

**The Political Accommodation of
Salafi-Reformist Movements in Thailand**

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Declaration

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the political accommodation of contemporary Salafi-reformist movements into Thailand's dual context of a Buddhist majority centralised state and the Malay Muslim minority. The two chosen case studies are Assalam (est. 1977) and the Muslim Group for Peace (MGP) (est. 2001) situated in the Deep South and Bangkok respectively. On the study of these movements' ideological, organisational, and behavioural dimensions, I have developed three conceptual frameworks: Islamic reformism, network-based movements, and accommodation, which is based on the literature of Islamism, Islamic social movements and activism and Thai Muslim politics. While previous studies of Islamic reformists in Thailand have focused on the role of individuals as a unit of analysis, this thesis looks into a larger level of social movement organisation, without ignoring the importance of influential leaders. This thesis also contributes to the literature of Thai Muslim politics by identifying ideological differences between Salafism and reformism.

This thesis argues that in their attempts to domesticate their Islamic reformist ideologies into Thailand's socio-political structures, Salafis adopted pragmatism as an essential approach that enabled them to become successfully accommodated. Their organisational strategies relied on the creation of network-based movements encompassing educational, media, social, and political organisations. Equipped by internal strength of modernist elements and external political opportunities and constraints, the formalisation of organisations became a transition point that made the movements shift from the narrow rigid Salafi positions to the broader socially engaged reformist perspectives. Thus, their activism expanded from organising religious educational programmes to providing religious-social services. In pursuit of accommodation, it is necessary for both movements to balance the compromise between their Salafi-reformist ideologies and socio-political realities. Although these pragmatic efforts resulted in relatively successful accommodation with the Thai state and better recognition from Malay Muslim society – with a significant degree of latent conflict and competition, the movements failed to maintain a relationship with their purist Salafi networks.

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Abbreviations

ASSA	Assalam Smart Schools Association
BNPP	Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (Patani National Liberation Front)
BRN	Barisan Revolusi Nasional (National Revolutionary Front)
CIS	College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
FTU	Fatoni University
IIROSA	International Islamic Relief Organisation of Saudi Arabia
IRC	Inter-Religious Council
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JPIP	Jemaah Pelajar Islam Patani (Patani Islamic Student Movement)
MGP	Muslim Group for Peace
MGPF	Muslim for Peace Foundation
MAJDA	Majlis Da'wah Islamiyah (Council for Islamic Preaching)
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MWL	Muslim World League
NRC	National Reconciliation Council
PAO	Provincial Administrative Organisation
PKS	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party)
PSU	Prince of Songkla University
PULO	Patani United Liberation Organization
SBPAC	Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre
SMT	Social movement theory
TIMA	Thai Islamic Medical Association

TMSA	Thai Muslim Students Association
YIC	Yala Islamic College
YIU	Yala Islamic University
YMAT	Young Muslim Association of Thailand

Glossary

<i>al-amr bi al-ma'rouf wa al-nahi an al- munkar</i>	Ar. promoting good/right and prohibiting evil/wrong
<i>ahl-al-sunnah wa al-jamaah</i>	Ar. the people of Sunni majority
<i>al-Salaf al-salih</i>	Ar. the pious predecessor
<i>anasheed</i>	Ar. Islamic religious song
<i>aqidah</i>	Ar. creed
<i>babo</i>	Ms. head of <i>pondok</i>
<i>bahasa Melayu Patani</i>	Ms. Malay language in Patani dialect
<i>bid'a</i>	Ar. innovation of religious rituals
<i>Chularajmontri</i>	Th. Sheikhul Islam, an Islamic official supreme leader in Thailand
<i>da'wah</i>	Ar. Islamic preaching
<i>da'i</i>	Ar. Islamic preacher
<i>dar-al-harb</i>	Ar. abode of war
<i>dar-as-salam</i>	Ar. abode of peace
<i>fatwa</i>	Ar. Islamic legal rulings
<i>far'd kifayah</i>	Ar. communally obligatory
<i>fiqh</i>	Ar. Islamic jurisprudence
<i>halaqah</i>	Ar. study circle
<i>hijab</i>	Ar. Muslim headscarf
<i>ihya</i>	Ar. revival
<i>ijazah</i>	Ar. scholarly license
<i>ijtihad</i>	Ar. interpretation by Islamic jurists
<i>Ikhwani</i>	Ar. an Islamic reformist ideological strand influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood
<i>islah</i>	Ar. reform
<i>kaum muda</i>	Ms. the new group
<i>kaum tua</i>	Ms. the old group

<i>khana kao</i>	Th. the old group
<i>khana mai</i>	Th. the new group
<i>kitab jawi</i>	Ml. traditional Patani Malay textbooks written by <i>ulama patani</i>
<i>majlis shura</i>	Ar. advisory council
<i>manhaj</i>	Ar. methodology
<i>maqasid al-shari'ah</i>	Ar. objective of Islamic law
<i>mazhab</i>	Ar. schools of Islamic jurisprudence
<i>niqab</i>	Ar. veil
<i>pondok</i>	Ml. Islamic traditional school in Malay world
<i>puak atas pagar</i>	Ml. group on the fence
<i>Qadyani /Ahmadiyah</i>	Ar. follower of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who claimed to be another prophet after the Prophet Muhammad
<i>sahwa</i>	Ar. awakening
<i>semangat</i>	Ml. spirit
<i>Shafi'e</i>	Ar. one of the four <i>mazhab</i>
<i>shari'ah</i>	Ar. Islamic law
<i>sheikh</i>	Ar. a knowledgeable person/scholar plural noun - <i>mashayikhs</i> (senior people)
<i>shirk</i>	Ar. polytheism
<i>shura</i>	Ar. consultation/advisory
<i>Sunnah</i>	Ar. prophetic example, practice
<i>tafsir</i>	Ar. Quranic exegesis
<i>tajdeed</i>	Ar. revive
<i>taqlid</i>	Ar. blind imitation
<i>tarbiyah</i>	Ar. religious upbringing through training and education
<i>tawhid</i>	Ar. the oneness of God
<i>tok guru</i>	Ml. Islamic scholar
<i>ummah</i>	Ar. Muslim nation/ global religious community

<i>ummah wahidah</i>	Ar. one nation
<i>ustaz</i>	Ar. & Ml. Islamic religious teacher
<i>Wahhabi</i>	Ar. follower of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the foreword to Chaiwat Satha-Anand's *The Life of this World: Negotiated Muslim Lives in Thai Society* (2005: xi), Omar Farouk Bajunid, a renowned scholar of Islam in Southeast Asia, observed that 'It is ironic that although the Muslims are significant minority in Thailand – historically, culturally and numerically – there seems to be a dearth of good academic literature... on their contemporary role in the kingdom.' He also stressed that the problem of poor understanding of, and misunderstanding towards, Thai Muslims has occurred not only with outsiders but also with their fellow citizens in Thailand. Negative events, such as the on-going escalation of violence in the southern Thai provinces serve as a reminder to the Thai nation and the world of the dangers of unresolved issues concerning political and social integration and religious reconciliation in contemporary Thailand.

This research responds to Bajunid's observation above by studying the accommodation of Islamist movements into mainstream Thai society and polity. In Thailand, Buddhism is the primary religion with the Buddhist majority, constituting over 90 per cent of the approximately 68 million citizens,¹ while Muslims comprise the largest religious minority. The exact number of Muslims in Thailand has long been contested and varies in official statistics, media and academic accounts. Muslim self-estimates range from 4.6 to 12 per cent of the population.² There are Muslims throughout Thailand, but there is a strong concentration of Muslims in southern border provinces and a significant Muslim

¹ This statistics is based on the CIA World Fact Book, 2017. [Accessed 27 July 2017]. Available from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html>.

² According to Thailand's Population and Housing Census, National Statistical Office, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology in 2000, the Muslim minority make up around 4.6 per cent of the population in Thailand. This figure is the smallest percentage that has been referred to by media and academic accounts since the resurgence of the Thai Southern conflict in 2004. Thai Muslim leaders and scholars have estimated their size of the Muslim population within variously, ranging from 6 to 10 per cent. One of the highest estimates – 12 per cent – was mentioned at an OIC foreign ministers meeting in June 2005 by then Thai Foreign Minister Kantathi Supamongkhon (Funston 2008: 7). However, according to the 2010 national census, the number of Muslims in Thailand is 3,259,340 or 4.9 per cent of the population. (The 2010 Population and Housing Census, National Statistical Office, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, [Accessed January 2013]. Available from: http://service.nso.go.th/nso/nso_center/project/search_center/23project-th.html)

population in the capital Bangkok.³ These are the two main areas that this research will focus on.

The attitudes and identities of Muslims in these two areas, regarding their relationships with the Thai state, are not similar. Muslims in Bangkok and other regions, except the Deep South,⁴ have diverse ethnic backgrounds and have been broadly described as assimilationist (Farouk 1988: 5) and integrationist (Yusuf 2007: 4; 2008: 132). These Thai-speaking Muslims are generally willing to be integrated and subservient to the Buddhist Thai. In the Deep South, the predominant Malay Muslims who speak *bahasa Melayu Patani* (Ml. Malay language in Patani dialect) have been referred to as 'unassimilated' (Farouk 1988: 5) and 'unintegrated' (Yusuf 2007: 4; 2008: 132).

Despite demonstrating the heterogeneity of Muslims in Thailand, these classifications are still superficial and fail to illustrate the nuance of Muslims' relations with the Thai state and society. It can be argued in a more careful, precise way that Muslims' relations with the Thai state are less integrated in the Deep South than other regions. Many Malay Muslims have a strong sense of ethnoreligious antagonism against the Thai state, with some groups espousing separatist sentiments. One of many factors causing the different degree of integration is related to the two contrasting patterns of Muslim settlement in Thailand.

The first group was initially indigenous Malays under the greater Patani kingdom, which was officially incorporated into the Thai polity in 1909, whereas the other, with different ethnic origins, mainly migrated to the central part and has been considered as an outsider or *khaek* (Thai, literally, 'guest') of Thai society (Thanet 2003: 9). It is not surprising that the second group was willing to integrate and had to be more accommodative in order to gain recognition from the Thai state and society, while the Malay-speaking people, who were forcibly included into the Thai polity, more proudly retain their distinct religio-cultural identity. In terms of

³ Approximately 64 per cent of Thailand's Muslims reside in the 5 southernmost provinces and 9.4 per cent in Bangkok. The rest are scattered across the Upper South (16.9 per cent), the Central region (7.9 per cent), the North (1.1 per cent), and the Northeast (0.7 per cent).

⁴ The Deep South refers to the three southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, and the other four districts of Songkhla province where the majority of Muslims speak Malay.

preserving identity, religion is a crucial matter to both groups; but for the southern Muslims, ethnic identity also important. Thai Muslim minority politics is therefore an interaction between the Thai state and Muslims that hinges upon religious and ethnic identity politics – dynamically impacted by both sides.

The Thai state features two main contradictory characteristics affecting Muslim responses: firstly, its openness towards religious rights and liberty; and secondly, its conservatism that perpetuates the integrity of the Thai polity and the supremacy of Thai-ness. The former allows Muslims to ‘positively’ engage with wider society and use the open space to demand or bargain in a quest for their religious rights, whereas the latter leaves little space engagement at the level of (state attempts to impose strictly fixed) cultural identities. Particularly the preference among the Malay ethnic identity to promote their ethnic affiliation, from the state’s point of view, is considered as a sign of disloyalty towards the state. Ever since the Muslim south was forcedly incorporated into the Thai polity – despite its distinct cultural entity – there have been continual attempts to integrate Muslims into the centralised polity. Of its many policies, the most problematic has been the assimilationist policy of the 1940s, which caused resentment and a series of relentless responses from many Malay Muslims lasting up to the present day (Thanet 2004: 3).

As for Muslims, their characteristic response to the Thai state can be classified into four patterns: assimilation, political engagement, identity negotiation, and armed resistance. The first three types are inextricable and can be seen throughout all regions, especially in terms of their engagement with bureaucratic and democratic processes, but the last is manifested specifically by Malay Muslim separatist movements in the south that opt for violence as their preferred means. This use of violence does not represent all southern Muslims. There are many Muslims and movements that struggle to preserve and reform their religious and ethnic identity via peaceful means. Certain Muslim groups from the ‘new school’, in particular, appear to be accommodative towards and even cooperative with the Thai state. To emphasise, these are the groups upon which this research will focus.

This so-called 'new school' is locally known as *kaum muda* (Ml.) in Malay-speaking areas or *khana mai* (Th.) in the Thai-speaking areas.⁵ Their religious practice and interpretation to some extent deviate from the long-held religious dogma of mainstream local Muslims, the old or traditional groups known as *kaum tua* (Ml.) or *khana kao* (Th.). In the southern provinces, *Wahhabi* is another prevailing term used by Malay traditionalists that appears to have a pejorative connotation and is disliked by the new school (McCargo 2008: 22–23; Liow 2009: 92).⁶ Internationally, the *kaum muda/khama mai* can be categorised under the broader Salafi label. Salafi refers to the follower of *salaf* or *al-salaf al-salih* (Ar. the pious predecessor),⁷ the first three generations of Muslims who had first-hand experience of the establishment of Islam and are regarded as exemplaries for the righteous way to live as a Muslim (Meijer 2009: 3). *Salaf* includes the companions (Ar. *sahabah*) of the Prophet, the successors of the *sahabah* (Ar. *tabi'een*), and the successors of the *tabi'een* (Ar. *tabi'it tabi'een*). In Islamic studies, Muslims who strictly follow the *salaf's* way are also called *ahlus sunnah wal jama'ah* (Ar. the group of prophetic practice and his followers). Therefore, in some countries, such as Thailand, Muslims might be familiar with the term *sunnah* rather than Salafi.

Salafism is not one thing: some may be either activist or quietist, political or apolitical, extremist or radical-moderate, and violent or peaceful. A range of terminologies have been interchangeably used to explain different types of Salafi ideologies, movements and strategies. These can be classified into three

⁵ Throughout this thesis, the terms *khana mai/khama kao* are applied to the new/old groups in all regions of Thailand except the Malay-speaking area in the Deep South, in which the term *kaum muda/kaum tua* are used instead. *Kaum* is a Malay loan word from the Arabic *qaumun*, referring to a nation, a community, a tribe, and a group of people.

In the Malay world, the terms *kaum muda* and *kaum tua* connote more than a single meaning. Whilst in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, they mean the new and the old groups, which associate with the traditionalist-reformist contestation, in Indonesia, both terms are literally understood as the young and old generations. Instead, the terms that reflect the reformist and traditionalist traditions in the Indonesian context are what Clifford Geertz (1960) called *santri* and *abangan*, respectively.

⁶ Most people from the new school reject the name '*Wahhabi*', reasoning that despite being influenced by his teaching, they are not the followers of Muhammad Ibnu Abdul Wahab, who was a remarkable reformist during the eighteenth century. Instead, they prefer to be called '*Sunnah*' or '*Salafi*' as they try to follow the authentic source of teachings from the Prophet and the Salaf.

⁷ Due to different meanings of the term 'Salafi' used by various authors, this research needs to clarify how the term is used here. The term 'Salafi,' or 'Salafis' in plural, refers generally to the followers of the pious ancestors (*al-salaf al-salih*) in the earliest era of Islam, whilst 'Salafist' is confined specifically to the ultra-conservative Salafis who rigidly emphasised themselves as Salafi or being part of the Salafist or *Salafiyah* movement. 'Salafi' in this research functions as an adjective and noun, which refers both to ideology and to people.

interrelated sets of terminologies 1) a set of Islamic fundamentalisms: *Salafiyyah*/Salafism and *Wahhabiyyah*/Wahhabism; 2) a set of Islamic reformism discourses: modernism, reformism and revivalism; and 3) a set of ideological-strategic trends in Islamist movements: Ikhwanism (brotherhood-ism), Salafism (as a subset of Salafi) and Jihadism. Definitions and discussion of these terms will be presented in the analytical framework section. Most of these terms generally refer to literalists or Salafis. However, other religious creeds or political orientations in the Muslim world – such as Sufism (mysticism Islam), traditionalism, secularism, liberalism, and nationalism – have not been totally excluded. For instance, some Islamists can be influenced by Sufi traditions (for example some Egyptian Ikhwani and Indian Deobandi reformists), the transnational Tablighi Jama'at is also considered as reformist by some scholars (Horstmann 2007), and some secessionist-nationalists might use global Islamist rhetoric and define their fighting as 'jihad' (for example, Malay Muslims in southern Thailand and Moro Muslims in southern Philippine secessionist movements).

Among those varieties of Salafis, the movements on which this research focuses can be categorised as an activist, political, moderate and peaceful Salafis. Generally speaking, a Salafi individual or movement that does not separate politics from religious ideology can be termed Islamist. Therefore, this research describes these Thai Muslim movements within the new school as 'Islamist'.

The term 'Islamists' (*al-Islamiyyun* in Arabic) is particularly problematic because it has a wide range of definitions and connotations. Generally, Islamists are groups of Islamic political or social activists who are committed to the implementation of their ideological vision of Islam in the state and/or society and mostly belong to Islamic organisations or social movements (Esposito 2003b: 151). Islamism, as an ideology in connection with progressive movements, has been applied and explained frequently with interrelated references to reformism and modernism.

Regarding reformism, Islamism seeks to revive the thought that Islam is not merely a religion, but encompasses a system for social, legal, economic, and political organisation (Roy 2004: 58; Bubalo et al 2008: 6). In relation to modernism, many explanations highlight the emergence of the Islamic reformism

ideology as responding to the rise of western imperial power in the era of colonisation and the nation-state. Another influential explanation stresses the decline of the Muslim world in contrast to the rise of the West during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which caused Islamic scholars to revive, or reform Muslim communities through the renewal of authentic Islam and the adoption, but not the blind imitation (*taqlid*) of modern science.⁸ On this basis, contemporary Islamist movements have enthusiastically embraced modern science and technology and tend to recruit students and professionals rather than religious scholars (Bubalo et al 2008: 6). As Olivier Roy (1994: 39) wrote, the Islamist movement 'conceives of itself explicitly as a socio-political movement, founded on an Islam defined as much in terms of a political ideology as in terms of a religion.' In the Malay world, including Indonesia (Abdullah 1971), Malaysia (Noor 2011), and southern Thailand (Liow 2009), the reformist/modernist movement has been captured in the concept of *kaum muda*. Liow explicitly used this term to frame the reformist nature of the Salafi movement when he wrote, 'this term essentially refers to Salafis who attempt to reform Islam by taking it away from traditional syncretism and re-orienting it towards scripturalism' (Liow 2009: 78).

However, all the terms discussed above fail to explain exactly 'what Islamists are.' Throughout the course of my research, I have attempted to determine the most suitable term to define both of my case studies. From their own points of views, informants are all satisfied with the simple term 'Muslim,' but this does not give an appropriate connotation for social science research. I finally settled on the term 'Salafi-reformist,' which will be dissected subsequently toward the end of the thesis.

Core Problem and Case Study Justification

As a problem-driven (as opposed to theory-driven) thesis, the core problem examined relates to the highly centralised Thai state. The movements under

⁸ The terms renewal (*tajdid*), revival (*ihya'*) and reform (*islah*) have been used interchangeably to explain contemporary Islamist movements. All of these terms refer back to so-called *mujaddid* (renewers) or modernist/reformist thinkers: for example Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, and Jamaluddin al Afghani (Esposito 2003b: 265).

examination experience an internal security dilemma whereby the centralised state is hostile to local autonomy and expressions of alternative identities, creating a complex local political landscape with many different Muslim groups vying for space. These groups comprise formalised Islamic councils, Islamic educational institutions, Islamic preaching groups, Muslim political parties, ethno-nationalist movements, and Islamist movements. For these movements, violent insurgency in the Deep South is failing to pay dividends for the majority of Thailand's Muslims, making political accommodation the only 'way out' of the dilemma. Given their wide applicability elsewhere, my empirical findings from Thailand should be relevant beyond the national context. I also hope to step out from the shadow of terrorism and insurgency studies, focusing instead on political contestation and the prospects for peaceful resolution through political accommodation and reconciliation.

Though the Muslim population in Thailand may enjoy limited importance in the larger Muslim world, especially given its relatively small proportion compared to other Muslim states, there are two main reasons supporting the significance of Thai Muslim case studies.

The first reason is the issue of Muslim minority politics. The significance of Thailand in the Muslim world is not about the role or influence of Thai Muslims towards or compared to other Muslim nations. Rather, it is about how a Muslim minority can best seek space in a non-Muslim country, especially a very centralised state like Thailand. Many scholars have explained how Thai nationalist leaders and bureaucrats have constructed an image of Thailand as a culturally homogeneous nation while there are many different ethnic and linguistic communities that have traditionally existed within the country, including the Muslim minority (Scupin 1998: 230–231). The Thai state has long sought to manage religious affairs through a centralized, top-down system that enforces principles of belief and practice (McCargo 2010: 94).

Notwithstanding this centralisation, the Thai state provides a relatively open space for religious communities. Legally, equal rights and liberty for different religious practice and beliefs are enshrined in the constitution. In reality, preserving ethnic and religious identities can be sought through peaceful means

and the democratic system. A number of studies, such as those of Chaiwat Sathanand (2003, 2004, 2005) have shown that in the context of the expansion of democratic space in Thai society, Muslims have greater opportunities to create space and peacefully engage in Thai political society in order to preserve their identities. Their engagement has deployed many modes of agency: they have been victims of oppression, media practitioners, public intellectuals, religious leaders and politicians (Chaiwat 2004: 156–57). Therefore, Thai Muslim minority politics can also be considered an important case study for other Muslim minority contexts. Under the Thai polity, Muslims preserve their identity through different avenues, such as exercising their citizenship rights, participating in the democratic process and negotiating with the state. Yet in the Deep South they have engaged in an armed struggle against the Thai state. Understanding these contradictory attributes of Thai political society (that is, a centralised, culturally homogeneous state but also one that has a relatively open society and democratic political system) have influence on identity preservation of Muslim minority is both interesting and necessary.

Secondly, a more justifiable reason for looking at Thailand is the issue of Islamist politics as part of Muslim minority in the context of Thai state. Although the role of Islamists in Thailand is not noticeable as compared to other Muslim countries, I argue that Thai Islamists have even more space to pursue their agendas than their counterparts in Muslim majority countries, especially some authoritarian and monarchical states. Their Islamic activism – despite facing some constraints – is rarely obstructed, nor are they treated harshly by the Thai state. For example, a private Islamic university and four Islamic satellite TV channels – despite being monitored by the central state – operate freely without disruption.

The interesting point regarding Islamists vying for political space in a non-Muslim country can also be considered from the fact that the Salafi Islamist idea is not only alien to the popular local traditionalist Muslim population but also to the Thai state. Hence, a study of Thai Islamists and their interactions and accommodation will add another useful case study from a different context to those from Muslim majority countries.

Selection of case studies

The research focuses on two networks, each of which is led by a prominent Salafi reformist scholar who created an organisation and informal outreach activities. The two networks operate in two different areas: the Deep South and Bangkok. The first is the Assalam movement based in Fatoni University and led by Dr. Ismail Lutfi Japakiya. The second is the Bangkok-based Muslim Group for Peace (MGP), led by Sheikh Rida Ahmad Samadi.

Assalam is actually a wider grouping, which is related to – but not exactly the same as – the new school or *kana mai/kaum muda*. It is a network organisation based in Fatoni University (formerly Yala Islamic College) but reaching many more through its network of Islamic private schools, mosques, Islamic co-operatives, Islamic teachers and other groups that subscribe to Lutfi's ideas. Most of their leading activists are professional adults, encompassing religious scholars and teachers, intellectuals, businessmen, and even some politicians.

The Muslim Group for Peace is smaller and enjoys relatively limited acceptance, but its zealous activism appears more attractive to teenagers. Indeed, most of their activists are from younger generations, particularly university students, fresh graduates and young professionals. Most of them do not have an educational background from a formalised Islamic institution. Both groups have evolved from different earlier Islamic reformist movements, beginning with struggles and relative marginalisation but then evolving and having a greater impact and acceptance in Thai society.

Rigour in case selection involves opting for cases that are congruent to the study's objectives and that will provide data on significant research questions (Patton 1999: 1197). Before discussing how the chosen cases meet my study purposes, it is essential to understand the wider context of religious groups in which the cases are located. In the first instance I will explain why I selected the new group (*khana mai/kaum muda*) internationally known as Salafi/reformists. Then I will clarify and justify the reasons why I chose the two movements as case studies.

My interest in the 'new group' stemmed from the implication suggested by previous studies of Thai Muslim politics. Chaiwat's (2004; 2005) proposed notion of 'engaged Muslims' as a theoretical alternative to political Islam. He argued that case studies of negotiated Muslim lives in Thai society have shown that Muslim individuals and groups – with different degrees of piety – have opportunities for various types of political participation in pursuit of preserving their rights. Although Chaiwat (2003) did not focus on Salafi or the new group especially, his interest in minority co-existence through non-violent actions in non-Muslim societies led me to question further: how can the notion of Muslims vying for space in Thai society be applied with the Salafi and Islamic reformist groups. A couple of decades prior to Chaiwat's study, Scupin (1980b) had looked at the politics of previous Islamic reformists in Thailand and also highlighted the influence of Thai society in shaping Muslim response (Islamic reformism in particular). Another work by Scupin (1998) focusing on Muslim (including the new group's) accommodation in Thai society offers insights that can be developed by examining the dynamics of the contemporary *khana mai/kaum muda*. Liow (2009: 88) has highlighted the outstanding role of Ismail Lutfi in generating a second wave of Islamic reformism in Southern Thailand. McCargo (2008: 26) has shed light on the issue of how Salafi groups in southern Thailand had to accommodate Thai society and Malay traditionalist Muslim society. To conclude, although the 'new group' has small numbers (approximately 20 per cent of all Muslims in the Deep South), when compared to the Thai traditionalist Malay Muslim majority population, its dynamism in minority politics, both vis-a-vis Thai political society and local traditionalist Muslims has constantly increased in recent decades.

Despite the fact that there are various Muslim individuals and movements struggling for space (that is, to retain identity and gain recognition in Thai society), I opt to focus on the movements in the new school or *khana mai/kaum muda*. This is because it is interesting to see how religious-based groups which are generally regarded as being pious, extraordinary and unlikely to compromise with pluralism can create space and gain recognition in a pluralistic society and a centralised state. In other words, if the integration of the Muslim minority in Thailand is indeed significant as suggested by many authors (Scupin 1998, Bajunid in Chaiwat 2005),

the question of how a new group (and a minority within a minority at that) attempts to create space for its ideology and activism in the contexts of Malay communities and the Thai-Buddhist majority is even more interesting.

As for the second point, which is to make a case for the two selected movements, I considered five criteria for selecting the movements of these two scholars as case studies: 1) they are led by Middle East educated scholars, 2) they are considered highly influential Islamic scholars, 3) they have significant power bases and social followings, 4) similar trajectories of accommodation are apparent from their activism, and 5) their locations represent two significantly different contexts of Muslim communities mentioned above.

These criteria concerning the significance of both movements came from findings of previous studies on Islamism and from my own determination built upon the reviewed literature. The exploration of Islamist political dynamism has been treated in many ways. I take two major strands into perspective for my study case in Thailand. The first strand is the investigation of how Islamist ideology in the Middle East expands and influences in other regions. For example, Fealy and Bubalo have illustrated how Islamist ideologies in the Middle East take form in Indonesia, particularly the connection of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS – Partai Keadilan Sejahtera)(Bubalo and Fealy 2005). The other strand is the study of Islamist adjustments or shifts towards positive tendencies, including moderation, de-radicalisation, democratisation and ‘civil Islam’.

Moreover, the background of other related movements in the same political landscape of the chosen cases also supports my case study choices. In other words, just as Muslim politics involves contestation over the interpretation of symbols, and control of the institutions that produce and sustain them (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004: 5), Islamist groups in Thailand as a part of a wider context of the Thai Muslim political landscape are also inextricable from competition with other groups. Each group justifies its mission with different interpretations of ‘Islamic’ norms and with the stated objective of working the sake of Muslims. In the wider scope of Muslim politics, the range of Thai Muslim groups associated with religious motivation are varied by formal/informal institutions and political/apolitical

movements, such as the Young Muslim Association of Thailand – a youth movement (Liow 2009b, 2011), the Tablighi Jamaah – as a part of the global apolitical preaching movement (Horstmann 2007a, 2007b, 2011), the Wahdah group (a Muslim faction operating within mainstream politics), and some other less prominent groups from the Shiite sect.

However, the most challenging rivals to the chosen Islamist movements are tied to the *khana kao-khana mai* conflict. This conflict is the most obvious sectarian divide within Malay Muslim communities and the subject of the most scholarly interest on Thai Islamic reformism. The old group comprise the majority and have for the most part controlled formal Islamic institutions, authorised by the Ministry of Interior to administer Islamic affairs in Thailand. These institutions, which include the Office of Sheikhul Islam/Chularajmontri and the national and provincial Islamic Councils, has been constantly politicised by the Thai state (McCargo 2010). More than 3,500 mosques are registered with the Islamic Councils (Ministry of Interior 2007).⁹ These formalised Islamic institutions have limited roles in Muslim communities, mostly concerning bureaucratic and ceremonial affairs. Their main functions are overseeing family and inheritance matters and issuing Islamic certificates for halal foods, marriages and divorces. Other than these institutions, another legitimate power among mainstream Thai Muslims is shared by the informal religious leaders or *tok guru*, especially in *pondoks* and Islamic private schools. In 2004, there were over 550 Islamic schools in three southern border provinces (Suphaphan et al 2006).

Besides contestation with the *khana kao*, the chosen movements also face challenges from factions from within the *khana mai*. The ideas and practices of the new group came to Thailand mainly via two ways. Firstly Ahmad Wahab, a political refugee who settled in Bangkok in the early 1900s, brought from Minangkabao (Indonesia) Islamic reformist ideas influenced by scholars and the Salafiyah movement in the Middle East (Scupin 1998: 251). Secondly, subsequent generations of graduates from the Middle East and South Asia adopted the Salafi

⁹ These statistics were collected by the Division of Government Affairs Coordination, Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA), Ministry of Interior, Thailand. As of 31 January 2007, mosques were registered in 65 provinces. There were 2,289 mosques in the five southern border provinces, 736 mosques in the Upper South, and 193 in Bangkok.

ideology. Although the new group called for the reform and revival of Muslims through the way of the Salafi (*ahlus sunnah wal jamaah*), in Thailand they did not call themselves Salafi but are rather comfortable with the term *klum Sunnah* (a group of the prophetic way). Many of them also recognise the term *khana mai/kau muda* (a new group), used by the mainstream traditionalists. Unlike the Salafis in the Middle East that have long divided into two main competing movements/ways of preaching – that is, the Salafis and Ikhwanis – the existence of Salafis in Thailand appeared homogenous when presented in terms of as *khana mai* versus *kau muda*. However, there were less visible frictions among the new group, manifested by various Islamic private schools, mosques, foundations, and informal networks of scholars.

The largest and the most cohesive, organised new group network is that of Ismail Lutfi and his allies, especially the Malay-speaking groups in the lower south and the southern dialect-speaking people in the upper south. They are influenced by Salafi reformist ideas. Their mobilisation and networking has been done through study circles (*halaqah/usrah*). In Bangkok, groupings and networking between *khana mai* are varied, loose and independent. Significant institutions in Bangkok and in the south include the Foundation of Islamic Centre, Santichon Foundation and the Young Muslim Association of Thailand (YMAT). These organisations are primarily inspired by Islamic reformist ideology rather than explicitly by the Salafi movement. YMAT in particular, with its establishment in 1964 and renaissance in 1980s, has been perceived as one of the most zealous and active youth movements, well; recognised domestically and internationally (Liow 2009b).

Other groups in Bangkok that appear more obviously Salafi and are tied to *khana mai* scholars/activists include the Assalafiyun group, the Preservation of Islamic Heritage Foundation, the Muslim Group for Peace, the Sattachon Foundation for Education and Orphan, the Foundation for Virtue and Hamzah Foundation (based on Sassanupatham School). Currently, rival factions within the *khana mai* are reflected in competition between four Islamic satellite TV channels: TV Muslim Thailand, TMTV (Thai Muslim TV), Yateem TV, and White Channel. Though they all claim to be the group of the Sunnah (alternatively, Salafi), relations between these groups are generally more competitive than cooperative.

Internal conflict and controversies among *khana mai* groups have long centered around nuances in interpretation of scholarly texts. Further tensions emerged after the resurgence of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood after the Arab Spring in early 2011 that brought about its popularity among some Thai Salafis or *kana mai*; at the same time there was an advent of 'hard line' Salafi ideology, especially the Madkhali approach in Thailand.¹⁰ Such disputations and criticisms have occurred in forms of statements and speeches on websites, social media and satellite TV channels.

In order to make the selected cases more justifiable. I have also taken Yin's suggestion to select cases that enable the researcher to gain access to potential data that will most likely illuminate the research questions (Yin 2009: 26). In the attempt to justify my chosen cases, size and popularity of the organisations are not the most significant criteria for choosing these two movements. Rather, their capacity for transformation and change makes both movements especially salient.

To be clear, the justification for selecting these proposed movements and excluding others is their shift they exhibit in their ideological leanings thanks to the reality of living in Thai society. This does not mean that other movements are not accommodative, but the aforementioned justification makes the accommodation of the chosen cases more obvious and justifiable than others. Of considerable importance is strong influence of Middle Eastern ideas upon the movements' own ideologies and strategies.

The most important criterion is trajectory of accommodation and contrasting point from its origins and its ends. In other words, both Lutfi and Sheika Rida have led their movements through dramatic changes, which will help in discerning the extent to which agent and structure function and interact. Another criterion also considers the shift from religious movement to a more social and

¹⁰ Sheikh Rabi' al-Madkhali, a Saudi Salafi scholar who rigorously addressed the importance of Salafi *manhaj* (Ar. methodology) and stringently drew the line to define and exclude whether who is Salafi, thus provoking contentious debate within the Salafi realm. Madkhalism established its authority and became a transnational Salafi phenomenon through its loyalty to the Saudi regime and its criticisms against the deviant Muslims. The main targets that Madkhali battled against were the clerics and movements that combined religion and politics, especially the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi scholars in Saudi Arabia who were influenced by the Brotherhood's ideas. See Meijer, 2011.

political movement, with an emphasis on the role of charismatic leaders in religious, social and political activities.

Other movements have shown less significance in the transformation or expansion of their original objective and nature of movement. For instance, YMAT has always been a social movement inspired and animated by religious ideologies. Many *kana mai* groups – despite adopting sophisticated media strategies – limit their movements to religious or social objectives, but still distance themselves from mainstream politics.

Apart from considering how these cases help me answer my research questions, I also emphasise on how they widen understandings of Islamist politics. Since my research question asks how Islamist movements can become accommodated in Thai society, my preliminary observations above showed that the chosen case studies are the two most obvious movements that will help to illustrate this.

Another comparative dimension in the study of Islamism is also related to violent aspects of Islamist mobilization. Initially, the problems regarding Islamists that lead to my research interest lay in local and global security issues. Locally, there have been attempts especially from international terrorism analysts criticised by Michael Connors (2007: 164) as “war on terror” intellectuals who served state security perspectives, to locate Thai Islamists as links between global radical Jihadists and local Thai southern insurgents. However, reearch has shown ascertained that Thailand’s Islamists in most instances are not engaged in violence and do not have socially or politically nefarious objectives in mind when engaging with Thai society. Those who have most seriously studied the conflict agree that the prime perpetrators of violence from the Muslim society are actually people who understand themselves as ethnic Malay nationalists fighting against the Thai state in order to attain a separate territory (for example, ICG 2005: 25, 37–38; Liow 2006a: 95–97, 107–108; Funston 2008: 33; McCargo 2008: 187–88). Although they may sometimes use Islamist language and rhetoric, the core of their act of violence is intrinsically linked to their determination to reclaim a Malay national territory, which is not in line with the Thai Islamist’s approach. According to mainstream global assumptions about violence committed by Muslims most people who

engaged in the act of violence were extreme 'Islamic fundamentalists' (Esposito 1999: 128); nonetheless, the southern Thai insurgency offers a counter-narrative to this, since the local context is far more complicated than such a framing allows for.

At a global level, there is a substantial focus on so-called fundamentalist Islamist movements because the involvement of some groups in many violent situations, especially since the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the ensuing invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Studies by Bassam Tibi (2002, 2008, 2012) and by Gunaratna et al. (2005, 2013) who focused more on the local Thai situation have greatly exaggerated the Islamist threat to democracy and security. In addition, there are widespread tendencies to label Islamists as intolerant and incapable of compromise with the state and other groups in society. A failure to deal with these problems may create many concomitant issues. One of them is losing the opportunity to engage Islamists in countering radicalisation and promoting peace, security, and democracy. Contrary to this notion, this study will adopt a positive perspective focusing on the moderate and cooperative character of Islamists in Thailand.

Beginning with the impact of 9/11 and the global war on terrorism emerging in 2001, followed by the Bali bombings on 12 October 2002, and many explosions in the Philippines, Thai security and intelligence agencies grew increasingly concerned about the threat of 'Muslim terrorists', viewing Southeast Asia as a second front to the Middle East (Gershman 2002). On 11 August 2003, Riduan Isamuddin (aka Hambali), one of the leading members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), was arrested in Pranakorn Si Ayudhaya province as part of a joint operation between the Thai police and the CIA (Heinrichs and Nicholson 2003; Ramakrishna 2006: 31). As a result, Thai security agencies closely monitored Muslim movements, especially fundamentalist groups that had transnational connections with Muslim business groups, religious and educational institutions, charitable organisations, and even government agencies in Southeast Asian, South Asian, and Middle Eastern countries.

In this context of combating terrorism, the rise of domestic insurgency in the southernmost area of Thailand in January 2004 also intensified portrayals of

Muslims as terrorists or Jihadists. In probing insurgents during the early years of the violence, most Thai authorities and security agencies could not differentiate between Malay-Muslim nationalists or separatists and Salafi or 'Wahhabi' fundamentalists. The former are ethno-religious oriented groups while the latter are the groups oriented by universal religious ideology and which embrace an Islamic literalist interpretation predominantly from the Middle East and South Asia. Some studies focusing on violence and terrorism have also further aggravated such misunderstandings, such as the studies of Zachary Abuza (2005),¹¹ and Rohan Gunaratna et al (2005) which have explained the causes of the violence in southern Thailand by ambiguously linking them with Islamists and their international ties to terrorist networks.

Michael Connors (2006) has articulated a strong critique in response to these studies. He has posited how intellectuals who proclaimed expertise on terrorism misread the conflict in Southern Thailand, arguing that those authors drew conclusions with inadequate evidence and unsuited research methodologies. Connors' argument has also been reaffirmed and clarified by Duncan McCargo's (2008) empirical study on the Southern Thai conflict. McCargo (2008: 187-89) argued that the conflict in Southern Thailand neither has Islam as a core problem, nor become part of a global jihad. A familiarity with 'Islamist' conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq may not always help to explain what is happening in southern Thailand. In Thailand's southern conflict, Islam is one of the key elements connected to violent circles, as it is a resource that the militant movement mobilise for political ends. However, religious grievance is not a primary cause of violence (McCargo 2008: 180). Today it has become clearer to academics and Thai authorities that insurgents' means and ends are essentially framed by Patani Malay ethno-nationalist ideologies, which are distinct from global Islamist ideologies.

Misrepresentation of Islamists appearing in academic literature and the media is not only connected with local nationalist militants, but also other global radical Islamists. Just as Muslims are a heterogeneous group, so too are sub-groups

¹¹ Notwithstanding his attempt to analyse the violence by linking JI with southern Thailand, in his "A Conspiracy of Silence: Who is Behind the Escalating Insurgency in Southern Thailand?" written in 2005, Abuza admitted that the evidence to prove such links was still limited.

within this that we identify as 'Islamist'. At a global level, following radicalism-focused analysis, there are even here nuances in terms of radical, de-radicalised and non-radical Islamists. In Thailand, Islamists are from a diverse spectrum of Salafis educated from different schools and places including Saudi Arabia, 'Misri' or 'Azhari' (that is, from the Egyptian Islamic University, Al-Azhar), 'Nadwi' (Indian Nadwatul Ulama), and those who studied in Pakistan. Most of them have a reformist agenda but their interpretations and implementation strategies are different. Very few of them take an extreme line in terms of violence, though the rigid or narrow interpretation could be manipulated for violent purposes. As with broader Muslim societies, tensions among Thai Islamists has led to internal conflicts. Although there have been attempts to look at and link their ties with Muslims in Southeast Asia and the Middle East in a negative way, their relationships and interactions with those regions are more complex than outside observers generally credit. Their Islamic resurgence is not necessarily similar to what has happened or been observed in other parts of the world and neither does it necessarily pose a violent threat to mainstream Thai society. Therefore, the conditions leading to Thai Islamists acting differently from their global counterparts are also studied by this research.

To conclude, by taking Yin's case study methodological perspective (Yin 2009: 53), my decision to conduct a two-case study research is not for comparative purposes, but to make my explanation more representative and robust. As such, both Ismail Lutfi's Assalam and Rida's MGP have exhibited a trajectory of accommodative shift with respect to their internal dynamism (for example, taking into account their ideological backgrounds, strategies, organisation's power distribution and politics) and external influence (for example, Thailand's political structure, opportunities, limitations and challenges). Given this preliminary observation, the study on the chosen religious movements will contribute to a deeper understanding of Islamist politics in Thailand's relatively open society and – at the same time – highly centralised, conservative state.

Research Questions

This research proposal is inspired by many authors who study Islamists and go beyond the narrow focus on terrorism and violence (Esposito 1999; Said 1997; Eickelman & Piscatori 2004; Bubalo & Fealy 2005; Mandaville 2007; Gunning 2008; Roy 2011). Some studies do however raise concerns over the problem of exaggerating the threat of Islamists (Esposito 1999; Sidel 2007). Reviewing these literatures, three interrelated categories are relevant to my research inquiry:

(1) Islamists in public life, particularly democratic politics (Hefner 2000; Bubalo et al 2008; Gunning 2008; Schwedler 2011; Ahmad 2012)

(2) Islamists as a part of civil society organisations or social movements (Clark 2004; Wiktorowics 2004; Bayat 2005, 2007; Roy 2011)

(3) Islamist moderation (Clark 2004, 2006; Bubalo and Fealy 2005; Schwedler 2006, 2007, 2011; Wegner and Pellicer 2009; Ashour 2009).

Not inspired solely by the literature on Islamists globally, this proposed research is also guided by authors studying Muslim accommodation and negotiation in Thai society (Scupin 1998; Chaiwat 2005, 2006) and Islamic reformism in Thailand (Liow 2009). Building on this existing literature, my primary research question is:

To what extent and how have the Salafi-reformist leaders and their network-based movements become accommodated into Thai socio-political structures which comprises of a relatively open society and centralised polity in the wider context of Thai society and the conservative popular Malay Muslim society in the more specific context?

My secondary research questions are as follows:

- What are the contexts that the Salafi-reformist movements emerged and are embedded?
- How have the Salafi-reformist movements developed their network-based movements?

- How have Islamic reformist ideologies of Assalam and the Muslim Group for Peace evolved?

Research Objectives

This research aims to study the accommodation of Islamist movements into Thai society and to understand the ways in which ideological, social, and political conditions shape their responses. In other words, I expect to offer an alternative understanding of the rise of Islamists and their accommodation in public life, particularly in the Thai polity and society.

It also aims to illustrate how Islamist ideology, which originated and has been developed in the Middle East, evolves in contexts other than the Middle East, Europe, or even neighbouring Southeast Asian countries that have already been widely studied. Most scholars working on southern Thailand have focused on issues related to separatism and touch on Islam as one of the major factors linked to the violent conflict. The more complex dimensions of Islamisation and Islamist politics are missing from these studies.

In addition, in spite of their connection with the Middle East and their dynamic force in the Thai Muslim community, knowledge of Islamist movements in Thailand is incomplete. Such an objective will echo Bubalo and Fealy's argument that not all influences from the Middle East on Southeast Asian Islam are negative (2005: 11).

Overview of Case Studies

As this thesis will demonstrate, Assalam and MGP have different sizes, compositions and forms of organisation, as well as unique political strategies, movements, mobilisations and campaign agendas. They also have different levels of acceptance from inside and outside the Thai Muslim community. Ismail Lutfi's network is larger and more accepted due to its longer history and a more compromising strategy towards different ideas and practices of local Muslims. However, Sheikh Rida also appears to have undergone a transformation away from his initial activism and towards a more compromising approach. At the same time,

there are similar features shared by both groups. They are driven by charismatic leaders who are influenced by both *ikhwani* and *Salafi* ideologies, and they are heavily scrutinised by security agencies and authorities.

Originating in the Middle East, both ideologies are considered 'fundamentalist' – I argue that literal fundamentalism is not necessarily as negative as it is widely perceived – and are generally known as Salafi. However, even here there are sub-ideologies divided into smaller beliefs. Generally, the two major strands are Ikhwani and Salafi. The Ikhwani are influenced by Muslim Brotherhood ideology and the Salafis are influenced by the movement known as Salafism (Ashour 2009; Lynch 2013). However, more specific variants can be categorised by considering their different ideologies, perspectives and textual-contextual interpretations. In addition, over long periods of struggle, both leaders have adjusted their stances related to social modernity and traditional practices in order to deal with political challenges. Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida embrace various approaches and types of modern media to propagate their messages and are gradually recruiting more followers and sympathisers within Muslim communities throughout the country, even though it is substantially minimal when compared to the numbers found in the traditionalist Muslim majority.

Case study 1: Ismail Lutfi Japakiya's Assalam

After obtaining a doctoral degree and coming back from Saudi Arabia in 1986 with an ideology influenced by both Salafi and the Muslim Brotherhood or *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, Ismail Lutfi started teaching Islam, running his father's religious school *Bamrung Islam* in Pattani and organizing a weekly public lecture known as *Majlis Ilmi* (Surainee 2004: 134-36; Liow 2009: 88). Owing to his charismatic and revered personality, his Islamic reform efforts were gradually recognised and he created broad networks of Islamic religious schools and Islamic micro-finance networks. Despite his expanding role, Lutfi has encountered tensions with those espousing long-held traditionalist beliefs and practices among other Muslim groups in Thailand. His reform efforts still had to negotiate with local Malay-Muslim culture and politics. In 1996, Ismail Lutfi established Yala Islamic College (YIC) to teach both religion and modern sciences. YIC was upgraded to a university in 2007, and

in 2014 was renamed 'Fatoni University'. Lutfi is very well respected and influential in the Middle East, resulting in financial assistance from Middle Eastern government agencies and voluntary organizations, generating over 60 billion baht (£12 billion) thus far for Fatoni University's infrastructure and administrative costs. Currently Fatoni University, which is the only private Islamic higher education institution in Thailand has approximately 3,500 students studying in two campuses located in Yala and Pattani provinces.¹²

The significance of Fatoni University is that it is not merely a university, but also formally represents Ismail Lutfi's network and symbolically his position as the leading authority of the Malay Muslim *khana mai*. Though Ismail Lutfi assumes many positions, his main formal representation in public is always that of rector of Fatoni University. However, Fatoni University cannot wholly represent the size and character of Lutfi's movement. There is a wide network of formal and informal organisations affiliated with his movement throughout the southern provinces. For instance, the Southern Thailand Islamic Cooperative Network, which was founded in 2002 has 135,800 members in 22 co-operatives in 2011 (The Southern Thailand Islamic Cooperative Network, 2013). Its growth appears to be faster and more extensive than *khana kao's* Islamic micro-finance model. However, their educational institution network, the Assalam Smart School Networks which combines 35 school members in lower and upper Southern area with 26,414 students and 1,950 teachers (ASST document 2013), is outnumbered tenfold by the *khana kao's* private Islamic schools and *pondoks*.¹³

In some media and counter-terrorism sources, Ismail Lutfi has been defamed as a "hard-line Wahhabi cleric" (Liow 2009: 90). Some of his critics used his training and his connections with state and private sectors in Saudi Arabia to disparage him (Liow 2009: 90). He had previously been perceived with serious suspicion by the Thai authorities following intelligence reports regarding his connection with the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Al-Qaida members (McCargo 2008:

¹² The third largest campus named "Madinatul Salam," which is now being built in the Pattani suburbs, is intended to accommodate the health science faculties and the ideal Muslim community. It is under the "Pattani Jaya" project for which the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Mohammad, has served as a consultant.

¹³ There are approximately 500 Private Islamic Schools and pondoks in the southern area (Baka 2005: 4).

199). He was once warned by some politicians and security officers that he was among the most-wanted terrorist clerics in Thailand and was in danger of to being sent to the Guantanamo Bay detention camp.¹⁴ His ally, Waemahadi Waeda-oh, a medical doctor (later a Senator and Member of Parliament), was arrested in June 2003 under suspicion of belonging to JI, although his high-profile case was dismissed in June 2005 after a Bangkok court found there was insufficient evidence to proceed (BBC 2005; Manager Online 2005).

As mentioned earlier, suspicions towards Ismail Lutfi and his networks not only occurred in the context of global violence, but also the local violence in southern Thailand. So far, no evidence has been produced to connect him with any violence. Instead, through his tolerance, charisma, and political manoeuvring, Lutfi has been gradually recognised and become less suspect in the eyes of the authorities. He has thus been integrated into public affairs to a quite surprising degree. On this basis, Lutfi has been appointed to many important official and social positions including: member of the Chularajmontri Advisory Council, the *Amirul Hajj* (pilgrimage leader), member of the 2005–06 National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), member of the National Legislative Assembly, 2006–07 (after the 2006 coup d' état), and the Co-Chairman of the Inter-Religious Council (IRC) of Thailand.

Unlike many contemporary mainstream Salafi scholars who have rigid literalist interpretations and doctrinal conservatism, Ismail Lutfi's teachings and activities appear to be more progressive and show his appreciation for religious pluralism in the Muslim community (Liow 2009: 90–92). In other words, whilst he emphasises the importance of the text from *al-Quran* and *as-Sunnah* (practice of the Prophet Muhammad), Lutfi's implementation involves compromise with the context and expresses concern for the unity of *ummah* (Muslim nation). Liow (2009: 91) has noted that although mainstream Salafis reject Mawlid (the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday), Lutfi wrote an article for the

¹⁴ Interview with Ismail Lutfi Japakiya, 20 February 2015. In addition, according to McCargo's interview note of his *Tearing apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand*, the former MP Muk Sulaiman claimed that he and then interior minister Wan Muhammad Nor Matha had convinced Thaksin not to accept a US request to arrest Ismail Lutfi as the JI leader (McCargo 2008: 199).

annual collection of essays sponsored by the Islamic Centre of Thailand's National Mawlid 2006, in order to maintain religious solidarity. As such, the *Ummatan Wahidah* (or the nation of unity/one nation) campaign project was launched in May 2011 by Ismail Lutfi throughout his network with the main agenda of promoting unity among Muslim groups. Since May 2011, the second section of the Majlis Ilmi, his weekly Saturday sermon, rather than used as previously to express his opinion about contemporary issues, has been used to promote his ideas of Ummatan Wahidah (Ar. one nation). His book entitled *We Are One Nation* (Ismail 2011) was also published in Arabic, and was translated into Thai and Jawi versions in the same year. This concept has been consistently spoken of by Ismail Lutfi to promote unity not only among Muslims but also among all different religious communities within the nation of the Prophet Muhammad. In my observation, Ismail Lutfi has frequently spoken about the extended meaning of this concept since he was appointed as the Co-Chairman of the Inter-Religious Council (IRC) of Thailand.

Nevertheless, his attempt to remain moderate and balance various sides, especially between the government and the anti-government groups, has caused him to face suspicions and challenges from different quarters. Challenges from the state and from traditional Muslims have been frequently mentioned by writers who explore Ismail Lutfi's movement, but little effort has been made to seriously study the political strategies Assalam has used to deal with those challenges.

Case study 2: Sheikh Rida Ahmad Samadi's Muslim Group for Peace

Pramote Samadi, known as Sheikh Rida Ahmad Samadi, is an Egyptian-Thai Islamic scholar who spent his early years in Saudi Arabia and Egypt and moved to Thailand in 1998. Due to his zealous activism against the government in Egypt, he was banned by the Mubarak regime from living in Egypt.

Sheikh Rida is assertive – but not aggressive – in preserving the purity of Islamic belief and practice and in protecting Muslim rights. Due to his rigidity in the practice of Islamic principle according to a Salafi orientation learned in Egypt, his attempt at Islamic reform in Thailand in the very beginning showed his literalist interpretation to be out of touch with socio-cultural context of Thai society. Nevertheless, thanks to the influence of critical and progressive Salafi thinkers in

Egypt,¹⁵ his activism since 2000 has shown significant adjustments in a direction that is more accommodative with Thai society. His Islamic reformism so far has been carried on by his range of affiliated networks, which are based in an umbrella movement called the Muslim Group for Peace (MGP).

The MGP was founded in 2001 in response to the US global war on terrorism. Since its inception, the MGP organised demonstrations highlighting perceived cases of Muslim victimisation, including the war in Afghanistan (2001), the Iraq War (2003), and periodic Israeli actions against Palestinians. The MGP has developed its mission to be a Muslim rights-based activist organisation in connection with peace building which is based on promoting the understanding of Islam. In order to pursue this goal, the MGP has set up more affiliated bodies including the Society for Muslim Consumer Protection or Himayah in 2007, the Thailand News Darussalam (TND) news agency in 2008 (in cooperation with its affiliated network of newspapers, websites and community radio stations), the Amanah Islamic Co-operative in 2010, and most recently, a satellite television called 'White Channel' in 2012.

The MGP first made headlines in 2012 with a campaign and protest against the hijab ban on students in the Matthayom Wat Nong Chok School in Bangkok. This became a controversial and sensitive issue between Muslims and Buddhists (Asian Tribune 2012; Bangkok Post 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). Such controversies prompted the MGP to become more integrated into Thai public life, even participating in parliamentary politics. Despite the fact that in previous elections Sheikh Rida always articulated in his sermons and lectures a call to Muslims to vote 'no' against what seemed to be 'dirty' elections and immoral politicians, he formed an Islamic political party named Phuea Santi Party (literally, Party For Peace) in 2013. Prior to this, Rida set up the Research Institute for Promoting Islamic Politics in November 2012.

Whereas Ismail Lutfi began his *da'wah* missions at the local, grassroots level in rural Yala, and then expanded his network to include the setting up of YIU, Sheikh Rida's Islamic reform strategy began with teaching religion and delivering

¹⁵ They are Salafi thinkers whose perspectives are quite liberal compared to other clerics within the Salafi movement in Egypt.

the Islamic lectures and Friday sermons in many Muslim communities in Bangkok and nearby urban areas. His own programmes under As-Sunnah Society, classes on *tafsir al-Quran* (Ar. Quranic exegesis) and his explanations of hadith and other weekly lectures have continued until today. Initially, his rigorous interpretations on social issues led to different responses – both acceptance and resistance – by many communities, including among Salafi followers.¹⁶ However, his innovative teaching methods – such as using multimedia and applying religious lessons to deal with contemporary issues – have attracted hundreds of young people, especially university and high school student activists in many leading institutions. Despite his limited overall acceptance, he is one of the most popular Islamic scholars to be invited by youth groups and social organisations to give talks.¹⁷ Many affiliated youth groups – including Fityatulhaq, As-Sabiqun, Banatulhuda and People of the Tree – have been inspired by his teaching and training, resulting in another wave of Islamisation driven by Salafis among Thai-Muslim youth activists since 2000. As such, he has various affiliated networks and tools to utilise in pursuing MGP’s work, especially the White Channel TV, which has given him a larger number of mass supporters.¹⁸

These two case studies will cover many different aspects of Islamism in Thailand, including the origin of the ideology (Egypt and Saudi Arabia), the political nature of Islamist movements (compromise or assertiveness), and the political geography of activism (rural and urban).

¹⁶ For instance, he campaigned for a boycott of American and Jewish brands, supported the idea of prohibiting women from travelling without their guardians (*mahram*), called on Muslim not to join other religious-cultural celebrations, and forbade Muslims to wear yellow shirts to show loyalty to the King (due to it being *shirk* – the sin of idolatry or polytheism).

¹⁷ It is primarily confined to the *khana mai* realm. Searching via Thai and English, there are over two thousand clips of Sheikh rida’s lectures posted on YouTube, while Ismail Lutfi has approximately six thousand.

¹⁸ The popularity of the White Channel is not possible to estimate exactly; however, it can be seen in the large number of people that participated in the so-called ‘White on Tour’ roadshows held in Bangkok and in seven provinces in the south during its first year. Approximately 5,000 to 20,000 people joined each event. One of major factors that attracted many Muslim teenagers was the White Channel’s recruitment of the ex-rock-star who goes by the alias “Toe Silly Fools” after he repented from his “immoral” career (The Nation 2013; Manager 2013). Another indicator of its popularity can be seen from the many traditionalist Muslim scholars and communities that have warned against – and even at times banned their followers from watching – so called ‘Wahhabi TV channels.’ There are also three other satellite TV channels operated by scholars from the new school of thought. All four TV channels, particularly the White Channel, have attracted many teenagers from traditionalist Muslim communities.

Thesis Structure

In order to answer the principal research question centred on how and to what extent Islamist movements have become accommodative in mainstream Thai society, the secondary questions will seek to unpack the answers in respective chapters. Thesis conclusions will appear in the final chapter. The discussion of selected case studies will be presented not in separate chapters but alongside the substantive chapters examining issues raised by the research questions.

Chapter 2 will seek to explain how this research was conducted. It will include a discussion on research methodology and analytical framework. Chapter 3 will provide the context of Islamist accommodation in Thailand by looking at examples of significant Islamist transformation in global and region contexts. The chapter will then describe the context of Malay Muslim interaction with the Thai state in order to better understand notions of accommodation in the political landscape of Malay Muslims struggling over identity issues in Thailand.

The empirical section of this research will be presented in Chapters 4 and 5. The historical background of Assalam and MGP will be illustrated in Chapter 4, which will address reformist ideologies of Islamist leaders (Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida) and their origins in the Middle Eastern context. It will also examine how these ideologies have been introduced to their networks and how they have evolved in the Thai context. In Chapter 5, I use social movement theory to study the organisational and ideological dimensions of the movements. It also investigates organisational evolutions and strategies, of which informal networks of affiliation, formalisation of organisation, and external political cooperation and alliances were integral. In addition, different means – such as through educational institutions, media and other social organisations and mobilisation – instigated to pursue their Islamic reform agenda will also be focused on. The last third of Chapter 5 will deal with the movements' ideological strategies, focusing on origins, framings, adaptation and shifts. In this section, I have considered the influence of the Middle East in the triggering and shaping the two movements' Islamic reformist ideologies. Alongside the two movements' ideological domestication, I have also emphasised the significance of domestic factors – that is, the Thai socio-political contexts and

the Malay Muslim communities in shifts to ideologies. The analysis of Islamists' accommodation will be gradually disclosed in each chapter's conclusion and will be discussed and concluded altogether again in the final chapter through theoretical perspectives and analytical frameworks.

In the concluding chapter, I will summarise the main findings of each chapters, discuss how the movements have use different dimensions of strategies, and evaluate the extent to which the Islamists have adjusted their movements by scrutinising ideological, behavioural and organisational dimensions.

Chapter 2

On Studying the Salafi-Reformist Movements

This chapter explains how the research has been designed and conducted. The chapter is divided into three sections, which are the analytical framework, research methodology, and research challenges and limitations.

Analytical Framework

Since the thesis's main units of analysis are organisations, ideologies, and form of movement's change, the related concepts operated in the study need to be clarified. The respective concepts include network-based movement, Islamic reformism and accommodation.

Network-based movement

In developing the concept of a network-based movement, I appreciate the need for engagement with social movement theory (SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY). As my study concerns social movements and in particular Islamist movement, my following conceptual frameworks are built on networks, social movements and the Islamic activism literature.

The phrase 'network-based movement' can be defined and used by this research explicitly and implicitly. The explicit use will be applied to the internal level of the movement. I intend to use 'network-based movement' to represent a movement that comprises an internal networking of organisations and individuals. Network-based movement operated in this study characterises a movement that is constituted by networks of affiliated – whether formal and informal – groups or organizations. Indicators for claiming that these affiliated groups are exactly linked together and work in the same movement can be various, but must be tangible evidence showing their commonality and collective actions. Their actions can be divergent, ranging from those of a cohesive grouping, a loosely coordinated activity, or a contentious, fragmented relationship, such as an umbrella or coordinated organisation (whether official, unofficial or hidden), though a common

leader should play a decisive or charismatic role in the network, a joint committee, and a collective activity.

Secondly, 'network-based movement' at the external level entails a local or regional network and an international network. In terms of the local network, a movement is embedded in personal interactions and social relationship and thus creates its informal ties with non-member participants and other elements in wider communities, as well as establishing partnerships with other local organisations and government agencies. In the Islamist movement literature, this kind of network relationship is often described as network-based activism, in that many Islamic activists and movements are embedded in complex network-oriented societies (Wicktorowicz 2004; Clark 2004; Singerman 2004).

In terms of the international network, a movement utilises its international ties to develop its institutional capacity, such as human resources, skills, and financial resources. As for many Islamist philanthropic movements, this level of network is very important. In particular, Lutfi's movement has largely been supported by Middle East charities. These three kinds of networking are used by NGOs to strengthen their organizational capacity, operational area, and support from the public, whether morally, financially or politically (Latief 2012: 51).

Network-based movements

Many analyses of Islamism merely deal with it either as a part of religious revivalism or as a unique issue that mainstream social science approaches struggle to fully capture (Bayat 2005a: 891). Wicktorowicz (2004: 3) has argued that despite the uniqueness of ideological worldviews based on Islam, Islamic activism is not exceptional from other examples of social movement and contentious politics. Hence, instead of following the majority of Islamic activism publications that merely focus either on particular Islamist movement's history or descriptive analyses of its ideology, structure, and goals, I have taken Wicktorowicz's suggestion that applying social movement theory to the study of Islamic activism provides more theoretical and conceptual strength, and gives a more comprehensive view of the movements (2004: 5).

Since the early 2000s, an increasing number of scholars have tended to use social movement theory to study Islamist movements, and have contributed significant analyses of their features and nature (Wickham 2002, Clark 2004, Wiktorowicz 2004, Bayat 2005, Gunning 2007). However, Bayat (2005: 892) argued that those attempts have made neither critical productive engagements with – nor contributions to – social movement theory, but merely ‘borrow’ from those existing theories.

Wickham (2002: 4) used social movement theory as an aid to understand how mobilising agents, structures, and ideas function in changing individual grievances to collective action. In a study of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s opposition activism with the emphasis on mobilisation, Wickham raised two observations: 1) the mobilisation in an authoritarian conditions is different from democratic settings, which support the increasing role of social movements and 2) religion, as well as other wider cultural elements, can provoke collective actions against influential individuals and regimes by offering resources and opportunities. However, Wiktorowicz (2004: 5) has contended that beyond the religious grievance-based explanation of mobilisation, social movement theory provides more explanations of other factors that are associated with mobilisation process, such as resource availability, framing resonance, and opportunity structure.

Clark (2004, 2004b) used social movement theory to examine how Islamic social institutions (ISIs) are rooted in, and mobilise their resources through, particular networks. Social movement theory focuses largely on how horizontal social networks play a role in social movement. According to social movement theory, people tend to associate with people similar to themselves (Klindermans 1992: 88, Clark 2004b: 945). In dealing with the role and significance of horizontal ties in social movements, social movement theorists from the two most influential schools (the resource mobilisation and the new social movement) conceptualise social movements as webs or networks of institutional and personal linkages in which their associated institutions are embedded (Clark 2004a: 3; 2004b: 942). Case studies of ISIS in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen have shown that Islamist activism horizontally expanded its ties among the middle classes rather than vertically

reaching the poor (Clark 2004b: 943). In the case of Thai Islamists, the *khana mai* has been viewed by many studies as having been well accepted and successful in mobilising their networks among the middle classes (McCargo 2008).

Notwithstanding the increasing adoption of social movement theory perspectives to study aspects of Islamist movement, the limitations of social movement theory to understand the complexities of Muslim socio-political activism still need to be tackled. "Islamist movements are internally fluid, fragmented and differentiated", posits Bayat (2005a: 901). He argued that, despite this fragmentation, what leads differentiated actors to unite or join collective actions is not only shared interest but also imagined solidarity. This indicates that the religious or sociological perspective cannot be disregarded.

There is obvious difference in the application of social movement theory between the mainstream social movement scholars, who have developed social movement theory upon western democratic settings, and the Islamist movement scholars, who applied social movement theory with social movements in closed settings under authoritative regimes in the Middle East. This study, however, takes social movement theory perspectives from both settings into another scenario – the Thai political structure, in which a context of a relatively open society and highly centralised state co-exist, and which provides both opportunities and constraints for Islamist movements.

Many studies of Islamist movement that adopt social movement theory perspectives have taken McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996)'s synthetic approach of different perspectives into their analyses (Wicktorowicz 2004, Bayat 2005, Gunning 2006). In analysing social movements, this approach suggested three sets of factors, which are political opportunities, mobilising structures and framing process (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 2-7). In terms of political opportunities, it is argued that social movements are influenced by the broader sets of political constraints and opportunities within the national context they are embedded. Mobilising structures means collective vehicles (that is, institutionalised political systems or informal political processes) through which people mobilise and engage in collective action. These formal or informal organisational infrastructures shape the possibility for collective action and the

forms that movements take. Apart from structural potential for collective action factored by political opportunities and mobilising structures, one other psychological factor is the framing processes, which has been equated with the cultural dimensions of social movements. This factor emphasises the importance of ideas in collective action and functions when people share some grievances and see the potential to redress the problem by acting collectively.

These three factors have inextricable influence upon one another. Mobilisation process requires political opportunity as a key translator or conveyer of collective grievance to collective actions. Contemporary social movement theory suggests that environmental factors constrain the options available to movement organizers and affect whether their mobilizing efforts succeed or fail (Wickham 2002: 8). In sketching the relationship between these factors that helps provide fuller understandings of social movement dynamics, two points of inquiry are suggested by McAdam and colleagues (1996: 7): 1) the origins of social movement, and 2) the extent and forms of the movement over time. Thus, in order to account for the factors and processes that shape the chosen movements with respect to their accommodative shifts and behaviours, I have integrated these inquiries into my analysis.

Like many recent Islamist studies, this research has taken McAdam and colleagues' three levels of analysis – political opportunities, mobilising structures and framing processes (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996) – as the starting point for a unified analytical framework. It has however also integrated frameworks of previous Islamist movement studies that descriptively analyse the historical, political and ideological dimensions of such movements, as well as frameworks of recent studies that engage more theoretical and conceptual dimensions of social movement theory.

As this study prioritises the politics and transition of the movement in relations to the wider context of Thai society – rather than merely study its organisational aspects, the social movement theory perspective is taken to examine the Islamist movements' external, internal, and ideological factors that are relevant to the shifts here.

The examination of external elements will focus on contextual factors (that is, the wider political and socio-economic structures) in which the movements are embedded, especially opportunities and constraints in Thai polity and society (both levels of wider Thai society and specific Malay Muslim society), external networks and resources that the movements operate.

The internal elements involve organisational strength and development, including a network-type organisational structure, resource mobilisation, member recruitment, internal leadership, power distribution, and decision-making mechanism. The examination will focus on the role of charismatic leaders in the movements' political and mobilising processes, as well as on collective actions.

The ideological elements entail the movement's ideological framing processes and evolution, the legitimacy of ideologies and socio-religious initiatives or discourse claimed by leaders, as well as contentions over religious interpretation that lead to unification and fragmentation within a movement.

Islamic reformism

My employment of the terms 'Islamic reformist' and 'Islamist', which are widely used in – but not necessarily limited to – the Middle Eastern context, is based on previous studies of Muslims in Thailand, as well as on my own preliminary observations on the subject.

In terms of 'Islamic reformism', it has been applied by authors who have studied Thai Salafis or Islamic modernists in depth, as outsiders (Scupin 1980b, 1998; Liow 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011c). For Thai Muslim activists (or insiders), Islamic reformism has been a notable discourse and ideology that drove their activism since the period of YMAT's establishment in 1964 (Liow 2009b), although the Salafi and Islamic reformist idea influenced by Jamaluddin al Afghani and Rashid Rida as well as the Salafi movement more broadly had been introduced earlier by Ahmad Wahab from Indonesia since his settlement in Bangkok in the early 1900s (Scupin 1980b). Some authors (Scupin 1998; Liow 2009b; Horstmann 2007) have posited the inception of the YMAT as a consequence of global Islamic reformism, marking another milestone of Islamic reformism in Thailand. YMAT's ideologies have been influenced by various renowned Islamic reformists,

especially Sayyid Qutb, Hasan al-Banna, and Abul Ala Maududi, many of whose writings have been translated and published in Thai by YMAT.

Thus far, the Middle Eastern Salafi and Islamic reformist ideology has influenced Thai Islamic activists and scholars in many periods of heightened roles of individuals and movements. The role of Islamic reformists in Thai society has been very significant according to Scupin and Liow, although relatively silent internationally. A more focused study on the influence of Middle Eastern ideologies, which can be seen nowadays in Thai context, will be investigated by this research. To conclude, the discourse of Islamic reformism is not used by this research exclusively, but has long been embedded in Thai Muslim politics.

Hence, there is no doubt that in the Thai Muslim context many Thai Muslim movements, including the proposed case studies, can be called Islamic reformists. However, concerning the 'Islamist' label, which has a more specific connotation in relation to the political domain, no previous studies of Thai Muslim politics have used it as a serious term. The engagement of Islamic reformists in Thai politics has not been much noted in the past four decades. In fact, there was a significant engagement of Islamic reformists in Thai politics studied by Scupin (1980b). For instance, reformist-labelled Chaem Promyong, the first Sunni (as opposed to Shi'ite) *Chularajmontri*/Sheikhul Islam, was one of the leading members in the People's Party that led the 1932 revolution, transforming the Thai absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy (Scupin 1980b: 1227). Nonetheless, the term Islamist has not yet been widely used during that time. On the contrary, when Islamism became a new discourse in Middle Eastern politics during the mid-1980s (Kramer 2003), the role of Thai Islamic reformists who engaged in politics was in decline (Ismail Lutfi and his colleagues came back only in 1986). Notwithstanding YMAT's peak during the 1980s, as noted by Liow (2009b), this involved more social activism rather than political engagement. Against this background, this research argues that Asslam and MGP, which did not separate the socio-political dimension from their activism, can be categorised as somewhat 'Islamist'. However, the term 'Islamist' is still too broad to capture both movements' Islamic ideological orientation: I have found a more specific sub-category of Islamism, which combines the two major alignments of Islamic ideologies – the Salafi and reformist elements

to be more useful. I am intending to employ the term 'Salafi-reformist' to explain and gauge the case studies' ideological elements. This coinage forms part of my original contribution to the literature.

Given the re-emergence of a new generation of Islamic reformists in Thai politics (Liow 2009: 87–95), this research will claim its originality in the use of the 'Salafi-reformist' label as a sub-category of 'Islamist' to describe Assalam and MGP. The two main reasons for adopting this term with these case studies is that, firstly, their leaders and movements have been influenced by the Islamic political ideologies in Middle East that have been termed as Islamists, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi movements. Secondly, these leaders and their movements over time become increasingly engaged in politics. Therefore, given the main characteristics of Islamists – involvement in the socio-political realm – coupled here with a strong emphasis on religious ideology, this would seem an appropriate label.

There are several related labels for the chosen case studies: Wahhabism, *khana mai/ kaum muda*, *ahlul-sunnah* or *klum sunnah* (*sunnah* group), and Salafi. The first two terms have been used by the popular Malay Muslim majority, as they frequently present ideas not acceptable to local Islamic creed. The latter have been used by the new groups themselves. Scupin has posited a general framework for a study of reformism within Muslim communities in Thailand. He has shown that a contestation between the traditionalist, *khana kao* (the old group) and the reformist, *khana mai* (the new group) or between *kaum tua-kaum muda* in the Malay usage has influenced the interactions and the evolution of Muslim society in Thailand.

Accommodation

Accommodation is one of the thesis's primary research interests. Taking a sociological line of analysis to the study of the transformation of social movement organisations, Zald and Ash (1966: 327) have posited that a bureaucratic structure and a general accommodation occur when a movement organisation obtains recognition in the society as charismatic leadership is replaced.

One of the dominant approaches to the study of the transformation of the movement organisation has been the institutionalisation and goal displacement model. Taking this model, the movement organisation tends to accommodate itself by pragmatically displacing its goal in favour of organisational maintenance.

The term 'accommodation,' as a constantly changing political process rather than an end state, refers to the shift of an Islamist movement alongside the pursuit of its ideology in a trajectory that fit into the context it is embedded. This shift entails an adaptation of the movement's ideology and strategy resulting from its encounter with challenges in the context containing values, perspectives, worldviews and norms that conflict its beliefs. The accommodation concept does not merely describe a series of significant shifts within the movement but also associates the relative interaction of the movement with other actors in the surrounding contexts: the Thai society and the traditionalist Muslim community (local Islam).

There are two reasons for using the accommodation concept to characterise the chosen case studies of Islamist movements, rather than employing those existing concepts, such as moderation and de-radicalisation, which have been more influential and widely used in studies of the evolution of Islamist movements. Firstly, both concepts have mainly focused on the transition from radical to moderate orientations, no matter whether this was a strategic or ideological transition. Secondly, the 'moderation' concept has emphasised the formal political movements that transform into or establish political parties, engage in electoral politics and formal political activities, and change toward democratisation. These attributes are not suitable to capture the chosen case studies' transitions, since neither Assalam nor the Muslim Group for Peace has ever used violence as a strategy. Assalam's direct political participation and MGP's organisational development into a political party are still works in progress. How their strategies and ideologies are truly democratic is significant, especially when Islamist movement forms a political party (as one of the movements has recently formed a political party, namely Phak Pheu Santi or Party for Peace). However, a Salafi stance fully believes in the perfection of an Islamic political system and does not necessarily accept democracy as the best political model. Thus any concept that

views the process and goals of a group of Islamists through a democratisation lens may fail to capture the dynamics and exact character of the movement's political evolution. Therefore, I take the suggestion by Wegner and Pellicer (2009) that has solved the problem of bending Islamist transition into democratisation trajectory. In other words, they have reconstructed that notion by studying the moderation of Islamists without democratisation.

Apart from the distinction from those concepts, I will clarify further that the use of accommodation in capturing the transition of Islamist movements will not follow the 'close-ended approach' that can be seen in the existing literature on Islamist moderation, de-radicalisation, and democratisation. Rather, it will examine how Islamist movements, which have their own discrete social and political perspectives, can create space to animate their Salafi-reformist ideologies and at the same time compromise with mainstream ideas and people. The research has adopted a more open-ended approach suggested by Wickham (2013: 6) who has recently studied the Muslim Brotherhood's evolution by disassembling the concept of moderation and has specified the multiple dimensions of change. This is because employing concept of moderation as a shorthand occludes internal dynamics and differentiation, such as the change at the level of individual actors and at the level of complex organisations, and the the contradictions between rhetoric, behavioural change and ideational change. My application of this open-ended approach is also broader than moderation and other aforementioned concepts that emphasise whether changes in the movement are moderate, democratic, or de-radicalising. However, it is still narrower than Wickham's, as I use the concept of accommodation, which assumes *a priori* some particular direction of change shaped by the goal of compromise with the mainstream system, rather than freely leaving open the direction of change.

Accordingly, this use of a more opened-ended approach mentioned above means that I do not determine the ultimate goal of Islamist accommodation in the same way that concepts of moderation and de-radicalisation have done, for example by using the renunciation of any peculiar or 'radical' ideologies or goals as a parameter to evaluate movement change (Schwedler 2006; Ashour 2009). Rather, I will examine how those ideologies/goals (for example advocating an

Islamic state, use of *shari'ah*, Islamic banking and micro-finance, wearing hijab in public educational institutions) alien to the mainstream perception become accommodated not only in the sense of self-ideological change, but I will also focus on the accommodation of these ideologies in relation to the application or adaptation of strategies. In other words, the accommodation of Islamist ideology does not necessarily mean the renunciation or limitation of their goal, but can also be the launching of these goals into society in an accommodative way. This 'accommodative way' can be examined by looking at the movements' strategies and everyday decisions.

In terms of the explicit frame of accommodation operationalized in this research, it means the adjustment of the Islamist movements' ideologies and strategies in order to achieve their Islamic reformist goal. It also refers to creating space for preserving and reviving an Islamic identity among Muslims and promoting Islamic values in the whole society as part of the *da'wah* (propagation) mission. Therefore, accommodation does not necessarily mean renouncing their ultimate goals of *da'wah* and practicing Islam, such as implementing *shari'ah*, establishing Islamic banking, wearing hijab, and other attempts of promoting Islamic values in society. They would no longer be Islamist if they renounced these sorts of goals.

There is a correlation between the movements' reformist ideology and the term accommodation employed for analysing their character. The analysis of this correlation will be undertaken in terms of a discussion of their ends and means. The ultimate level of Islamist goal and strategy, whether in the short term or long term, in their attempts of Islamic reform that is considered by this research as being in line with accommodation must not violate the Thailand Constitution and must abide by national laws. Any ideology or strategy that contradicts this demarcation will not be considered 'accommodation.' Threats to security will also be taken into account but will not be used to demarcate the extent of accommodation. The reason for emphasising this notion less is due to it being problematic, laying upon perception, and can be negotiated to open space.

To clarify, using violence is beyond the scope of accommodation. Even though a quest for implementing *shari'ah* law might be perceived as a threat to

state security, such advocacy may still be considered accommodation as long as it is undertaken under the Constitution, and through legal means.

In a comparative view with the concept of moderation, it is worth considering the observation of Wickham (2013: 5–6) regarding the ambiguity in the concept of moderation, which is identified in four dimensions. First, it can be applied to both an end state and a process. Second, it is not an absolute, but relative, concept, which needs an answer to ‘Moderation in comparison to what?’ Third, ‘moderation’ can imply changes in behaviour and/or to changes in ideas. Fourth, this term can refer to changes both at the individual and organisational levels, which may not be able to capture some internal differentiation. The first dimension, as mentioned earlier, ‘accommodation’ is an evolving process rather than an end state. Secondly, although accommodation is also a relative concept like ‘moderation,’ accommodation is broader in that the process of change is considered by comparison with previous positions of the movements that move from a rigid interpretation to more open ones. It does not necessarily focus on the violent position. There is no difference in the third. In the fourth dimension, although accommodation means changes in both level, it is an open-ended approach that considers a variety of dynamic issues rather than confined only within the question ‘Is the movement moderate?’ which considers the change process as ‘overarching, internally consistent, and linear’ (Wickham 2013: 6).

To conclude, accommodation in the narration of Islamist movement’s attempt to achieve the Salafi-reformist goal in the Thai context does not simply mean renouncing or limiting their goals or strategies, but rather opening up social space to promote the movements’ core values and norms.

As accommodation is a gradual process of change with major shift in some junctures, the timeframe for examining Islamist accommodation has to start from the advent of Islamic reform mission in Thailand. Since the movements have been developed and centralised around religious scholars, especially Dr. Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida Ahmad Samadi – both as charismatic leaders – the accommodation strategy of the movement will be examined prior to the formal establishment of their main organisations. I started from the first domestication of Islamic reformist ideology preaching by these scholars, beginning with when they started teaching

in Islamic private schools, setting up religious teaching programmes, forming more formal Islamic educational schemes and institutions, until they expanded with more outreach programmes and organisations into the wider communities alongside creating relations and networks with other groups, including official authorities and rival factions.

For Ismail Lutfi's movement, we need to begin in 1986 when he earned his PhD from Saudi Arabia and came back to southern Thailand. In a decade prior to his arrival, some of Salafi scholars and colleagues had also come back from the Middle East and preached the teaching of 'literalist Islam' (as opposed to the long-held of traditionalist way) separately through their own schools or religious courses. Most of them were Saudi graduates, whose ideas conflicted with the traditionalist majority. They met with strong resistance and were labelled as 'Wahhabi'. Ismail Lutfi thus came back to a hostile context and had to be accommodative; for example, he made every effort to introduce himself to many significant traditionalist religious scholars and politicians. Thus, despite internal power sharing with other senior scholars, the accommodative trend of the movement has been apparent from the early years following Lutfi's return to Thailand.

Sheikh Rida has been the dominant figure in the development of the Muslim Group for Peace, with supporting roles played by other less well-known scholars. Rida's MGP started in 2003 when he came from Egypt. Unlike Lutfi, Rida brought his zealous personality and ideas back to Bangkok, where the dynamics of the traditionalist majority were weaker than in the Deep South and where Salafi teachings caused less resistance from the mainstream. Rida's accommodative junctures have emerged alongside conflicts with rival groups and his own organisational evolution as he reached out to the wider community.

While I study the accommodation of Islamist movements by determining to examine it from the Islamist side (ideology and strategy), I do not disregard the fact that accommodation is a two-way process shaped by a movement's broader interactions with other actors in the system: we cannot analyse accommodation solely by focusing on the movements themselves. I also recognise that accommodation has been undertaken by other stakeholders in this relationship,

especially the Thai state. Thus, the framework for analysing the extent to which Islamist movements have accommodated into Thai society considers both internal and external levels. I have analysed and measured the accommodation by using three strands of ideological, behavioural and organisational transition.

The concept of accommodation is employed to explore Islamist movement's transition by looking at two aspects of the movement, which are its ideology and strategies. However, in order to acquire clearer understanding of internal differentiation and disagreement on this accommodative change, I also integrate organisational dimensions into the analysis.

Accommodation may not be consistent and linear in its ideological and behavioural changes. Degrees of adaptation may range from dramatic changes to subtle adjustments, and can vary according to changes occurring with the movement's strategy and ideology.

In terms of strategy, without disregarding ideological and organisational change, accommodation primarily emphasises the behavioural shift that can be examined from Islamist movements' own strategies. In the ultimate or widest range of change, its strategies necessarily have to shift from rigid confrontation to cooperation with other actors in any particular situation or issue. Within this range of change, there is a process of negotiation, which is the central process bringing about an accommodative character. The strategic adjustment that has been adapted to conform to new contexts in pursuit of their ideology and has been dramatically changed from its origins and that appears innovative from its traditional practice will be considered as pragmatic.

The strategies of Thai Islamist leaders and movement as a whole have not appeared violent from their outset. Evidence of this includes their strategies to date and the rhetoric of Islamist leader who promote peaceful means and denounce violence. However, this does not ensure that the same ideological current occurs in all individual members. Therefore, ideational investigation is another crucial tool for the evaluation of accommodation.

In terms of ideology, the research not only seeks to examine changes in Islamist ideology, but also how the idea has been limited or hidden. Levels of

ideational accommodation can be varied from genuine ultimate change, genuine adjustment (without hidden agendas), feigned adjustment (rhetoric), and no change but still seeking to open more space. However, with respect to strategy, whether or not Islamist ideology challenges or contradicts the mainstream systems, ideologies or worldviews matters less: it will be considered accommodative with the condition that its strategy promote the said ideology is undertaken using peaceful means and in accordance with the law. The level of change, including the level of genuineness can be evaluated by using discourse analysis (to be explained in the methodology section). This means that the Islamist movement accepts living with a political or social system that may not suit its ideology but it does not require outright rejection or condemnation.

Points of analysis, indicators, and sources for analysing and measuring accommodation will be examined through three strands of transition parameters. The guideline for tracing relevant issues is as follows: for the he first strand, I will look into an ideological shift. The following points of analysis below will be considered.

Salafi credentials and justification to be accommodative: how can they preserve Salafi beliefs and practices and how can they justify their adjustment of ideas or strategies and an open, inclusive stance?

I will seek to investigate whether the Islamist movements – as a whole or as individuals, leaders and factions within it – have moved toward greater adoption and toleration of the perspectives and values that are not in line with their orientation. Compromise policies, particularly *Ummah Wahidah* (One Nation), recently initiated by Ismail Lutfi and adopted and actively echoed by Rida's White Channel, has to be analysed to see how far it is truly embraced by both movements, how far it is merely rhetoric to gain mass support, and also how the movements justify it with religious texts and interpretation. The analysis of this issue will be considered as behavioural and organisational dimensions.

This research shares Wickham's view (2013: 7) that this ideational accommodation does not necessarily imply a change from a religious frame of reference to a secular one. The reason is such a shift de-legitimises the Islamist

movements' position and makes them no longer Islamist or Salafi. Since the Islamist movements claim themselves to be Ahlul-as-Sunnah wa-al-Jamaah (followers of the Prophet and his followers), or what is generally called Salafi, the research will seek to investigate how the Islamist leaders justify those ideational and strategic adjustments and hinge these upon religious interpretation.

Notions of democracy, secularism, and pluralism: what are their views toward democracy as an ideology as opposed to their Islamic political thought and the democratic system that they have to accommodate with? How have the movements adapted to the idea of equal citizenship rights for Muslims and non-Muslims, equality for men and women, their view of women's rights and duties, their adoption of different beliefs, ideologies, views and practices that are considered contradictory to their religious beliefs and their own Salafi interpretations? (Wickham 2013: 6).

Truly democratic? The question of to what extent the Islamists believe in democracy is significant. It helps us to understand whether their behavioural accommodation and political strategies are pragmatic or truly driven by their beliefs. Nonetheless, 'true' or complete belief in democracy will not be used as an indicator for the comprehensive success of accommodation, since the evolution of Islamist movements in an accommodative way does not necessarily require democratisation, as suggested by Wegner and Pellicer (2009) in their study of Islamist moderation in Morocco.

One might argue that de-emphasising democratic norms lead this research to support undemocratic ends or values. I maintain that it is not right to judge these movements according to ideological norms they do not believe in. There would not be any problem to employ more general values such as justice, freedom, and respect of human rights and dignity (though it is true that many of these values are still difficult to define).

The case might be more interesting if the chosen Islamist movement did indeed advocate democracy and was tolerant and accommodative towards that system. But as these movements are both Salafi, and they fully believe in the perfection of religious principle and the need to promote Islamic values, my priori

assumption is that they do not ultimately favour democracy over an Islamic political vision of the world.

Examples of indicators showing the movements' ideological shifts and accommodations are as follows: formal announcement of rejection of violence; denunciation of violence used by other domestic and global Muslim groups; renunciation of the creation of an 'absolute ideal' Islamic state; consistent adoption of mainstream norms; acceptance of the rules of the democratic system and social pluralism; changing of opinions and *fatwas* to answer questions about contemporary issues; a sense of being relatively more open and tolerant to alternative perspectives; and a compromise policy vis-à-vis rivals.

To reiterate, the use of ideological indicators is not designed to measure success in renouncing or reducing Islamist ideologies, but rather to capture an exact idea that has evolved. Thus, the renunciation of *shari'ah* implementation and foregoing advocating of wearing the hijab, will not necessarily be indicative of accommodation.

In terms of sources of data, ideational evolution can be examined from the leaders' rhetoric, intellectual history and their views, as well as the movements' internal texts. Data has been collected through interviews, and primary sources such as religious teaching programmes, conferences, media, public lectures, policy documents, and statements or fatwas addressing contemporary issues.

An examination of behavioural shifts will primarily look at the movements' strategies and their responses in the face of contemporary challenges and problems, based on the following points of analysis:

Preaching method and agenda: I will examine how each movement has changed its way of reviving or rectifying Muslim beliefs and practices; specifically, I look at this in terms of brotherhood-centric or purist-centric methods.

Methods of defending or demanding Muslim rights: I will demonstrate how the movements appealed for their need to preserve an Islamic identity and expressed their disagreement on public issues through peaceful political means, such as demonstrations, issuing official statements, using legal procedures, political lobbying and alliance building.

Before and after the creation of outreach organisations: When literalists move from the status of scholars to become activists, thus creating wider outreach programmes or organisations, they are likely to adjust their strategy in order to compromise so as to become more accepted by diverse groups of people.

Developing modes of justification for accommodative trends: This point will suggest how movements or their leaders have developed strategies to justify their engagement in new/innovative discourses in political spaces.

Natural reaction and everyday practices (as opposed to policy or strategic plan): When the movements face hindrance or deadlock, how are toleration and adjustment implemented in response to such shortcomings and to maintain struggling to open that space?

For indicators, I will look into language used to promote accommodation, cooperation, reconciliation or solidarity and repeated language used such as 'Islam as a religion of peace', '*Ummah Wahidah*' and discourses of 'inter-religious cooperation' on top of those focusing on cross-ideological/sectarian cooperation (Browsers 2009: 8–9). Moreover, there are other discourses related to inter and intra dialogue, the interpretation of new situations; innovative strategies such as new media or outreach programmes; events, joint projects, invitations to, cooperation with, and joint sponsorship with the state; and other competing, opposing factions especially the old/traditional group (*khana kao/kaum muda*). Lastly there is political engagement in electoral politics, and commitment to the participation of women in social and other political activities.

The main sources for this investigation include interviews with leaders and members of the movements, their competing factions, and related external actors; content and discourse analysis from textual sources, audio files from new media (YouTube and Facebook); and secondary sources from websites, newspapers and academic articles and books.

In terms of organisational shifts, I will focus on the following points of analysis:

Group and individual differences within movement: The transition to accommodation occurs not only at the organisational level, but also at the

individual level, too. Generally, the ideology and behaviour of groups and individuals do not monolithically shift in the same direction. Schwedler (2011: 361) has suggested that analysing the moderation of an individual apart from groups. It is unlikely that leaders or movements will be able to convince all members to agree with their ideology and strategy. Therefore, the indicator of accommodation will not be based on complete agreement; rather, I will investigate how the movement can deal with those disagreements and can control them so as not to cause a stalemate to the projects of the movement as a whole. Wickham (2013: 6) has noted the risk of treating Islamist organisations as unitary actors since this may overemphasise the extent of the ideological and behaviour uniformity within them.

Organisational mechanisms for driving the accommodative direction:

I have examined how ideological innovation or policy spreads from leader or other level of the individual to the broader organisation and network; reactions inside the movement; how advocacy and objections to the innovative or progressive change among members are handled; the nature of internal disagreement and contention; debates, internal reconciliation processes and conflict resolution mechanisms are applied to manage dissent; how reverence, influence, and authority of charismatic leaders play a role in the dissent occurring in the movement; and how advocates of progressive change have managed to acquire authority and influence to convince the group. Also important are the methods that internal detractors use against innovative change or policy, external cooperation and reconciliation mechanisms that promote compromise with other external groups and lead to the recruitment or expansion of network organisations.

Nature and structure of network-based organisations: In order to understand the above mechanisms, it is important to examine the movement's organisational management and power relations, such as: distribution of power and authority; patterns of internal decision making; the balance of power among internal factions; methods of enforcing internal conformity and discipline; strategies of recruitment and socialisation (Wickham 2013); how organisations are formed up and expand; the relationships, connectivity and elasticity of the network; and the place of independence and individuality in the organisation.

Discourse, disputation, or language used for membership exclusion/inclusion: Labelling and classifying Muslim sects within and outside the network is done by some Salafi factions, such as criticising and excluding other factions from their 'pure/righteous' group. This can be done by labelling others as misguided, or falling out of the Salafi/*ahlus Sunnah*. But it also affects internal group dynamics, internal debates and disputes over Salafi authentication; use of interpretation by Salafi scholars to legitimise their own stances; conflict and politics within Salafi-*khana mai* networks; level of radicalism in groups and among individuals; and group and individual motives.

In terms of indicators, I will consider both achievements and failures. Indicators of achievements can include reconciliation or conflict management such as cooperation, reuniting and reconciliation between factions; increasing membership and followers; and the number of clusters in a movement such as schools and mosques. Failure indicators can include disagreement, dissent or conflict in the movement that leads to the renunciation of a particular accommodative policy, division; and the formation of new groups.

The accommodation of these organisations can be traced through interviews with leaders and members of the movement, and through participant observation. Sources on the internet are also consulted, such as the movements' webpages, Facebook, YouTube, and official statement/pronouncement on other websites.

Apart from accommodation, the other two explanations for the obvious "peaking" of Salafis in Thailand posited by McCargo are rejection and suppression (McCargo 2008: 26–27). Rejection refers to the new type of Islam promoted by Salafis that has been popularly rejected by the Malay traditionalist Muslim majority. Suppression meant the hostility between the new and old groups as a latent conflict suppressed by the separatist violence that may re-emerge in the future. I take this as another analytical point of departure to examine the limitations and challenges that Islamist movements encounter, such as rejection against Salafis in Islamic councils, networks of traditionalist Islamic private schools, networks of traditionalist religious leaders, and the perception of

community leaders toward the new group. I will also examine how this tension has worsened or declined over time.

Indicators for acceptance can be the appointment of Islamist leaders to significant positions in state agencies and rival Muslim organisations (such as, advisory council members to administrative authorities and other Islamic councils) while indicators for rejection or failure of accommodation can be the fragmentation of groups, organisation or mosques in the Muslim community.

Research Methodology

Owing to my experience as a student activist in the Thai Muslim Student Association (TMSA) when I studied in Bangkok during 2001–03, on top of my Master's thesis concerning transnational Muslim organisations in 2008, my academic service as a lecturer in southern Thailand, and my supplementary career as a presenter and moderator of a TV programme regarding southern Thailand in recent years, I have been fortunate to be given an insider's view of the Muslim groups and communities in Thailand, including those in the selected case studies. This access to sources in the field is also invaluable for this project's aims. Using a qualitative method, I conducted interviews and observations as well as scrutinising primary and secondary texts.

My ethnographic fieldwork, along with the interviews, was undertaken for six months from November 2014 to April 2015. During the first four month period, I was mainly in the southern border area and for the other two months in Bangkok. I based myself in my home and my office at the Faculty of Political Science, Prince of Songkla University in Pattani. In Bangkok, I stayed at my brother-in-law's house in Rajathevi area. Throughout the fieldwork period, I regularly visited their main formalised institutions. For Assalam, this was Fatoni University in Yala and Pattani, mainly when I had interview appointments and when there were events organised. In Bangkok, the main sites of MGP are at the offices of White Channel and the Amanah Islamic Co-operative located in the Bangkapi area. The office of the Muslim for Peace Foundation is located on the top floor of the Amanah Co-operative office. Apart from these main sites, I also travelled to other provinces to observe the

activities of their affiliated organisations and to interview other affiliates. Those provinces were in the lower and upper southern area, including Narathiwat, Yala, Satun, Songkla, Phattalung, Nakhorn Sri Thammarat, Krabi, Phang-nga and Phuket.

First-hand primary data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews and ethnographic analysis. For interviews, I used semi-structured interviews, which were conducted with three key groups of informants:

1. Leaders, founders, and board members or leading members of the Islamist affiliated networks in the two case studies (the Deep South and Bangkok).
2. National and local politicians and Thai state authorities including national and sub-national officers, policy makers, and security and intelligence officers.
3. Muslim political and ethnic factions, Islamic organisations, related NGOs, traditionalist *ulama* (Muslim scholars).

Altogether, I interviewed fifty-five key informants. In some circumstances, I had to use group interviews, such as with female leaders and activists. I interviewed ten more informants via group interviews. Some informants, especially senior leaders were open to giving deep insights and detailed information; therefore, I had to re-visit them a number of times. In total, I made 74 visits for interviews. It is worth mentioning that in many cases, especially when visiting leaders, my initial visits were spent mainly in creating rapport.

Secondly, for the ethnographic analysis of Thai Islamist groups I employed participant observation methods consisting of informal interviews and participating in formal and informal meetings, public and private lectures, campaigns, events, projects, and observing affiliated media. The informal interviews were undertaken by focusing on activists and ordinary members of the affiliated organisations and groups, along with participation in their activities. As pointed out by Burnham et al (2008: 268), this method allowed me to obtain deeper knowledge about the motivations, beliefs, and behaviour of individuals and groups and gave me more sources from which to analyse pragmatic and accommodative behaviours. In studying policy networks, Rhodes (2002: 412–13)

has suggested that ethnographic observation focuses on how different individuals within the network define and apprehend the world they inhabit through both their actions and what they say in interviews (Vromen 2010: 261).

Participant observation may entail varying degrees of participation, ranging from complete participation to complete observation. Respectively, Gold (1958) has described four types of observation consisting of complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant and complete observer. Of these four styles, I took the role of the *participant as observer*, which is the strategy most often adopted by researchers engaging in the study of organisations (Burnham et al 2008: 274). Using this method, my research role and presence were overt to the group. I started by consulting the movements' leaders so that I may be granted access to their activities. In some situations, I used a non-participant observation method, in which contact with informants was brief and formal, with limited access. What Gold (1958) called 'one-visit interviews' was applied with most informants, except the key leaders who I was required to visit more than once.

Primary texts, most of which are in Thai and local Malay, were also consulted and these included the teachings and articles presented by the movements' leaders in conferences, affiliated websites and magazines, and documentation such as pamphlets, bulletins, and official statements. Published books, dissertations or research written by leaders, and interviews appearing in magazines and websites were also examined in order to gain a holistic understanding of a prominent leader's view. Numerous YouTube clips of leaders, conversation and disputation on Facebook accounts of affiliated groups and other factions were also analysed.

This thesis also applied three significant methodological techniques: 1) using case study as a research method, 2) using triangulation of methods and sources, and 3) using coding and thematic analysis and discourse analysis as analytical tools.

Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative research requires appropriate matching of methods to empirical questions and issues, and not universally employing any single methodological approach for all problems

(Patton 1999: 1208). On this basis, I will clarify how the following three supplementary techniques were employed and help to strengthen weaknesses.

In pursuit of methodological rigor, I take the case study approach as a research method in order to make consistent plans and strategies throughout the entire research process, covering research design, data collection, and data analysis. It is cautioned that the employment of case study as a research method needs to systematically follow its methodological instructions (Yin 2009).

As a researcher with relatively limited experience, I needed to first develop reliable tools to help me avoid collecting excessive, irrelevant data and to obtain pertinent evidences that address the initial research questions as much as possible. Aiming at such a goal, I take Yin's suggestion of the five components of a research design into my revision and development of a more rigorous research design (Yin 2009: 27–35). It consists of a study's questions, its propositions, its unit(s) of analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings.

I have taken the first three components into my case study design to make for a sound basis for the consistency of data collection and analysis. Moreover, in order to ensure that the gathered data are sufficient to answer the research questions, the main problem the research seek to address and at the same time prevent collecting excessive data, the research questions had to fit together with chosen methods and evidences collected. Yin (2009: 29) posits, 'the more a case study contains specific questions and propositions, the more it will stay within feasible limits'. In response to these suggestions, I have developed tools for checking the data collection so as to solve the above issue. This is done by identifying the requisite components of research questions, unit of analysis, and proposition.

In the use of case study research, the researcher with previous knowledge about the subject matter to be studied is at an advantage: they can use their basic insight to create realistic study proposition and plan. Similarly, many studies on Islamist movements use in-depth interviews and participant observation (e.g. Hroub 2000, Wickham 2002, Schwedler 2006, Gunning 2007, Ahmad 2009, S. Roy

1995 and 2011). Indeed, Esposito notes that direct observation, interaction, and study are critical for the reason that many Islamic activists write relatively little and their writings are mostly ideological or public relations texts (Esposito 1999: 263). It is worth recalling, moreover, how Robert Yin (2009) defines a case study:

a method is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

The employment of the case study research method emphasises the technique of triangulation, which is another technique I adopted to increase the validity and reliability in my research. Using multiple methods is important in research because different types of data provide cross-data validity checks and prevent risk of errors linked to particular single method, such as excessive interview questions, biased or untrue answers (Patton 1999: 1191).

Since triangulation of multiple methods yields cross-data validity checks and ensures an accurate description as well as a more complete picture of the phenomena under study, I have adopted two types of triangulation techniques into my work. Firstly, method triangulation helps to check the consistency of findings provided by different data collection methods, and secondly, triangulation of evidences enables researchers to check the consistency of different data sources within the same method (Patton 1999: 1191). Anticipating given verification and validation of data, my triangulation of methods for collecting data will combine in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation and media data collection. In terms of evidence triangulation, the data will be collected from the two chosen movements and their relative stakeholders. Hence, the informants and sources (as shown in the proposal) will not only be selected from the movements and their sympathisers, but also those who are opponents, or who (relatively speaking) disagree with the movements.

Since my research combines different methods comprising participant observation, interviews, and texts, it will ensure a level of neutrality by crosschecking between different methods. Interviews, for example, were conducted with different groups of people as explained above, that is leaders and

members, key persons in the chosen case studies, sympathisers, as well as non-partisans, competitive rivals, and opponents.

As the chosen movements have generated their agenda and discourses through a range of types of documentation and media, data collection from these sources is essential. Documentation issued by the movements was sought from the movements and their leaders' books, magazines, pamphlets, and other internal documents. Media, which is another crucial source that the movements use for communicating their agenda, were investigated from audio and visual data on cassette, CD, and the Internet. A discourse analysis of books, speeches, informal talks, public lectures and sermons by their leaders will be conducted.

In the third section of Chapter 5, I investigated how discourses have been constructed by the movement leaders to achieve their goals, as well as consider how their opponents react and constrain the produced discourses. The discourses will be selected from the dominant ones that are relevant to accommodation and Islamic reformist ideological agendas – both key units of analysis.

Based on McAdam et al's positivist definition of discourses as 'the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action' (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 6), I have also taken the critical approach to discourse analysis into my study by delving into the motivation behind the discourses, the context in which they operate, and their internal contradictions.

Sample materials for conducting discourse analysis were partly collected and extracted by employing research assistants since these methods are time-consuming. However, the selection of sources of evidence was determined and assessed carefully by the researcher.

Discourse analysis is used in the ideological part of this research to analyse the discourses used by the chosen movements, such as *ummah wahidah* (one nation), which has been launched as policy promoted by Ismail Lutfi's movement to reconcile between Muslim factions. Others include 'Islam is a religion of peace' as a campaign in order to distance his movement from violent movements and allay the state's suspicion; and *wasatiyyah* or *ummah wasat* (moderation, moderate

nation). It can be used to analyse discourse – and counter-discourse – created in the conflict between Muslim factions; for instance, *ummah wahidah* has been denounced by some Salafi groups who argue that unification should not include groups that have ‘impure’, misguided creed, or perform *bid’ah* (Ar. religious innovation) in religious rituals. Such Salafi groups strictly follow the Salafi *manhaj* (methodology) with little room for compromise – something which has been seen in Salafi communities in the Middle East. Bringing this discourse into the Thai context, some Salafis have excluded Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida from the category of Salafi and/or *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah*. They described both leaders as going astray from the righteous path. Numerous such denunciations can be found on YouTube, TV programmes, debates, statements, articles and other publications.

Research Challenges and Limitations

Challenges and limitations of participant observation

In conducting participant observation, the researcher will encounter the challenge of remaining neutral and staying balanced between integration and detachment. The more the researcher is accepted by the group, the greater the tendency to empathise with them. The most concerning issue that might affect independent critical analysis is that as the researcher gradually becomes integrated into the group, he or she may lose the ability to criticise them (Burnham et al 2008: 269). As I was quite familiar with some leading members of the movements that might enable me to access insight and deeper information, yet this advantage could also be risky as pertains to research objectivity.

Moreover, when the researcher wins the trust and friendship from subjects, she or he might face other challenges, such as being asked to write something in favour of their movement, as occurred with Ahmad (2009: 42). However, one of the classic solutions suggested by Bruyn (1962) is that the researcher must negotiate a role which is acceptable to the group, and within which he or she can function as both participant and observer (Burnham et al 2008: 269). Hence, a clear role boundary needs to be established.

Sara Roy's method (2011: 17–18) for studying Hamas' social and economic sectors was mainly through ethnography, which was also based on her experience and engagement in Gaza and the West Bank over twenty-five years. In her aim to challenge negative views of studying Hamas, the methodological strength and legitimacy that was claimed by the author was the course of fieldwork through interviews and observations. Even though she is Jewish, she found herself standing in the Palestinian's shoes. To allay concerns over issues of reliability and accuracy, which might be caused by the ethnographic method, the author emphasised that the study tried not to speak *for* Palestinians but *from* them. Data from the movement's members and sympathisers was weighed against and balanced with the voices of other Palestinians incorporated into the author's analysis.

As the same concerns pertain to my relations with the Assalam and MFP movements, building on my previous research, Roy's method is worth reflecting on here. A range of interviews with other individuals, organisations, and agencies involved both positively and negatively with Islamist movements, were undertaken in order to serve as a counterbalance to data drawn from the movements.

The most pertinent technique to solve my concern over the closeness of researcher to the movement being studied was demonstrated by Machmudi (2008) in his study of the origins and ideology of the Indonesian PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera or Prosperous Justice Party) Islamist party with a focus on its efforts to Islamise Indonesia. He had directly interacted with its founding movement (Jemaah Tarbiyah) during his undergraduate studies and had close acquaintance with a number of its figures. However, he attempted to prevent this familiarity from interfering with critical analysis by trying not only to maintain objectivity but also to develop empathy with the movement (Machmudi 2008: 17). To create empathy and prevent sympathy, the status and role of the researcher need to be clearly demarcated and described to the movements at an early stage.

Security and sensitivity concerns

As this research is conducted and located among two types of conflict, the violent insurrection in the Deep South and amid tensions between Muslim factions, the

khana kao and *khana mai*, there were two main concerns over security and sensitivity. The first concern was the safety of the researcher and the informants and its related impact on reliability. This was less critical for me since I am an academic and local Thai (by nationality), Malay (by ethnicity) and Muslim (by religion) with sufficient knowledge and familiarity about the area and people, but in terms of the informants' sense of insecurity, this might affect the completeness of data. It was important to make informants feel confident in the researcher and comfortable in giving information. Applying ethical research standards and procedures is the best way to appropriately deal with these concerns.

As for the issue of sectarian tension and conflict, there are a range of complications, different degrees of intensity and areas of conflict. Conflicting parties related to this research include *khana kao*, *khana mai*, Sunnis, Shiites, and intra Salafi contentions. Throughout my TV moderator career I needed to mediate between different identities and have assumed a neutral position in order to access different groups of people in a plural society. I have also tried to stay neutral and stand on my academic credentials; however, it was unavoidable that people would make judgments and categorise others into particular groups.

Another sensitivity concern, which does not fall into the above conflicts, is the notion of Western conspiracies or CIA-phobia. It appears to have been allayed in recent years but is still worth considering. Duncan McCargo (2008: xv), as a European conducting research in a Muslim conflict zone, tried to counter any suspicions of his connections to western intelligence in the Deep South by declaring himself as an academic and linking himself to Prince of Songkla University. This is less of a concern in my case, as I am a local Malay Muslim, but as a student in a British institution, I might arouse suspicions among some informants. Indeed, this occurred in Irfan Ahmad's study of the Indian Jamaat-e-Islami transformation (Ahmad 2009). Notwithstanding his Indian background, his research was perceived as part of a Western or 9/11 conspiracy. To earn trust, in addition to tying himself, like McCargo, to the Aligarh Muslim University, he demonstrated his academic autonomy by using personal introductions, disclosing his Islamic educational background in Indian institutions and also through the assurance of his credentials from other leaders. Similar techniques were used in my case.

The most useful technique was to give sufficient time in building rapport and negotiating my researcher role and participant's rights with the informant before asking serious questions and sensitive issues. This technique, albeit time-consuming, allowed me to gain trust from key informants and insight into leaders' idea and movements' sensitive issues. On top of that, I was further recommended by senior leaders to other key informants. Without recommendations from the leaders or key activists, my snowball-sampling would not have been effective. Most of my interviews with key leaders were done more than twice. In some cases, I knew from one interviewee that another informant called him to check whether I was trustworthy before I met him. In many cases, insightful and sensitive information was revealed at the end of the interviews, mostly after I stop jotting things down, closed my notebook, turned off my voice recorder, and prepared to leave. This technique demonstrated greater trust which gradually increased during the course of interviews. However, in some cases, being asked to sign consent forms created concerns for interviewees. My interview with one security official from the national intelligence unit was cancelled after the informant saw the consent form I sent in advance.

Challenge of researching on network-based movements

Since Islamist movements are based on complex relations and affiliations with different types and sizes of organisations, it is quite challenging to delineate the real features and activities of a movement embedded in complicated networks. Wiktorowicz (2004: 22–23) has noted that dependence on network-based activism among many Islamic activists makes the topic ambiguous for research. In Irfan Ahmad's ethnographic study of the Jamaat-e-Islami in India (Ahmad 2009), he initially started with a community-based approach. After finding that a community study was not fitting with the networked-nature of the Jamaat, he employed Marcus's approach (1995) of network-oriented, multi-sited ethnography (Ahmad 2009: 43).

In terms of methodological concern, understanding the nature of a movement that works in networks and is embedded in wider Muslim affiliations and societies is a prerequisite for studying them. Most authors who have studied

Islamist movements have found that Islamist networks are by their nature rooted in personal interactions and social relationships, and, therefore, secondary materials are not enough to capture their activism and internal contentions. As such, Wiktorowicz (2004: 23) suggests that fieldwork should be done over months or years since understanding can be obtained only through replicated interactions, the building of friendships and trust, and patience and endurance.

My six-month fieldwork was a relatively short length of time compared to many existing studies on movements. However, my data collection was nevertheless very robust, considering my accumulative understanding of these movements and the fact that supplementary observations and analysis were made through their affiliated media, particularly TV channels and websites during my analysis and writing-up period.

Challenge of framing Islamist transformation process

In the Islamist moderation literature, the typology of Islamist movements and their transformations has become gradually richer. Related theories and approaches have been widely revisited and debated, especially in the MENA context. However, the development of Thai Islamists has not yet reached a mature level as a political party or an extensively popular movement unlike many Islamist actors in Muslim majority countries. Moderation theory, therefore, is not exactly suitable to frame Thai Islamist movements.

Accommodation is likely to be the most flexible term among the concepts that explains the transition of Islamist movements here. Those other concepts are moderation, de-radicalisation, and democratisation. These terms are not very common in the literature on Thai Islamists but they have been extensively discussed and debated in global Islamist studies. Moderation is the most relevant term to what this research seeks to examine. According to Schwedler (2006: 3), moderation refers to the process in which a radical movement shifts its position from a somewhat closed and rigid worldview to one more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives. However, it is narrowly used for describing an increasing acceptance of democratisation. In this literature, two major issues have frequently been discussed: whether Islamist moderation results in the democratisation of a

political system and whether political inclusion is the cause of Islamist moderation (Wegner and Pellicer 2009: 157).

The research, therefore, does not employ the term moderation, as its definition is still narrow and foregrounds democratisation, electoral politics, and the transformation from a violent or radical position to non-violence. Although this research does not seek to examine the radicalisation process of Islamist movements, it is worth mentioning the difference between radicals and moderates. Irfan Ahmad, in his study on the transformation of the Indian Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami movement, has made a distinction that 'moderates seek to achieve their goal by accepting the regime within which they work, whereas the radicals wish to achieve their goal by challenging it' (2009: 7). In comparison with another related concept, while moderation is a transformation process within Islamist movements that is mainly concerned with the perception of Islamists towards democracy, de-radicalisation is essentially concerned with the changing attitude of armed Islamist movements towards violence (Ashour 2009: 5–6). Nonetheless, there is a gap between these two typologies of the transition process. This gap is apparent when a particular Islamist movement neither starts from a radical origin, nor has democratisation as its end.

To be clear, this research is not concerned with commonly asked questions about whether Islamist moderation is 'truly democratic' or simply feigned (Schwedler 2006: 149; Wegner and Pellicer 2009: 157–58). The related question inquiring as to whether such movements seek to exploit democratic processes to achieve nondemocratic ends (Schwedler 2006: 3; Wegner and Pellicer 2009: 157–58) is far beyond the remit of this research.

To summarise, none of the aforementioned concepts are able to precisely capture the process of change within the proposed Islamist movements. Instead, the term 'accommodation,' being broader, is the most pertinent and appropriate term to employ in order to conceptualise the particular transformation of their political ideologies and strategies.

The application of the term accommodation in this research broadly refers to the transformation of an Islamist movement, obvious in that it shows obvious

adaptation of its ideology and behaviour in order to fit into the local context. More precisely, whether or not Islamist ideology challenges the mainstream systems, ideologies or worldviews, their adaptation would necessarily shift them from confrontation to little or no confrontation with that system. In other words, it means that the Islamist movement accepts – regardless of to what extent – a political or social system that is not preferable to their own ideology.

Some sensitive issues in the use of participant observation:

It is worth noting that there could be impartiality given the researcher's activist background and selective focus on religious 'peacemakers'; it could be questioned why I choose to play the role as a 'participant as observer' identified by Gold (1958: 220–21) in the employment of participant observation that raised concern over the neutrality and balanced role of researcher.

To ensure a credible level of neutrality and impartiality in employing ethnography, apart from justifying the case study and developing more rigid analytical frameworks (clarified above), I also need to take some more space here to make the case explicitly.

I was aware of this concern over my ethnographic position and thus take the risk of 'going native' cautioned by Gold (1958: 221) into account. To avoid over-identifying with the informants that may compromise my research perspective, I distanced myself from working with the movement in their workplaces and did not base myself at their main offices as previously planned. Instead, I visited and observed their activities in two types of occasions: formal observations in scheduled interview situations with members; and informal observations during meetings, events, and other important activities.

However, I maintained my participant as observer role because it is the most appropriate strategy that would enable me to make rapport as well as gain accurate and useful insights into the movements, and at the same time, it entails the right to maintain the overt research role (Gold 1958: 221). I candidly negotiated with the movement's leaders to allow participation and observation in their activities. My clear and unconcealed role – participant as observer – which is mutually understood by the researcher and the informants at the beginning of the

research, was expected to help me retain sufficient elements of 'the stranger' and prevent our connections attaining an intimate form that might undermine the independent and critical analysis. It also minimised any ethical problems stemming from covert observation. Such awareness and potential strategies also addresses whether my closeness to the subject actually make this problem more acute.

Two types of observation – observer as participant and complete observer – which involve smaller degrees of participation than the participant as observer, are not in the category of participant or informal observation (Burnham et al 2008: 275, Gold 1958: 221). Meanwhile, the participant as observer strategy was needed for my case given that participant observation was very appropriate to the examination of small political groups and movements existing on the edges of the political system (Burnham et al 2008: 249). In a hostile political environment in which the movements may adopt a culture of secrecy, participant observation enables the researcher to gain accurate and useful insights into the movements and to understand why people join them (Scott 1975: 214, cited in Burnham et al 2008: 249).

We cannot completely avoid bias but the important point is how we can prevent it and do our utmost to be impartial, as I reflected through my research design. The conflicting data reflected from the diverse source of informants, in my opinion, strengthens rather than undermines the quality of my research analysis as it proves the validity of data in relations to reliable methods. As for interviews, the use of data triangulation yields such validity. However, corroboration of data is still more desirable and more useful for my research to draw hypothetical conclusions.

When such a gap occurred, in the first instance, I used interview techniques (such as prompts and example questions) to test the credibility of the answer or open a chance for respondents to revise or confirm their answer(s). The interview protocol helped guide me in checking the relevance of data. If any gaps remained, thematic analysis took priority over conflicting data. Presenting the contradictions between different data and ideas equally is also necessary at some point if these methods are not successful in helping me to reach a conclusion or judgment.

Challenge of examining or evaluating the extent of accommodation

To answer the main research question, that is, to what extent and how Islamist leaders and their movements have become accommodated into Thailand's relatively open society and polity, it has indeed proved challenging to identify or evaluate the degree to which they accommodate. However, there are indeed criteria already established in related studies of moderation and de-radicalisation processes which I could draw on for my study.

Schwedler (2006) has argued that moderation should be evaluated not only from the transformation of behaviour but also at the level of ideology, because looking at behaviour alone will not reveal hidden radical agendas. Ashour (2009: 6) has established another level of Islamist transformation which is at the organisational level. His contention was established particularly in the study on de-radicalisation of jihadists. He has noted that moderation is a process of relative change that mainly concerns the attitude of Islamists towards democracy and agreed that it can occur on two levels: ideological and behavioural. However, for de-radicalisation of jihadists, comprehensive transformations need successful acceptance within an organisation. Ashour's three comprehensive levels of de-radicalisation are composed of ideological, behavioural, and organisational transformation. Though the case studies are not originally radical, Ashour's ideas can be taken to analyse the extent to which Thai Islamists have been accommodated as they have certainly lessened their strict literalist interpretation to acclimatize to the Thai context. For ideological and behavioural dimensions, it is too early to evaluate their achievements at this stage, but for the organisational dimension it appears that there has been some internal dissent which has led to conflict and separation.

Agential-structural factors

In an attempt to examine the Islamist movement's accommodative behaviour, although *how* and *to what extent* questions remain the main focus of the primary research question, it is also necessary to incorporate the *why* in the analysis on factors that shape Islamist transformation.

For example, this thesis asks ‘why do Thai Islamists act accommodatively, which is different from many global Islamist and indeed other domestic ethno-nationalist groups?’ To understand this phenomenon, we need an explanation of agential-structural influences. Agency refers to action or conduct that an actor is able to consciously do by his or her own intention and capacity while structure refers to context and to the setting within which social political and economic events occur and acquire meaning. The greater the influence of structure, the more predictable political behaviour tends to be (Hay 2002: 95). However, applying this concept to the research is quite problematic owing to two reasons: theoretically, the relationship between the actors and their environment has long been debated in political studies; and, practically, the self-capacity of Islamists and the structure of Thai polity and society appear to be equally important to their shifting behaviours.

The main factor shaping Thai Islamist behaviour might be based on the innate ideologies and how they interpret the structure. If we adopt a constructivist view, it can be presumed that Thai Islamists interpret Thai society as *dar-as-salam* (Ar. abode of peace) in which Muslims can live and engage, whereas Malay ethno-nationalists conversely view it as *dar-al-harb* (Ar. abode of war). From a structural or critical realist approach, Thai social and political structures force Islamists to adapt themselves, which prevents them from being radical like their global counterparts. The opposing question – *why the Malay nationalists are not similarly constrained* – can possibly be explained by their different internal structures, especially historical and social backgrounds, which influence them to interpret differently.

Although concepts of structure and agency tend to be thought of as oppositional, this need not necessarily be the case when applying these concepts to case studies. We can still apply both dimensions of influence as Colin Hay (2002: 95) has established, though it remains important to distinguish clearly between structural and agential explanations. Therefore, at this stage, it is not necessary to opt for one of the two causal mechanisms as Wendt and Shapiro (1997: 181; Hay 2002: 91) suggested: ‘We can settle them only by wrestling with the empirical

merits of their claims about human agency and social structure... These are in substantial part empirical questions.'

In studying the two Salafi-reformist movements' complicated ideologies, network-based organisations and behavioural strategic adjustment, the analytical framework and research methodology presented in this chapter sufficiently ensure that the empirical parts of this thesis (Chapter 4 and 5) are rigid, valid, and reliable. Of the three analytical frameworks I have developed as a tool to understand and explain Assalam and MGP, the Islamic reformist framework (with a focus on its Salafi-reformist subset) and the concept of accommodation constitute the primary original contributions of the thesis to the literature on Thai Muslim politics.

Chapter 3

Understanding the Context of Salafi-Reformists' Accommodation

This chapter aims to provide a preliminary context of the thesis through the review of related literature and social phenomena on the Islamist movements' accommodation in Thai society. In order to illustrate how this research is situated in the relevant literature and identify niches that remain unexamined, this literature review will deal with it by defining and exploring key terms, concepts, and variables used in the research questions. The literature on Islamist movements, accommodation, and the Thai-Muslim socio-political landscape will be thematically defined and explored from the broad area of knowledge that begins at the global level and moving to the more specific part which is the local Thai level.

After providing an overview of the literature, a detailed literature review will then be presented in four parts: conceptions of Islamist accommodation; case studies of Islamist accommodation in the global context; Muslim politics and accommodation in Thailand; Islamists in Thailand.

Overview of Literature

Scholarship concerning Islamist accommodation in Thai society can be identified into three main areas: global and regional Islamist studies, Thai Muslim studies, and Thai Islamist studies.

In the broadest area, the literature foregrounding positive aspects of Islamists – which is minimal compared to studies focusing on the threats they allegedly pose – mainly concentrate on Muslim countries. Case studies regarding Islamist accommodation have been investigated in many areas globally, especially in the Middle East and North African (MENA) countries and Southeast Asia. In the MENA, studies of Islamist democratisation and Islamist moderation are flourishing equally. In Southeast Asia, mainly Indonesia and Malaysia, the focus is on their role in democratisation and political inclusion. In Central and South Asia, although there

are some significant studies of Islamist moderation and democratisation, particularly the Jamaat-e-Islami (Ahmad 2005, 2009, 2012), the majority literature is still around radicalisation. In Europe, the mainstream focus is on the integration of the Muslim minority into the European state and society in relation to the pluralistic and democratic settings, but the scope is broader, beyond Islamists *per se* to the wider Muslim community.

In terms of the transformation processes in Islamist movements, two processes that most studies attempt to explain are radicalisation and moderation. Radicalisation, which relates to violent orientation and intolerance to social pluralism, has been strongly addressed and debated since the 1990s (Lewis, 1990; Roy 1994; Esposito 1997 and 1999; Fuller 2002; Hafez 2003; Wicktorowicz 2004; Ashour 2009). Moderation, albeit less influential, has grown gradually as a theme since the mid-2000s (Wickham 2004; Clark 2006; Schwedler 2006, 2007, 2011; Wegner and Pellicer 2009; Tezcur 2010; Karakaya and Yildirim 2012; Brocker and Kunkler 2013). In terms of actors, extensive studies in the moderation literature have narrowly focused on Islamist political parties as a key factor in the democratic transition of the political system and in the democratisation of the Islamist actor itself. Studies on Islamist accommodation in the global and international context are relatively rich especially in MENA, where Muslims are the majority. However, in regions where Muslims form the minority, particularly in Thailand, there is still a substantial gap to fill.

In the mainstream literature on Thai Muslim studies, of which the dominant trend has focused on the conflict in the Deep South, there are two main different interests that relate to my own research. The first thread examined or merely explored Islamists in connection with violence without seriously focusing on the movement and Islamisation dimensions. The second examined Muslim minority struggles and accommodation in Thai politics and society. Each of these strands has merits, although there are limitations worth mentioning.

In the first strand, some studies have attempted to connect Islamists with separatism and often frame the southern Thai conflict as part of the wider war on terrorism (e.g. Abuza 2005; Gunaratna et al 2005; Chalk 2010; Gunaratna and Acharya 2013). On the other hand, some studies clearly differentiate between

Islamists and the issue of southern separatism (e.g. ICG 2005; Connors 2007; Liow 2006a; McCargo 2008). Both sides of the literature provide background knowledge on the challenges Islamists face in the region.

In the second strand, there are a range of studies that focus on Muslim minority politics in the wider Thai society and polity (e.g. Suhrke 1970, 1977; Nanthawan 1977; Forbes 1982; Surin 1985; Che Man 1990; Scupin 1998; Arong 1989; Yusuf 1998, 2008; Thanet 2003, 2004; Chaiwat 2003, 2004, 2005; McCargo 2008, 2010, 2012). These studies highlight the various types of Muslim responses to and interactions with the Thai state other than the use of violence. Moreover, limitations and facilitations in Thai political society as conditional factors for Muslim actors' engagement are significantly illustrated by this literature. The most relevant studies are from Chaiwat and Scupin. Chaiwat (2003, 2004, and 2005) has focused on Muslims' tolerance in negotiating the preservation of their identity through civic engagement and peaceful means.

A significant contribution to the study of Muslim minority politics emanating from Chaiwat's scholarship is that the open or democratic space in Thai society has gradually expanded (Chaiwat 2004: 158). This has been echoed by his case study examination of Thai Muslim political engagement and negotiation, including the peaceful hijab demonstration of the Muslim South during 1977–78 (Chaiwat 2005: 78–100), the Ban Krua Muslims' community defence through civic engagement and strengthening civil society against the government's expressway mega-project (Chaiwat 2005: 145–55), and the peaceful protests against the Afghan War in 2003 symbolically termed 'praying in the rain' (Chaiwat 2004). Despite the fact that violence in the south remains prevalent, attempts to convey political aspirations through violence for Thai Muslims have otherwise been on the decline, while other peaceful alternatives, including political participation through formal and informal channels, media engagement, civil society empowerment, peaceful protest, and peace dialogue expanded (Chaiwat 2004: 158).

Scupin (1980b, 1998) has studied Muslim accommodation in Thai society with a primary focus on Islamic reformists, showing the heterogeneity of the Thai Muslim population's background and politics in the Thai state, and the significant participation of Bangkok Islamic reformists in mainstream Thai and Muslim

politics since the people's revolution in 1932. Although Scupin's writings are now outdated, they constitute significant and influential pioneer work. This study, therefore, will draw upon and advance Scupin's scholarship by focusing on the accommodation of contemporary Islamist movements.

Looking closer into Thai Islamist studies, there are many observations to make and gaps to be addressed. The first observation is concerns various terms used to explain 'Islamists'. Firstly, the term 'Islamist' is not commonly used in Muslim studies in Thailand today because during the time when 'global Islamism' and 'political Islam' were being used by social scientists (from the 1970s onwards) Thai Islamic movements and leaders played a largely subdued role in politics. The pivotal role of Islamic leaders in Thai mainstream politics occurred three decades earlier, and then referred to as Islamic reformists and modernists (Scupin 1980b, 1998). A focus on 'reformism' has thus dominated Thai Islamist studies. Secondly, while there was a decline of reformists in mainstream politics, there has been a rise in *khana mai-khana kau* tensions between the new school (the subsequent generation of reformist students) and the old school within the Muslim community. *Khana mai/kaum muda* is therefore the term best representing 'the Islamists' spoken about in other literatures. Thirdly, since the role of Ismail Lutfi has been prominent, concomitant with the rise of global terrorist concerns, the term 'Wahhabism' has also been frequently used.

The second observation refers to case studies of Islamists. Several works that examine or explore the existence and influence of contemporary Islamists, *khana mai*, or Salafis in southern Thailand, all mention the leader Ismail Lutfi (Yusuf 2007 11–13; Funston 2008: 32; McCargo 2008 21–23; Liow 2009: 88–95; Liow 2010: 42–58; Gunaratna and Acharya 2013: 131). Some studies have tried to explain the rise of Lutfi as a sort of re-emergence or successor to Haji Sulong's reformist leadership in southern Thailand during the 1930s and 1940s (Liow 2009: 88; Liow 2010: 42).

The existing literature on Ismail Lutfi can be categorised into two strands: firstly, a focus on the dynamism and confrontation of the new school in the mainstream traditional Muslim community; and, secondly, works that focus on suspicions around his connection with domestic and international violence. Liow's

(2009, 2010) examination of Lutfi's roles in Islamic reformism and Islamic education in southern Thailand is one of the most perceptive, along with Surainee's (2004) sociological examination of Ismail Lutfi as an elite religious leader. Additionally, some works have noted his cooperation and accommodation with the Thai State (Yusuf 2007; McCargo 2008), but none of these studies have seriously examined the evolution of his ideology and movement and the way it became accommodated within Thai society and the polity. This is one of the gaps that the current research aims to fill.

While literature concerning Thai Islamists in the southern area is quite abundant, studies of Islamists in Bangkok are obviously outdated. Most of the studies that explore the existence of the *khana mai* or the Salafi reformist movement in Bangkok rest upon Scupin's works (1980b, 1998) stating the role of Ahmad Wahab (an Islamic reformer who migrated from Minangkabao in Indonesian during the 1920s) and Chaem Phromyong (the former Chularajmontri and a member of the People's Party in the 1932 revolution) as individuals, and the Jam'iyatul Islam Association and the Young Muslim Association of Thailand (YMAT) as movements which flourished during the period from the 1930s to the 1970s.

Only two studies explore the role of contemporary *khana mai* in Bangkok. The first is a Thai thesis studying the role of the Muslim Group for Peace (MGP) founded by Sheikh Rida as a part of the anti-Afghan War movements (Punthin 2003), while the second is an article (as part of an ongoing thesis) studying Salafi women activist movements under Sheikh Rida's network (Amporn 2009). This paucity of writings on Sheikh Rida and other contemporary Salafi movements or scholars in Bangkok reflects the fact that Salafis in the Thai capital – in spite of gaining higher numbers of sympathisers and having complicated internal politics and dissent – seem to be alienated from public life and mainstream traditionalist Muslims. Recently, however, they have engaged more with broader society, especially with the transformation of Rida and his networks. Hence, contemporary Bangkok Islamism is another gap that the research seeks to fill.

None of the studies on Ismail Lutfi has clearly distinguished between purists, literalists and reformists. Consequently, most authors are unable to

precisely identify his line of ideology and superficially described him as hard-line Wahhabi. They probably deduced such interpretations by looking at his Saudi educational background at a so-called 'Wahhabi' institution, combined with the fact that local people called him a Wahhabi and viewed him as a hardliner. This ideology is widely studied worldwide, with little awareness of the nuances and factions within Saudi Salafism (Wiktorowicz 2006, Lynch 2010). Yusuf's explanation (2007: 11-12) of Lutfi as a rigid Wahhabi puritanist falls into this same myth of Wahhabism, which appears widely in the orientalist literature. Joll (2012: 50) further notes that Yusuf disagrees with the idea that Lutfi is progressive and distinct from the conventional Wahhabis. Notwithstanding a detailed examination through interviews and documentary and biographical analysis, Liow (2009a) does not express a clear view on this important issue, merely noting the complex dichotomy of Ikhwahni and Wahhabi credentials in Lutfi's inclinations. He has argued that, whereas Lutfi graduated from the Islamic University of Imam Muhammad bin Saud in which influential conventional Wahhabi ideologues settle, he was mostly influenced by his tutor and supervisor, Sheikh Said Hawwa, a progressive Syrian lecturer and member of the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwanul Muslimin*) (Liow 2009a: 90). Indeed, while maintaining Salafi purist credentials characterised by often rigid interpretations, Lutfi has still compromised on many occasions with the traditionalists. This is part of the evidence for his pragmatism. In addition, there are aspects of the Wahhabi ideology that Liow's examination has not reached, and indeed has intentionally omitted (Liow 2009a: 90). This thesis cannot ignore the need for further examination.

The final observation, which allows this research to establish originality, is that while the contemporary Thai Islamic reformism literature encompasses Islamic revivalism, social movements, and education, it lacks a focus on the dimension of accommodation. Many studies have indeed shed some useful light on possible lines of enquiry for future examination. The analytical points that will be taken up in this research are: the influence of the Thai state over the rise and decline of the *khana mai* reformists in Thailand (Scupin 1980b: 1234); the politicisation and manipulation of the conflict and factions between *khana kao* and *khana mai* by the state (Scupin 1980b: 1232); the co-optation by the Thai state of

Muslim religious and political factions into the formal political system and into various state-controlled Islamic institutions (McCargo: 2010); international ideological influences (Liow 2009a); the Islamist trajectory of accommodation with the state (Scupin 1980b, 1998, Liow 2009a; McCargo 2008); and both Thai and wider Muslim society as two sites of potential Islamist accommodation (McCargo 2008).

Conceptions of Islamist Accommodation

Transformation processes are focused on shifts in state positions regarding Islamist leaders and movements relative to their previous positions, frequently in regard to violence and democracy (Ashour 2009: 5). The main aspect of Islamist politics that this thesis seeks to investigate is its ideological, behavioural and organisational transformation as part of their wider aim Islamic reform and 'fitting in' in the contexts they are embedded. In so doing, an appropriate term which can precisely characterise this pattern of transformation is indispensable. Accommodation is considered the most suitable term here. In conjunction with this, a range of concepts have been deployed concerning 'positive' Islamist transformation: moderation, de-radicalisation, democratisation and integration. Another related concept is that of 'civil Islam', which explains Islamist behaviour with respect to the public context rather than the processes of transformation and is thus also worth exploring. However, the most relevant to this research is the concept of moderation which we will need to unpack.

Ahmad (2009: 7) posits that moderation indicates the transformation of Islamism from an organic system into a process of interpretations. In other words, Islamism changes from an already consummate system to an evolving process of interactions with its former opponents. For Ahmad, moderation is:

a discourse marked by the blurring of Islamism's boundaries, the embracing of its 'other.' The de-centring of the Islamic state from its agenda, and the casting of doubt over its own premises while generating ambiguity and conflict among its practitioners (2009: 7).

From this definition, it can be argued that Thai Islamist movements at some level - particularly the ideological - have undergone a moderation process, although on the whole I will characterise this as 'accommodation' for reasons already noted and expanded on below. For instance, activities such as participating in electoral politics and watching television, which were forbidden by some Thai Islamic scholars in the past, are now interpreted differently. But since the two movements have not matured fully when it comes to internal debates (that is, their leaders are still revered and command ultimate respect from members) there has been little critical challenge from their members. Consequently, there are no clear internal factional divisions between purists and pragmatists Bubalo et al (2008: 117-118) found in the Indonesian PKS, the Turkish AKP, and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. In these two Thai movements, swings between purist and pragmatic stances reflect the changing positions of the core leaders rather than of influential members. Minor challenges within both of the case studies exist of course, but these have never been strong enough to provoke significant friction among mainstream members - such as the split of Assabiqun from Sheikh Rida's network as a result of his pragmatic strategy (Chapter 5).

Inclusion-moderation hypothesis

One of major strands in the moderation literature is the inclusion-moderation hypothesis which is premised on the idea that the inclusion of radical Islamists into the formal political system will lead to their moderation. Some studies that applied this hypothesis to studies on the democratisation of Islamist actors have also pointed out that the formation of an Islamist party is a key indicator of the democratic transition of a political system.

Moderation should be evaluated not only from the perspective of transformation of behaviour, but also ideology. Schwedler (2006) has argued that 'examining political behaviour alone provides insufficient evidence of moderation because it leaves open the possibility that political actors might act as if they are moderate while harbouring a radical agenda.' Many authors have noted that the inclusion-moderation hypothesis narrowly examines formal political processes in

the democratic system (Clark 2006: 149; Browsers 2009: 8; Wegner & Pellicer 2009: 158).

Although studies focused on the democratic normalisation of three Islamist movements in Egypt (Muslim Brotherhood), Indonesia (PKS) and Turkey (AKP) have superficially supported the inclusion-moderation theory, the argument here is still that their transformation seems to be an instance of 'oscillation' rather than 'moderation' since many Islamist movements or parties could not become fully moderate due to internal tensions over ideology and policy (Bubalo et al 2008: 117). This notion is reminiscent of Ashour's third category of the level of comprehensive de-radicalisation (Ashour 2009: 6). He has also argued that de-radicalisation could not successfully happen by ideological and behavioural transformation alone, but requires change at the organisational level in which there are no internal tensions or factions preventing the shift of the movement.

There are two main reasons why this research uses the term 'accommodation' and not moderation. Firstly, moderation is frequently used narrowly in relation to democratic transition. Secondly, moderation still hinges on the problematic radical-moderate dichotomy and associated debates. Use of the term 'accommodation' not only distances the research from this problematic terminology, but also fits with the current reality of Thai Islamist movements, which have not directly involved themselves in electoral politics. Also, even though it is not clear whether their ideological moderation is truly democratic, their behaviour is obviously non-violent. Such a question is important and will be considered in the study, but not pertinent to the transition of Islamists in the current situation.

Case Studies of Islamist Accommodation in the Global Context

As noted, the most pertinent debate in the study of Islamist accommodation is the literature of Islamist moderation. It is worth identifying in more detail four problems in this literature. Firstly, some 'moderate' or non-violent Islamists are somewhat unfairly (on the basis of insufficient evidence and problematic methodology) categorised in the 'radical' or violent category, especially the Muslim

Brotherhood. Secondly, there are indeed 'radical' Islamists who have transformed their ideologies, behaviours and movements but who remain suspect in terms of their sustainability and compatibility with pluralism and democracy (for example the Indian Jamaat-e-Islami). Thirdly, there are many armed or violent Islamists that have not yet shifted to unarmed or non-violent movements, but demonstrate a potential to de-radicalise (for example the Palestinian Hamas movement and the Lebanese Hizbullah). Fourthly, there are Islamist movements, with radical or moderate origins, that transformed themselves into political parties engaging in electoral politics (for example the Indonesian PKS, the Turkish AKP, the RP, the FP Palestinian Hamas, Egypt's Al Wasat and MB, the Jordanian IAF, groups in Yemen and the Moroccan PJD)

The best analogy for Muslim accommodation in Thailand may in fact be Europe, as Islamists here are also a minority in the Muslim minority. In Europe, where a significant migrant Muslim minority lives in pluralistic societies, there are considerable studies on the issue of Muslim integration with the state. One of relevant findings is that exclusion practised by some European governments – including in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Netherland – during 1970s and 1980s allowed some Muslim countries (especially Turkey and Saudi Arabia) to influence the Islamic practices of Europe's Muslim diaspora (Laurence 2012). One of key measures used by these governments to 'integrate' Muslims in pursuit of dealing with terrorist and extremist threats was by incorporating them into the fabric of European democracy, especially through government-led Islamic councils. This approach closely resembles that of the Thai authorities. The Islamist literature focuses on two main things: Islamist extremism as a major concern in European society and Salafism among Europe's Muslim societies. However, the Islamist moderation literature is not a major scholarly occupation in Europe due to the minimal degree of Islamist consolidation in mainstream politics.

As integration is the mainstream agenda in Europe, the literature on Islamism is also influenced by this discourse. Most studies of Islamists revolve around the question of whether Islamism is compatible with democracy or European pluralistic society. For instance, Bassam Tibi (2008) has coined the concept of Euro-Islam with his repeated distinction between Islam and Islamism

(Tibi 2012) and the contention that Islamism is a threat to European democratic pluralism, reflected in his slogan 'Europeanizing Islam vs Islamisation of Europe?' (Tibi 2008: xiv). In addition, based on one of the features of Islamism that aspires to implement Islamic shari'ah in society, Tibi has suggested the concept of Euro-Islam so as 'to rethink or reform Islam in Europe requires an abandoning of the shari'ah altogether – as well as jihad and da'wah/proselytisation.' Euro-Islam, therefore, rests upon *Europeanisation* and a recognition of pluralism. However, his claim regarding the incompatibility of shari'ah and democratic Europe can be challenged on the grounds of partial implementation of shari'ah in other secular legal systems around the world; indeed, Islamist accommodation in democratic systems is possible without abandoning their basic ideologies. This possibility can be seen from the Thai case study presented here, where Islamic identities in accordance with Islamist ideologies have been negotiated, legalised and institutionalised through the democratic system and via peaceful means.

Muslim Politics and Accommodation in Thailand (Thai Muslim studies)

In this section, the related context surrounding Muslim accommodation is reviewed extensively in order to examine Muslim alternatives in Thai politics. Muslim minority politics under the Thai state are more complicated than merely the issue of southern violence. Various means of Muslim interaction with the Thai state presented in this section will allow a greater understanding of Muslim politics in relation to Thai political space. In order to understand such politics, it is worth describing briefly the background of the Muslim community in Thailand.

The heterogeneity of the Thai Muslim population can be seen throughout different periods and regions. In the south, the majority of Muslims are Malay. As a result of the defeat of the Patani Sultanate by the Siam Kingdom and the Thai state's subsequent assimilationist policies, Malay Muslims are nowadays scattered throughout the country. Some of them were sent to the central region and the North. Others migrated upwards to settle in the upper south. They speak a Malay dialect in the three southernmost provinces, whereas their counterparts in Satun and four districts of Songkhla speak both Malay and a Southern-Thai dialect, a

variant spoken in the upper south too. Many of those descended originally from Malays nowadays hardly speak their ancestral language, except in some areas such as in Nakhon Si Thammarat in the upper South and Pathum Thani in the central region. In the north, Muslims are predominately of Chinese and Indian descent. Yunnanese Chinese Muslims or 'Haw' reside in and around the Ban Ho mosque and Attaqwa, in the Wat Kate area of Chiang Mai city and Fang district. They originally migrated from South-western China's Yunnan province to seek asylum after being persecuted by the Chinese Ching Dynasty during the mid-nineteenth century (Forbes, 1982: 1058). The Indian Muslim community comprises of Indian, Bangla and Pathan ethnic groups originally from present-day India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Burma. They are scattered throughout the country, from Chiangmai and Chiangrai in the north, Udon Thani, to Khonkaen, and Nongkhai in the northeast, and Hat Yai and Sungai Kolok in the south. They retain commercial importance in the country, especially in textile and cattle-breeding businesses. In the northeast, they also gained political power in many provinces, such as Surin, Yasothon, Ubon Ratchthani and Srisaket. In Bangkok, there are many Muslim communities of varied ethnic origins, comprising Malay, Jawanese, Persian, Hadrami, Indian and Chams. For instance, Muslims of Malay origins live along the Saeansaeb canal – thanks to the Siamese state's project to dig the canal eastwards of Bangkok using Patani war captives during the early Bangkok period. Cham Muslims initially migrated from Cambodia and settled in Ayudhaya before the eighteenth century. They were primarily military volunteers, organised as the *Krom Asa Cham* military department. During the Bangkok period, they were eventually rewarded with land in the Ban Krua area now situated in the heartland of Bangkok's business district. In the central region, there is a concentration of Muslims living in Pra Nakhorn Si Ayudhaya and Chacheungsoa province. In Pra Nakhorn Si Ayudhaya, descendants of different ethnic Muslim settlers during the pre-modern Thai Era nowadays live side by side with their Buddhist neighbours. In Chachaengsao province, which adjoins Nongchok district in eastern Bangkok, large numbers of Muslims live around the vast area of man-made canal networks.

The advent of Islam in Thailand

Islam spread to Thailand from different directions and periods; nonetheless, the earliest advent of Islam in Thailand can be traced back to the pre-modern era of the Siamese state. There are two patterns of early Islamisation in Thailand (Thanet 2003: 9). The first originated from and grew within the local area in the south which gave rise to its own distinct history and culture, whereas the other originated outside Siam with Muslims who migrated at one or another time into the kingdom, particularly into the central areas.

In the central areas, historical evidence and chronicles have indicated that Islam came to the Siamese kingdom through foreign Muslim traders between the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. One of the most influential ethnic trading communities in the seventeenth century Ayudhaya, comprised Persian Muslims. These Shiites were successfully assimilated into the noble class of Siamese monarchs from the Ayudhaya in the seventeenth century down to the Bangkok kingdoms in the eighteenth century. The most prominent Persian who was reported in Ayudhaya chronicles as one of political leaders in Ayudhaya was Sheikh Ahmad. He was appointed as Chularajmontri (Sheikhul Islam) – the first leader of the Muslim community during the reign of King Songtham (r. 1610-1628). Politically, he assumed the position of *Samuhanayok* (equivalent to minister) and *Praklang Tha Kwa* (Minister of Foreign Trade), which regulated foreign trade and populations in Ayudhaya (Scupin 1980a: 63-64).¹⁹ Scupin has pointed that although Persian Muslims had developed a secure social and political niche in Ayudhaya they had limited success in propagating Shiism (Scupin 1980a: 65). Besides, their influence began to decline when European imperialism came to Ayudhaya during the eighteenth century. Consequently, it is not surprising that nowadays Shiites make up only an estimated 2 per cent of Muslims in Thailand today. Some of Sheikh Ahmad's descendants assimilated into Buddhism, such as the Bunnag and Chularat aristocratic families. Instead of being influenced by their early pioneers, Shiites in Thailand today have been influenced more by the Iranian

¹⁹ The Minister of Foreign Trade has two sub-departments of Central Port. *Krom Tha Kwa* (a Right-Wing Department) was headed by a Muslim dealing with the trade and population of *khaek* or Muslims and other foreigners except Chinese, which were overseen by *Krom Tha Sai* (a Left-Wing Department) under Chinese leadership.

government and ideology, especially after the 1979 revolution carried out by Ayatollah Khomeini.

In the deep South where the emergence and development of Islam has been most profound, Islam was introduced to this area thanks to the influence of the Malay-Indo archipelago, which embraced Islam in the thirteenth century. The exact period and source of the advent of Islam in this area is not possible to pinpoint; however, according to a widely referred to legend Islam spread in southern Thailand after the conversion of a Malay ruler who was cured of his illness by a Muslim from Pasai in Indonesia, resulting in the ethnic Malay inhabitants of the south converting to Islam during the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Since other conversions up until the nineteenth century, the Patani kingdom produced several Islamic thinkers, especially Sheikh Davud Al-Fatoni and Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fatoni and became heralded as the cradle of Islam or 'the Mirror of Mecca' in Southeast Asia, rivalling Malaca and Aceh. As a result of its abundance of religious scholars or '*tok guru*' and a Malay-style traditional religious education called '*pondok*,' Islam has become an integral part of Malay life and identity.

Thai-Malay Muslim identity

Thai Muslim identities are distinct from those of their Buddhist counterparts in various respects. Other Thais have long called Muslims using the colloquial Thai term '*khaek*' (literally meaning "guest") since they originally came as outsiders. This term reflects a lack of sensitivity, though as Michel Gilquin has noted as it does not imply a pejorative connotation, any more than the term *farang* which has long been used to designate Europeans and Westerners (Gilquin 2002: 24). Nonetheless, for indigeneous Malays in the South, the term *khaek* is received badly because it suggests a distance among different religious communities (Thanet 2003: 5): identity plays a pivotal role in Muslim minority politics in wider Thai society.

In terms of the strength of maintaining religious identities in relation to the interaction with broader society, Thai Muslims in different regions have developed numerous strategies. Malay Muslims in the southernmost areas where they constitute the majority have the most pious practices and adhere most strongly to

traditional cultures, including the local Malay language and dress. For Muslims in other regions, there is less historical connectedness to traditions; they are also scattered among different communities and live side by side with non-Muslim communities. However, since religious institutions like mosques and Islamic teaching sites – both formal and informal – were established together with early settlements, many communities have maintained a high degree of Muslim identity.

In terms of religious institutions that connect Muslims, mosques and Islamic education institutions are the essential foundations. There are over 3,500 mosques throughout the country. Most mosques provide formal and informal Islamic education. The formal supplementary elementary offering for children in outside the south is called *farduine*. In the southernmost areas different curricula are used and taught in over 3,000 *tadika* schools (abbreviated from Malay *taman didikan kanak-kanak*). At the secondary level, there are over 500 Islamic schools, which comprise approximately 200 private Islamic schools, as well as 300 *pondoks*, known as *madrasah* in Arabic.²⁰

Since the 1970s, Muslims in Thailand have been influenced by Islamic reformism and modernism ideologies in the Middle East and South Asia, especially through religious graduates from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, India and Pakistan. They brought back teachings and interpretations that varied markedly from existing local practices: this has posed a challenge to local traditional communities and authorities leading to an internally-divided Muslim society. Reformism has been called *khana mai* in Thai or *kaum tua* in Malay, which means ‘new group’, whereas the traditional counterpart has been referred to as *khana kau* or *kaum muda*. Scupin has postulated that similar to elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the spread of the Islamic reformism movement in Thailand tended to attract an urban-based intelligentsia rather than a rural constituency (Scupin 1980b: 1225). Nevertheless, the influence of reformism in the southernmost regions was spread in the opposite direction. Before the urbanisation of reformism thought and Salafi ideology and

²⁰ Islamic education provided in southern border provinces can be classified into six types: Islamic Studies education in higher education level institutions, Islamic education in Private Schools Teaching Islam (PSTI), Islamic education in pondoks, Islamic education in traditional basic institutions, Islamic education in Basic Islamic Education Child Centres in local communities (or mosques) best well-known as *tadika* (*taman didikan kanak-kanak*), and Islamic education in Child Care Centres (*rao-dhah*) (Baka, 2005, p. 4).

practice, Islamic scholars like Ustaz Abdullah India, Dr. Jihad Bungatanjong, and Dr. Ismail Lutfi Japakiya, shared their religious teachings among rural people beginning in the 1970s, but were popularly dubbed of the label 'Wahhabi' by many traditionalists. Despite the internal and external tensions of *kana mai* (specifically with *kana kao* and Shiites) there has been a gradual tendency of reformist accommodation with traditional religious authorities and communities.

In terms of rights and liberties as Thai citizens, Muslims are legally protected by the constitutions as equal to other groups of Thais irrespective of origins or religious affiliation. Especially in religious matters, Muslims have full rights and liberties to practice according to their own beliefs as stipulated most recently in Section 31 of the 2017 Constitution:

A person shall enjoy full liberty to profess a religion, and shall enjoy the liberty to exercise or practice a form of worship in accordance with his or her religious principles, provided that it shall not be adverse to the duties of all Thai people, neither shall it endanger the safety of the State, nor shall it be contrary to public order or good morals.

Such provisions have been very significant for Muslims in exercising the rights to preserve their identities. Aside from religious matters, the Muslim minority and the Malay descendants in particular have long struggled to have their ethnic identity accepted. There have been limitations imposed by the Thai state and the broader Thai political culture which have historically impacted Malay Muslims in particular. To understand the way that Muslims respond to the Thai state and society, it is essential first to understand the Thai political setting.

Thai political culture and democratisation

The influence of Thai politics towards Muslim politics has been especially evident since 1932, when Thailand became a constitutional monarchy after a group of civilian and military officers called themselves as *Khana Ratsadorn* (People's Party) carried out a bloodless revolution. The overthrow of the absolute monarchy system in 1932 did not mean the end of monarchical power. The democratisation process has continually been disrupted and interfered with by the military. Political control has changed hands between military, bureaucrats and politicians. During the 1970s

and 1980s, Thailand was a 'stable semi-democracy' characterised by frequent changes of government (Chai-Anan 1989): democracy in Thai politics and society peaked during the period of the 1997 'People's Constitution', which was associated with the flourishing of civil society, greater political participation, and the introduction of 'check and balance' mechanisms.

Thai political culture has been partially constructed upon the 'three pillars': nation (*chart*), religion (*sasana*), and king (*pramahakasatra*), which were promoted to create "Thai-ness" as a national collective identity during Pibul Songkhram's government in early 1940s. During the rise of nationalism and militarism in early World War II, the Thai nation or "*chart Thai*" became extremely important. The role of the bureaucracy has also been developed along with the idea of Thai nationalism. Religion as a second pillar initially referred to Buddhism, which has been a primary religion of Thai society since its pre-modern era. Although Buddhism is not formally the national religion, its religious political culture ideologically shapes the Thai polity on many levels. Despite this fact, this religious dimension of Thai political culture provides religious communities with freedom of religious practices, expressions, and demands in Thai political arena (Yusuf 2009: 325). The third pillar, monarchy, represented a sacred universal ruler and embodied the hierarchical relationship between the ruler and people in Thai society.

Arong Suthasasna, a Thai-Malay Muslim sociologist, has argued that while Thai society is patrimonialistic, the Thai polity has also been characterised by excessive role of bureaucracy, which has been termed by a famous study from Fred Riggs (1966) as a 'bureaucratic polity.'²¹ Since this conservative polity is predicated upon a homogeneous society, heterogeneity or any deviation of different ethnic identities from the central value system can possibly cause instability and simply threatens the typical power structure of Thai society (Arong 1989: 92-93).

However, Duncan McCargo has articulately argued that "political networks" are the best concept to explain the politics of Thailand since 1973. McCargo has

²¹ In explaining socio-political characteristics of Thai society, Arong has combined the social characteristics termed 'patrimonialistic' (Jacobs 1971) and the political characteristics of the 'bureaucratic polity' (Riggs 1966, pp. 9-11, 329).

argued that “network monarchy” was the leading network of the period 1973–2001 until it was challenged by the unprecedented power of a new network created by elected premier Thaksin Shinawatra. After three decades of developing considerable influence through active interventions in the political process and institutions, the network monarchy seemed to be near exhaustion, especially after Thaksin’s second landslide election victory in 2005 (McCargo 2006: 516). However, since the 2006 coup by the monarchical network, the tensions between the two leading networks have been very strong. A deeply divided society split along the lines of these competing networks has been seen in Thai politics: the popular terms *phrai* (lowly peasant) and *ammart* (aristocrat) have widely symbolised the social disparities that mirror the pre-modern Thai class structure. The rise of Thaksin represented the rise of a capitalist-aligned party politics which transcended the Thai bureaucratic polity: a new factor in Thai political culture. For Muslims, the polarization of the country’s politics brought unwelcome and troubling tensions to the surface.

Thai State’s attempt to manage the Muslim minority

As Muslims in the south are culturally different from Thai Buddhists and have been a critical concern of the Thai state, a series of state policies to manage and indeed to interfere in Muslim affairs have long been implemented.

From the thirteenth to eighteen centuries, relations between Ayudhaya and Patani were based on a tributary system. Patani was a vassal state sending *bunga mas* or golden flower to Ayudhaya periodically. The first incorporation started in 1875 during Bangkok period under King Rama I’s expansion policy. After abortive rebellions, Patani in 1808 was divided into seven smaller provinces, or *hua muaeng*. During the nineteenth century, there were constantly unsuccessful resistances from southern rulers. In 1906, as a result of the administration reform under King Chulalongkorn’s centralisation policy, the seven provinces were dissolved and united as *monthon* or circle and local rulers were replaced by Bangkok bureaucrats. In 1909, the Muslim south was officially incorporated into the Thai kingdom under the Anglo-Siamese Treaty. One year after the 1932 revolution, the southern *monthon* was abolished and re-organised into four

provinces which remain in existence today. To this day, all provincial governors continue to be appointed by the government in Bangkok.

Rebellions and resistance from Patani rulers during Ayudhaya and Bangkok periods were largely conflicts among the local elite class. Discontent became more widespread after the rise of Thai nationalism during World War II (Thanet 2003: 12–13). Under Pibul Songkhram's military-dominated administration between 1938 and 1944, his assimilationist policies and discrimination against Malay language and culture aroused strong resentment among Malay Muslims in the south. A series of statism or *ratthaniyom* regulations under the State Decree were enforced that emphasised the centrality of Thai language, culture, and veneration in national symbols. In the south, wearing Malay dress, speaking Malay dialect, celebrating Muslim festivals were forbidden. The Islamic judiciary system regarding family and inheritance laws, which was authorised during King Chulalongkorn's reign, was abolished. In 1960, the Sarit Thanarat cabinet launched the Self-Help Land Settlement Project in order to 'balance the population ratio'. A large number of Buddhists from the North, Northeast, and upper South were brought to live and work in settlements scattered throughout the four southernmost provinces area under the auspices of the project, which aimed to dilute the Muslim majority population of the region.

After the fall of the Phibul regime as a result of the Japanese defeat in 1945, the new liberal government worked closely with Chaem Promyong and other Muslim reformists who had been aligned with the *Kana Ratsadorn* and Free Thai movement. The government sought to manage Islamic institutions by enforcing the Patronage Islamic Act 1945 resulted in favourable and unfavourable developments for Muslims and intensified divisions between Malay-speaking Muslims in the south and their Thai-speaking counterparts. The term '*Thai Islam*' used in the Act was seen as ethnically offensive by Malay Muslims in the south. Another Royal Decree was announced in 1948 after Phibul resumed the premiership. It amended the previous one, re-organising the roles and authority of the National Council for Islamic Affairs (NCIA), the Provincial Council for Islamic Affairs (PCIA), and the mosques (previously under the Mosque Act of 1947). The authority of *Chularajmontri* was downgraded: from being an advisor of the King, he became

merely being an advisor of the Ministry of Interior. Thai state management over time bureaucratized and politicized Islamic institutions, which gradually divorced them from local Muslims and particularly from religious leaders in the south.

The 1997 Islamic Organisations Administration Act was another channel for the state to manipulate the selection of Islamic committees. Duncan McCargo has argued that like many states that prioritise securing the loyalty of religious community leaders, the Thai state has sought to manage Muslim religious affairs in a similar way as it applied to the administration of Buddhism through a centralized and top down system. However, while Islamic institutions, specifically the Office of *Chularajmontri* and the Islamic council system, were reformed during late 1990s and outwardly became more open and democratic, they have also been more problematic and had the potential to replicate many of shortcomings of Thai electoral politics (McCargo 2012: 47–53). Elections for Islamic councils in the Deep South were highly politicized and became inextricable from power struggles involving local politicians through the respective supports from major political parties – the Democrat and Thai Rak Thai (McCargo 2012: 63). The later 2010 *Chularajmontri* and 2011 Islamic council elections also showed more obvious manipulation of political factions in parliamentary politics, including the indirect involvement of the monarchy and military networks.

Viewing *pondok* as a key institution cultivating Malay religious and political ideology and the foundation of Malay Muslim identity, which might hinder the process of Thai-isation, Thai authorities managed Islamic education with an aim to change this institution into ‘a quasi-secular instrument’ to propagate Thai values (Scupin 1998: 236). During the 1965 to 1968 period, the government implemented a plan to regulate and secularise the *pondoks* by transforming them to Private Islamic Schools (PISs) and further adjusting to many types of registered Islamic schools. As a result of coercive enforcement applied with an incentive of subsidies, more than 400 *pondoks* were incorporated into the government scheme, while others turned into separatist enclaves fighting against the state. Following the 2004 resurgence in violence, some private Islamic schools and *pondoks* were infiltrated and abused by the separatists to instil hostility against the

state, leading to increased government scrutiny and even the closure of some schools and *pondoks*.

Muslim responses to Thai state and society

The interaction of Muslims and the Thai state can be variously classified. Before 1932, Muslim relations with the Thai state were seen in two main respects. Firstly, the tributary relation between the Patani kingdom and Siamese kingdom has created the sense of Thai superiority and Malay inferiority, fuelling bitterness among Malay Muslims. Secondly, non-Malay Muslims elsewhere in the country were subject to Siamese rule since the pre-modern Thai era. Only in 1909 did Malay Muslims in Patani become fully subject to Siamese rule.

Thanet has argued that the relations between Malay-Muslims and the Thai state had been mediated through state relations between Patani kingdom and Thai kingdom, while the relations between migrant Muslims and the Thai state had been mediated mostly through individuals and personal relations (Thanet 2003: 9). As mentioned in Chapter 1, Imtiyaz Yusuf has differentiated the '*unintegrated* Malay-speaking Muslims' in the Deep South from those of the '*integrated* Thai-speaking Muslims' in other parts of Thailand in their relations with the Thai state (Yusuf 2008: 132, my italics).

The uneven distribution of Muslims in Thailand also implies that the relations between Muslims and the Thai state have rather been more accommodative in other regions of the country than in the Deep South. However, the response of heterogeneous Muslim communities to the challenges existing in Thai society and directly posed by the Thai state, have been too complex and intertwined to classify simply by region. Four distinct categories of reactions ranging from absolute confrontation to complete assimilation may be identified. The four categories are armed resistance, negotiation, political engagement, and religious cultural assimilation.

Armed resistance

The most hardline reaction has been the use of force by Malay Muslims in the southernmost province in their struggle to maintain their cultural religious entity

and in response to the perceived aggression of the Thai state. The armed resistance associated with their identity struggle occurred in two major periods: between the late 1960s and the early 1980s; and from 2004 until the present.

Since the coercive incorporation of the Malay southern area, the Thai state has struggled to integrate the Malay Muslims into its nation-building project. Instead, historically its assimilationist policies provoked grievances among the Malay elites and locals, stimulating rebellions and uprisings. Such policies included the expansionist policy in 1780s, the highly centralised administrative reforms of 1902, the official incorporation in 1909, the restructuring of provincial administration after 1932 revolution, and the assimilationist policy pursued during the 1940s. Before the 1933 transformation of the southernmost region into four provinces or *changwat*, resentment circulated merely among elites. But from the Phibul period of nation-building under the flag of Thai nationalism, which threatened Malay Muslim identities and provoke wider resentment among religious leaders and local people, all further attempts and policies to integrate and engage the southern Muslims were viewed as a form of assimilationism. When conditions deteriorated after a series of heavy-handed government-led incidents, popular outrage shifted to a radical line and was manifested in the emergence of a variety of separatist movements, of which the influential were BNPP (Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani/Ml. Patani National Liberation Front, est. 1959), BRN (Barisan Revolusi Nasional/Ml. National Revolutionary Front, est. 1961) and PULO (Patani United Liberation Organization, est. 1968) PULO. There was intense unrest during the late 1970s to early 1980s which ceased following the Prem Tinsulanond government's policy to accommodate the separatists by granting them amnesties and setting up the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) as a special regional security and governance agency.

A new round of the insurgency re-emerged in late 2001 (Funston 2008: 18; McCargo 2008) and has obviously escalated since 2004, starting with the so-called '4 January' incident when a group of militants raided a Thai army camp in Narathiwat. There was intense debate about the reasons for the revival of violence, which some blamed on the resurgence of the separatist movements and others on the dissolution of SBPAC by Thaksin's government. Over thirteen years of violence

from January 2004 to July 2017, over 2,200 daily attacks and disastrous incidents have heightened the number of casualties to exceed over 19,000, comprising of 6,608 fatalities and 12,535 injuries.²² Among various explanations for the escalating and ongoing violence, a major factor that has animated local grievances was the use of violent repression by the government. The two most controversial incidents were the Army's bloody siege and bombardment of the Krue Ze Mosque on 28 April 2004 and the Army's piling large numbers of arrested protesters into trucks on 25 October 2004 at Tak Bai, which led to the suffocation of seventy-eight men. Duncan McCargo (2008) has argued that the conflict is a war over legitimacy: separatists have flourished because of the state's lack of legitimacy. Another explanation that the National Reconciliation Council (NRC) identified as a key factor is a socio-economic structural problems, such as injustice, identity suppression, economic deprivation and social exclusion. However, whatever the salience of these factors, the separatist movements have gradually shown that they are the prime movers behind this conflict.

Negotiation

Negotiation is a debatable term that can loosely be applied to many courses of actions along cooperative behaviour; for instance, it can be considered as part of engagement and assimilation processes. In order to make a clear distinction from such overlapping processes, the term negotiation here is applied to explain case studies that show the outstanding sets of process of negotiation in religious and cultural identity struggle. This also reflects the same concerns as Chaiwat's concept of 'negotiated Muslims' (Chaiwat 2005).

The first case illustrating religious tolerance and a determination to negotiate in order to preserve religious and ethnic identity was the role of Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir, an outstanding scholar who was influenced by Islamic modernist ideology in the Middle East. After years of identity suppression under the assimilationist policy of the Pibul government, Haji Sulong's seven demands

²² Compiled from the Deep South Watch's monthly and yearly statistics reports including following sources: 1) Monthly Summary of Incidents in Southern Thailand, from 3 January – 3 August 2017, and 2) Deep South Update: State of Violent Conflict in Southern Thailand, December 2016, Prince of Songkla University, www.deepsouthwatch.org. Accessed 25 August 2017.

petition was submitted to the liberal government in April 1947, calling for regional rights for local people in terms of language, political and economic administrative issues, as well as the right to practise Islamic law. In other words, the demands suggested the creation of an autonomous rather than an independent region. But before further steps could be pursued, the government was ousted by a military coup in November 1947. Haji Sulong's petition and continuing political activity was perceived as a threat, leading to him being jailed for four years and six months. Two years after his release, he mysteriously disappeared after meeting police officers in Songkhla. His apparent extra-judicial killing was one of major incidents that provoked Malay Muslim resentment and has strengthened the legitimacy of resistance against the Thai state.

Another important case was the struggle of Muslims in defending their community called Ban Krua. This was previously an agricultural settlement of Cham Muslims on the margins of Bangkok administrative centre during the establishment of the Bangkok period. Over time, the area grew increasingly urbanised and eventually became very valuable economically. In 1988, the Expressway and Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand (ETA) launched a plan for a new expressway that would cut through Ban Krua: part of the community would have to be demolished and relocated, including houses, cemeteries and the mosque. Their protest against this mega-project was done via different methods, primarily based on peaceful means and public engagement, over eight years and against five governments. Their defence of the community means much more than houses and has been depicted as a symbol for the historical co-existence of Muslims and others in Thai society. Eventually, they gained sympathy and acceptance from media and non-Muslims and as some in the media heralded their successful fight as 'a model for Thai civil society' (Satha-Anand 2005: 149-155).

The third case, known as the hijab demonstration, exemplifies how far Muslims have come and the influence of an Islamic resurgence. The hijab protest successfully negotiated the right for Muslim women to wear the hijab in public institutions. When a global Islamic resurgence influence landed in Thai society between the 1970s and 1980s, the tension between these two identities was unavoidable. In the case of the so-called 'hijab crisis', the tension began from

December 1987 to March 1988 at the Yala Teacher's Training College, when a group of female Muslim students conveyed the message to the college administration that they intended to dress in accordance with their religious beliefs. Tensions had been boiling around the continuing refusal of the administrative to respect this wish, as well as student criticisms of existing regulations. This aroused hostile feelings on both sides and matters soon became very politicize. Despite an order from the Education Ministry asking the college to accommodate the students' demands, the hijab was still banned by the college thanks partly to protests by Buddhist students, and contradictory statements from another minister questioning the Education Ministry's order. A number of Muslim communities, politicians and organizations came together to organize two mass demonstrations in front of Yala Central mosque, in which tens of thousands of protesters participated. Finally, Ministry of Education agreed to amend the uniform regulations. Chaiwat (2005: 89) has noted that this crisis reflected social patterns found more generally in society: Muslim students constituted a minority in the college, which was governed by administrators armed with rigid regulations.

Muslim civil society has also taken to working towards Islamic identity preservation, community development and Muslim rights protection. Preeda Prapertchob has pointed out that many outstanding Muslim individuals and civil society organisations nowadays are the product of youth and student movements (Preeda 2001: 104–05). For example, the Thai Muslim Student Association (TMSA) established in 1960s has contributed not only to nurturing future successful politicians (for example, Wan Muhammad Nor Matha and the late Surin Pitsuwan), university scholars, business executives, senior government officials and businessmen, but has also indirectly become affiliated with many civil society organisations. The Young Muslim Association of Thailand (YMAT) is its most direct affiliation. It was established in 1964 and has worked to bring together activists who retired from TMSA. It has won acceptance across the spectrum of Muslim society in Thailand for its social services, and more recently, its advocacy for justice and the rights of Malay-Muslims in the southern provinces (Liow 2011: 1393). Given its renaissance in the 1980s, influenced by the global Islamic resurgence, YMAT is one of the leading organizations in reviving Islam and Muslim identity in

Thailand. Former YMAT activist and current advisory council member, Anantachai Thaiprathan, who is a medical doctor at Yala Hospital, also established the Thai Islamic Medical Association (TIMA) in 2003. It has played a pivotal role in promoting Islamic awareness among medical workers and negotiating the integrating Islam into medical services in public hospitals.

Political engagement

Muslim rights and liberties which are accepted in Thai society nowadays are the result of the continual political engagement and contribution from Muslim leaders of the past. Imtiyaz Yusuf has pointed that full engagement in the Thai political space has enabled Thai Muslims to maintain their religious identity and cultural rights within a democratic framework (Yusuf 2008: 131–32) as equal citizens. Indeed, Muslims has long been involved in Thai democratic processes. During the 1932 revolution, Chaem Promyong was one of the founding members of People's Party that helped transform Thailand into a constitutional monarchy (Scupin 1980b: 1227). During World War II, he joined the Free Thai underground resistance movement against Japanese Army. Owing to his Islamic modernist ideology, he used his close relationship with Pridi Phanomyong and other Thai liberals to reform the Muslim community, including the issuing of the Patronage of Islam Act 1945 which stipulated the establishment of national Islamic institutions in order to mediate between the Muslim community and the government. One of these was the Office of Sheikhu Islam or *Chularajmontri*, to which he was appointed the following year, making him the first Sunni to hold the office. Unfortunately, his attempt to reform this titular leadership to be more active and progressive was halted by the military coup in 1947, prompting him to flee overseas with Pridi. Although he failed to address the grievances of southern Malay Muslims, he had helped to create greater opportunities for the Muslim minority to be better accommodated in Thai society.

Another instance of engagement can be seen from Muslim participation in Thai national politics through parties, factions and as individuals. Regarding political parties, ever since the emergence of the democratic era in 1946, Muslims have established many political parties with the aim of advancing their collective

interests; they have all failed however, leading the majority of Muslims to argue that aligning with major parties is the best way forward (Yusuf 2008: 139). Muslim parties have included the Thai Muslim Party (1957–58), Naew Santi or Peaceful Front Party (1973–74), Santipharp or Peace Party (1998–99), Santipharp *Thai* or Thai Peace Party (2006–07) and in the 2011 election the Prachatham Party. Despite articulating itself as a party of southern Malays and addressing Malay nationalism as a main campaign theme (and being covertly supported by the military) Prachatham failed to win any seats. Among the factions aligning themselves with major parties, Wahdah (Unity) faction was the most influential and successful. It was formed by leading Malay Muslim politicians from the four southernmost provinces in 1988 in order to address a Thai Muslim agenda. For fifteen years Wahdah gained continuous support from Malay Muslims and its members gained a series of ministerial posts. Their prominent founding members were Wan Muhammad Nor Matha from Yala, Den Tohmeena from Pattani, and Areepen Utarasint from Narathiwat.

Two contemporary renowned Muslim politicians who achieved high positions are the late Surin Pitsuwan, a Malay descendant from Nakhon Si Thammarat serving as a Democrat Party MP, who became Foreign Minister, and later ASEAN Secretary General; and Wan Muhammad Nor Matha, a Malay from Yala who became successively a Member of Parliament, President of the National Assembly, Minister of Transport and Communications, Minister of Interior, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture. Through the strength of Wahdah, he reached a senior role in politics via Chavalit's New Aspiration Party which was later merged into Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai Party.

For Muslims in the south who are extremely dissatisfied with their situation under the Thai rule, there are two broad alternatives: fighting the system, or trying to work within it. Many politicians from the region faced this dilemma. There is some evidence that younger generation of separatist sympathisers are beginning to reject violence and use non-violent means to fight. As long as democracy functions, political engagement is a highly desirable approach for many Muslims to take. In central Thailand and other regions, Muslims are mostly closely engaged with Thai society. One reason for this accommodative relationship is that they did

not originally live in that region but came as outsiders and settled there as a distinct minority. However, the line between accommodation and integration is ambiguous, and many Muslims do indeed assimilate.

Assimilation

Unlike Malay Muslims in the south, who were able to maintain their separate identity despite the assimilationist policies of the Thai state under the Phibul regime, many Muslims in the central, northern and the northeast regions have assimilated into broader Thai society due to many factors, notably education and intermarriage (Scupin 1998: 247–49). The children of Muslim settlers, whether they were Malay, Indian, or Chinese Haw, eventually became involved in the mandatory educational process. They were exposed to learning the Thai language in schools and gradually forgot their ancestral languages. Following intermarriage, even when Muslim men married Buddhist women who converted to Islam, most of their children were raised in a non-Islamic household setting.

Another factor that has a critical influence on assimilation – regardless of area and origin – is the bureaucracy which recruits many Muslims into the Thai system. As bureaucracy is part of the Thai political structure and influenced by a patronage system inextricable from Thai-ness traditions, many Muslims felt that without hiding their Muslim identity and assimilating into the bureaucratic culture, it would be impossible to reach high positions. Many Muslim bureaucrats have been successful in their official careers, however. One of the most renowned is Aree Wongaraya, the former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, who became Interior Minister in the appointed government after the 2006 coup. In the Deep South, where Malay Muslims may expect to assume leading positions in official administrative agencies, given the reason that they are the majority in the area (and is one of Haji Sulong's seven proposals), there have been two Malay Muslim Governors in recent years. Theera Mintrasakdi, locally known as “Phoowa De” (from Abdul Kadir in Arabic), became the first Muslim governor of Yala province in 2006. During the final year of his career before retirement in 2012, Theera was sent to serve as governor of Nakhorn Si Thammarat, a Buddhist majority province in the upper South. As a provincial leader, regardless of religion,

he was expected to be involved in Buddhist provincial affairs. The other Malay Muslim governor is Niphon Naraphithakkul, alias “Nik Hok” – a local Malay name from Is-hak in Arabic) – who was the Governor of Pattani preceding Theera. Police Major-General Phichet Pitisetthaphan is another example of Muslims rising in the Thai state hierarchy. He was the first Malay Muslim police officer to reach the position of Pattani Provincial Police Chief. His official local Malay name was originally Pichet Kasor. Nevertheless, these examples of Malay Muslims assuming top bureaucratic posts were unusual.

As described earlier, some descendants of Shiite Muslims have also historically assimilated into Thai society. Aside from Bunnag aristocratic family which converted to Buddhism, another family that descended from the first *Chularajamontri* Sheikh Ahmad is the renowned Ahmadchula family. Of the Ahmadchula family, there are two prominent descendants who became prominent Thai politics. Firstly, General Sonthi Bunyaratkalin, who later became an MP and the leader of the Matubhumi (Th. motherland) Party, was formerly the Thai Royal Army Commander-in-Chief, the 2006 coup leader, and Deputy Prime Minister in the appointed government after the coup. His father, whose former family’s name was Ahmadchula, was a Shiite and also a military officer; however, Sonthi declares himself to be Sunni. Secondly, Prof. Dr. Akarathorn Chularatna, the first President of the Supreme Administrative Court, which was established after the 1997 Thailand Constitution, was born Buddhist after his father converted from Islam. The Chularatna family today, which is related to the Ahmadchula family, includes not only Buddhists, but also Shiite and Sunni Muslims. Simply changing a Muslim name to a Thai one can also be a symbol of assimilation. However, Wan Muhammad Nor Matha – despite maintaining his Arabic-Malay local name and surname – could still reach a very high position, showing that a more wide-ranging negotiation of identity may be allowed in parliamentary politics than in the bureaucracy.

In the present globalisation era, the new factor undermining the influence of assimilation is the globalisation of Islamist movements: Muslims who have been socialised in a non-Muslim context assert their identity beyond the national context to encapsulate a more transnational Muslim identity (Mandaville 2001; Roy 2004). For example, students studying in public institutions no longer necessarily

assimilate: they have a wider access to Islamic knowledge beyond the local traditional religious authorities and institutions. Still this also leaves the door open for Muslims with Islamic school backgrounds to assimilate to another influential cultural force. Even though the process of Islamisation seems to isolate Muslims from many Thai identities and practices, which are based on Buddhism and Brahmanic-Hinduism beliefs that contradict Islam, the role of some outstanding Islamist movements has created some accommodation for Muslims in Thai society.

To conclude, the aforementioned Muslim minority political engagement highlights the fact that there has been an opening in the democratic space in Thailand (Chaiwat 2006: 158). Despite the fact that violence in the south is still prevalent, attempts to achieve political aspirations through violence has been on the decline while other peaceful alternatives, including political participation through formal and informal channels, media engagement, civil society empowerment, peaceful protest, and peace dialogue, are increasingly attractive options for Thai Muslims.

Islamic reformism in Thailand (Thai Islamist Studies)

Generally, the Thai Islamic reformism literature encompasses Islamic revivalism, social movement, and education but lacks a focus on the accommodation dimension. The term 'Islamist' is not commonly used in what I here call 'Thai Islamist studies.' Instead, related terms which refer to the same group of people and ideologies have been frequently and interchangeably used include 'Islamic reformists' *khana mai or kaum muda*, and 'Islamic modernists'. There are two waves of literature on Islamic reformism in Thailand in accordance with different periods of the *khana mai* impetus. It is also worth noting that there is only one author who seriously examines reformism respectively in each wave.

The first wave is monopolised by Scupin's works (1980b and 1998) that examine reformist individuals and movements from the late 1920s to the 1990s. Prominent individuals studied here as part of the first generation are Ahmad Wahab, Direk Kulsirisawad (Ibrahim Quraishi), Chaem Phromyong and Banjong Sricharoon and their relative organisations are the Ansarissunnah Association and

the Jam'iyatul Islam Association. The Young Muslim Association of Thailand (YMAT), established later in 1964, was also noted as a recent development during that time (Scupin 1980b: 1233). Scupin used the term Islamic reformism inextricably with *khana mai*. While Scupin has established reformist scholarship in Bangkok and left a gap regarding southern area, Liow as part of the second wave has filled this gap with the focus on Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir in the first generation of Thai Islamic reformism (active between the 1930s and 1940s) and Ismail Lutfi Japakiya as a contemporary reformer. Parallel with Liow, there are also many authors who are interested in and have significantly explored Islamic reformist/Wahhabi or *khana mai* as part of different contexts respect to their expertise, such as Gunaratana and Archarya (2005 and 2013) and Abuza (2005 and 2009) as well as those focusing on insurgency and terrorism, Hosrstmann's focus on the Tablighi Jama'at (2007), Yusuf (2007) who looks at Islam in the south, McCargo (2008) and his studies of the southern conflict, and Joll who looks at Muslim merit-making (2012).

In terms of exploration of Salafis in the narration of terrorism-insurgency studies, which is thoroughly discussed in the first section, it is also important to comment further on some scarcely studies of Thai Islamist in connection with violence. It appears that these sources are limited to intelligence agency accounts and include many baseless claims, which have been recycled over time. The latest study by Gunaratna and Acharya (2013), for instance, carelessly mentioned Lutfi's Yala Islamic University as a college following the use of outdated sources re-cited from Bradley's short article (The Straits Times 2004) – just as the in their previous study (Gunaratna et al 2005).

In relation to the Tablighi Jama'at, Islamic reformism in Thailand has been examined through the roles of two groups in particular – that is, the movements around *khana mai*, both of which prioritise *da'wah* (preaching or calling) as their main mission of religious reform though their form of preaching and activism area totally different. The Tablighi Jama'at, which is irrelevant to this research, is an apolitical missionary movement founded by Maulana Ilyas from the Deobandi School in Northern India. Their preaching methods worldwide include forming groups of traveling preachers (for a particular length of time ranging from three

days, forty days to four months), preaching door-to-door and organising permanent preaching groups at local mosques (Horstmann 2007: 31). Their religious practices include Sufism and mystical rituals. Some authors argued that there is also an influence of purist or orthodox orientation in the group (Horstmann 2007: 31) but for Thailand this is not the case.

Aside from the focus on *khana mai* as a reformist movement, both Scupin and Liow also implied that the Tablighi Jama'at was a movement that could be situated in the reformist camp, though not in the mainstream version of it (Scupin 1998; 245–46; Liow 2011: 1396). Building on Scupin's work, Horstmann (2007: 31) has described the Tablighi as reformists and *da'wah* revivalists. As there is an ambiguity among some observers and local people in the use of the terms 'reform' and *da'wah* as used by the Salafi and Tablighi movements, it is worth noting that this research will explicitly apply these term vis-à-vis the Salafi explanation.

Chapter 4

Historical Background of Assalam and the Muslim Group for Peace

Introduction

In seeking to understand the transformation of the selected cases of Islamist movements towards an accommodative trajectory in the contexts of Thai political society and popular Malay Muslim communities, the very first questions that must be addressed are: Where and how did these movements originate? Building on the previous chapter which provided background on Thailand's political structures and the position of Muslims, this chapter will inquire into the specific milieus from which both movements originated and evolved. The chapter deals with the historical background and the evolution of the two movements, the Assalam and the Muslim Group for Peace (MGP). In so doing, the chapter will start by examining the emergence of the Salafi enclave within the Muslim community in Thailand. The life and experience of the movements' charismatic leaders will also be traced, as they constituted an essential part of the movements' origins. The chapter will then address the inception and significant turning points in the emergence and evolution of both movements, in relation to the heterogeneity, dynamism and contentions of the Salafi network as well as other elements of the Muslim community in Thai political society.

Rather than offering a descriptive explanation, the study will also employ theoretical perspectives derived from social movement theory. Within the broad category of social movement analysis, there are three respective levels of analysis, structural, organisational, and ideological, including political opportunities, mobilising structures, and framing processes (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996). This chapter focuses on the first level, which is based on the idea that social movements do not operate in a vacuum but are part of a broader social milieu shaped by changing patterns of opportunities and constraints that influence movement dynamics (Wiktorowicz 2004: 13). The analysis of this level reveals the importance of the broader political system, as well the socio-economic and cultural

conditions in which they are embedded. Much of the literature here highlights aspects of political closure and openness, as well as the institutional and substantive locations (Gamson and Meyer 1996: 277) which impact the capacity of social movements for activism. However, a movement's decisions and responses hinge upon recognition and interpretation of opportunities and threats (McAdam, Tarrow and Zald 2001).

Taking these perspectives into consideration for the two selected case studies, the category of political opportunities will be employed in this chapter by looking at the related socio-political contexts during the movements' early years of inception.²³ These contexts encompass both opportunities and constraints within Thai political structures and Malay Muslim society that affected the decision-making and contextual interpretation of the pioneering leaders, and thus shaped the form of the movements' emergence and subsequent evolution. The then-Assalam movement was formed in the late 1970s in a relatively repressive environment in southern Thailand, during which a lot of Malay Muslims still felt antagonism and distrust towards the Thai state, resulting from the state's previous cultural assimilationist policies and harsh treatment towards Malay Muslims in the 1940s and 1950s. These constraints mean that the beginnings of Assalam were covert and the movement operated as an informal organisation. I argue that Assalam gradually became more open, interactive and cooperative with the Thai state when its leaders became convinced that opportunities exist to collaborate with the bureaucratic structure. Increasing accommodation was then evident, thanks to this process.

MGP, on the other hand, emerged in Bangkok in 2001 with a fair degree of trust in the Thai state following the promulgation of the Kingdom's 1997 Constitution, which was widely acclaimed as the most 'democratic' constitution to date. While the evolution of MGP has not been associated with tight state control or repression, but the movement has been watched from a distance by the

²³ Subsequent developments in both movements will be analysed further in Chapter 5, especially regarding their management of challenges through pragmatic strategies, which is the most pertinent analysis to the examination of Islamist accommodation.

authorities.²⁴ Since MGP leaders were raised within a rigid tradition of Salafi scholarship and had a narrow perspective on socio-political issues at the outset of their movement, they were operated in a devout, puritanical realm and were isolated from the real-life activities of mainstream society. MGP's subsequent engagement with the state and wider society by exploiting political opportunities alongside its own organisational development was also evidence of accommodation.

In short, the difference in political settings – that is, between the Southern border region and Bangkok – as well as the different attitudes and interpretations of movement leaders towards political opportunities help to account for the divergent origins and evolution of the two movements.

The Emergence of Salafi-Reformism in Thailand

In Thai Islam, the rise of Salafi ideas provoked two competing factional alignments broadly categorised as traditionalist Islam and the Salafi-reformist Islam. The best-known terms among Malay Muslims in Thailand for these groups are *khana kau* (Th.) or *kaum tua* (Ml.), meaning the old group and *khana mai* (Th.) or *kaum muda* (Ml.), meaning the new group. According to Imtiyaz Yusuf (2007: 10), traditionalism denotes Islam that is syncretist in orientation whilst reformism denotes Islam which is puritanical in orientation.

Traditionalists, as described by Shepard (2004: 81), are 'Muslims [who] have given a lower priority to 'modernity' while at the same time have a strong loyalty to the particular religious forms they have inherited from the past'. In Thailand, Islam has historically been of the syncretistic type that entailed the intermingling of normative Islam with local practices (Yusuf 2007: 10). Traditionalists, who form the majority of Thai Muslims, have broadly adhered to this syncretist orientation. When Salafis – who claim a rigorous emulation of the Prophet Muhammad and *al-Salaf al-salih* (in Arabic, the pious predecessors or

²⁴ Interview with one of the senior officers in an agency under the National Security Council, which oversees security issues related to Muslim communities. I was asked by the informant to anonymise his name and position. Interview at Chaeng Wattana Administrative Centre, Nonthaburi, 20 April 2015.

forefathers), outspokenly criticised and rejected religious innovation (*bid'a*) a clash between *khana kao* and *khana mai* ensued and could be witnessed throughout Thai-Malay Muslim communities. This sectarian tension was noted by the former secretary of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC), Thawee Sordsong, who declared that a marked cleavage between *kaum tua* and *kaum muda* was one of the first issues he could readily notice at the outset of his appointment to the position.²⁵

Intra-Salafi divisions

The Salafi-reformist in Thailand, like elsewhere, does not represent only the 'purist' orientation, as framed inaccurately by Yusuf (2007: 10). Indeed, there is, and has been, significant ideological nuance and diversity concerning notions of purism and reformism within the *khana mai*. However, this has not been clearly explicated by prominent observers on Thai Salafis (Scupin 1980b, 1987, 1998 and Liow 2009, 2010). It is possible that during the period when Scupin conducted his research, internal ideological differences were not very apparent. However, during my research period it was very noticeable, especially when the selected cases of Islamist groups leaned towards accommodation through their external fronts. This thesis not only traces such a distinction in order to understand the dynamics of intra Salafi-reformist contentions alongside process of Islamist accommodation, but also attempts to establish new characteristics and relations between them not previously noted in studies of Thai Salafis.

I argue that one can infer an accommodative trend from Salafi adoption of a reformist approach. The more these Salafis become pragmatic and adaptive, the greater they tend towards accommodation with the mainstream. But in the eyes of the narrowest Salafi tradition, pragmatic Salafis will no longer be 'legitimate Salafis', and this causes tensions as well as heated debates in the wider Salafi community.

The thesis finds that the purists or scripturalists rigidly follow the Salafi methodology of Islamic interpretation and activism, whilst the reformists – despite

²⁵ Interview with Thawee Sordsong, the former Secretary of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC), 18 March 2015.

claiming its legitimacy on Salafi foundations – are more inclined to the modernist method of activism. These two lines of Islamic ideology reflect what Tariq Ramadan (2004: 27) has referred to as ‘Salafi-literalism’ and ‘Salafi reformism’, respectively.

Both purist and modernist ideological inclinations were inextricably linked alongside the beginning and evolution of the *khana mai* societies since the early twentieth century and had not become really obvious until Sheikh Rida announced a parting of ways from his purist-centric students in July 2012. Rida’s move subsequently escalated into larger intra-Salafi polarisation in the wider network of Salafi scholars. Such controversies began among Salafis in Bangkok from the early 2000s, before later spreading to the southern region. Thus far, exchanges of vehement criticisms between purists and reformists have taken the form of written refutations and verbal challenges, as well as televised debates on Thai Salafi TV channels, and extensive discussions on websites and social media – platforms which made this ideological division more intense and clear-cut.

This intra-Salafi conflict in Thailand, nevertheless, reflected and was influenced by contentious Salafi politics in the Middle East, especially in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Saudi Salafis, among whom Wahhabism or rigid puritanism is a predominant strain, had a more profound effect because it was supported by the Saudi regime, both in terms of granting powerful authority in religious affairs to a group of leading Salafi scholars appointed to the Council of Senior Scholars (*Majlis Hay'at Kibar al-'Ulama*) in the Kingdom and externally sponsoring projects worldwide via a massive budget derived from petrodollars. Internal Salafi division was triggered in the 1980s and 1990s when the established authority of the senior purist Salafi-Wahhabi scholars, who served as ‘rubber stamps’ of religious rulings to validate the Saudi ruling regime’s political stands (International Crisis Group 2004c: 1) was challenged by a group of younger, more politically inclined Salafi scholars who claimed better understandings of contemporary issues and insisted upon the necessity to apply the Salafi creed to the modern context (Wiktorowicz 2006: 221). These young scholars, comprising Sheikhs Salman al-Awdah, Safar al-Hawali, Ayidh al-Qarni, and Nasir al-Umar, rose to prominence between the 1970s and 1980s with the phenomenon called *al-sahwa al-Islamiyyah* (Ar. Islamic awakening), yielding to a blend of the traditional *Wahhabi* position and the *Ikhwani*

(Muslim Brotherhood) approach (International Crisis Group 2004c: 2-3). Albeit with varied degrees of adherence to Wahhabi and *Ikhwani* ideals, they enjoyed discussing contemporary social and political issues rather than focusing on abstract theological debates prioritised by Wahhabi puritanists. This trend is manifested – in different degrees and aspects – in both Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida.

This idea of Salafi contextual interpretation was disseminated in Saudi Arabia by Muslim Brotherhood scholars, such as Muhammad Qutb and Muhammad Suroor, who had fled from persecution by the Egyptian Nasserist and the Syrian Baathist regimes and sought refuge in Riyadh from the 1960s onwards. Given the impulse of Saudi Arabia to recruit well-trained professionals at a time of major state building and in order to firm up its political-ideological disputes with Ba'athist and Nasserist rivals, exiled Muslim Brotherhood's intellectuals and activists were welcomed by the regime and thereafter developed a firm foothold in Saudi schools and universities in the 1970s and 1980s. Their socio-political version of Islam was spread not only through school and university curricula, but also through books written by their members that could be found in bookshops throughout the Kingdom in the 1970s (International Crisis Group 2004c: 2-3).

While this thesis endeavours to establish and identify the Salafi ideological nuance in Thailand, it is important to note that generally in the global context so far, there has been confusion, ambiguity, and contradiction in the use of terms associated with Islamic revivalism, such as Salafi, Wahhabi, and Islamic reformism. The ambiguity and fragmentation within Salafism makes it difficult to define (Meijer 2009: 3). Some observers have erroneously drawn a common ideological lineage between the Islamic modernists and the purist Salafis, since they both referred to themselves as *al-salafiyya* (Wiktorowicz 2006: 212). Of the varied categorisations of contemporary Salafis or Islamists made by different authors,²⁶ the most comprehensive and neutral typology considering ranges of geographical

²⁶ Interesting categorisations include: Saudi Islamism, reformist, rejectionist Islamist, Jihadist, and Shiite Islamists (International Crisis Group, 2004); typology of Islamists by considering ideological trends – Ikhwanism (the Muslim Brothers worldwide, Salafism (influenced by Saudi), Jihadist (between Egypt and Afghanistan), Takfirism, and Al-Jaz'ara (mainly Algerian nationalist-Islamist) (Ashour, 2009a); category of Salafi activism – quietist and activist Salafism (Meijer 2009, p. 4); and political and apolitical Salafism.

areas and ideological trends was devised by Wiktorowicz (2006).²⁷ In his efforts to sketch an anatomy of the Salafi movement, Wiktorowicz categorised it into three major factions: purists, politics, and jihadis, which differ in their analysis of the context and what needs to be done, not beliefs per se. He argued that while the various factions of the Salafi share a common religious creed or *aqidah*, which revolves around strict adherence to the supremacy of *tawhid* (Ar. the oneness of God) and hold fast in following rules and guidance from the Quran and Sunnah, the divergence among them emanated from the 'inherently subjective nature of applying a creed to contemporary issues and problems' (Wiktorowicz 2006: 214).

The purists primarily emphasise the conservation of pristine Islam through nonviolent methods of propagation, purification, and education. They view a focus on contemporary politics as eroding the purity of Islam and leading to deviancy. In this regard, an important project by the International Crisis Group Middle East Report referred to them as 'rejectionist Islamists', because they focus on issues of individual belief, morals, and ritual practices, rather than engaging with broader social, cultural or political issues (International Crisis Group 2004c: 2). The 'politics', conversely, attempt to apply Islamic principles based on the Salafi creed to the socio-political arena. Regarding the aforementioned beginnings of the schism between the Saudi purists and modernists in the 1980s and 1990s, the latter claimed that they were better situated to interpret the application of Islam in the modern context owing to their better understanding of contemporary affairs (Wiktorowicz 2006: 221). Many politics are highly critical of ruling regimes as well as supportive of social and political activism, but stop short of calling for revolution. In contrast with the politics, the Jihadis are more inclined to a revolutionary and militant approach in pursuit of re-creating a true Islamic society or state. A striking example of the division between the politics and the Salafi-jihadists can be seen from the hostility between the Muslim Brotherhood and Al-Qaeda (Lynch 2010).²⁸ In the Thai Salafi context, the Salafi Jihadist strain is less

²⁷ Roel Meijer made the observation that Salafism or Wahhabism was previously studied mostly in Saudi Arabia as well as Pakistan, then gained a bit more interest after the Salafi expansion to Europe in 1990s. After 9/11, studies on Salafism strikingly increased, but were still mostly related to radicalisation and security concerns (Meijer (ed.), 2009, pp. 1–2).

²⁸ While addressing the Muslim Brotherhood's effort in combating violent extremist idea posed by Al-Qaeda in order to construct a 'firewall' to radicalisation, Mark Lynch has interestingly examined

relevant, as it has not yet appeared as a major trend endorsed by any Thai Salafi groups. This chapter, therefore, mainly focuses on the distinction between the first and the second categories.

Both contemporary competing trends of purificationism and reformism, which have also been manifest in the intertwined Islamic resurgent concepts of renewal (*tajdid*), revival (*ihya*), and reform (*islah*),²⁹ are traceable to theologians, legal scholars, as well as charismatic reformists in a longstanding and continuing history of Islamic revitalisation during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Notwithstanding the fact that they are used interchangeably by prominent scholars of Islamist politics, such as John L. Esposito (Esposito 1983, 1999a; 1999b; 2003), the terms 'renewal' and 'revival' frequently connoted the purificationist tradition, whereas the term 'reform' was more likely associated with the reformist tradition. Throughout the aforementioned three periods, both traditions were rooted in two contexts: the internal decline of Islamic beliefs and practices and the external threat of foreign aggression (Esposito 1999b: 47, Voll 1999: 510; Delong-Bas 2004: 8). These milieus were the breeding grounds for the puritanist and reformist strands, respectively.

Perceived internal decline which took place in the eighteenth century resulted from syncretism which had crept into Islam and intermingled with local popular creeds and manifested in Sufism. This decline was met by revivalists in many regions with support for puritanism. In the eighteenth century, the most prominent figures who were directly influenced by two earlier prominent figures – Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855) and Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) – were Shah Waliullah (1703-62) in India and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab from Najd of Saudi Arabia. The renewal efforts of Shah Waliullah, who was also influenced by Ahmad Sirindhi (1564-1624), were not yet influential until the Wahhabi movement formed by Abd al-Wahhab (1703-92) emerged with the support of the powerful tribal leader Ibn Saud, subsequently allowing Wahhabism to become a powerful, authorised creed of Saudi Kingdom, as well as becoming the prototype of rigorous

the difference between the Salafi reformist and the Salafi-jihadist views of an Islamic state, democracy, violence, and *takfir* (declaration of religious renounce). See Lynch, 2010, pp. 467–487.
²⁹ On renewal and reform see Rahman (1970) and Voll (1983).

fundamentalism in the modern Islamic experience. However, the followers of this doctrine who generally call themselves as *al-muwahhidun* (Ar. the believers in *tawhid*) not only represented the typical purist-fundamentalist trend, but also covered a wide range of positions on a broad spectrum that ranges from fundamentalism to open adaptation and syncretism (Voll 1994: 53–54). This kind of divergence has been evident since the nineteenth century.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the external challenges of foreign dominance taking place across the Muslim world were responded to by reformist movements both intellectually and militarily. The nineteenth-century thinkers including Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (1839–97), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), and Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935) laid important foundations of reformism to the subsequent influential movements in the early and mid-twentieth century, such as the Muslim Brotherhood founded by Hasan Al-Banna in Egypt in 1928 and the Jamaat-e-Islami established by Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi in Pakistan in 1941. The idea of these reformist trends primarily emphasised the adaptation of Muslims to changing circumstances and modernity, as well as the struggle to end colonial rule. According to Al-Afghani, evolutionary thinking and the trust in human intellect is the key driver of social development and civilisation (Moaddel and Tallattof 2002: 13). Abduh emphasised Muslim engagement in social issues and educational reforms by adopting core elements of western civilisation.

It is worth quoting the passage below on the legacies of this period as it is relevant to the focus of this research on Islamist accommodative behaviour. Esposito (1999a: 647) posited that:

Islamic modernists of the nineteenth and twentieth century, like secular reformers were open to accommodation and assimilation; they wished to produce a new synthesis of Islam with modern sciences and learning. Thus they distanced themselves from the rejectionist tendency of religious conservatives as well as western-oriented secular reformers who restricted religion to the private life and they looked to the west to rejuvenate state and society.

Despite their different responses, prominent revivalists and reformists also demonstrated an affinity in their efforts to revitalise Islamic faith and practices.

Aiming at the moral reconstruction of society, the critical causes of Muslim political, economic and religious decline was commonly diagnosed as resulting from Muslim deviation from true Islamic values and from the infiltration and assimilation of local, indigenous, un-Islamic beliefs and practices, as well as *taqlid* (Ar. blind imitation) of those un-Islamic traditions. The prescribed solutions were the call for a return to the Quran and Sunnah, the assertion of *ijtihad* (Ar. independent human reasoning/interpretation), and the reaffirmation of authenticity. According to Voll (1983: 35–43), these three solutions can be seen as continuing themes that appeared throughout the history of Islamic resurgence.

The onset of Thai Salafi-reformism

Like elsewhere, these three continuing themes of reformist traditions have resonated in the Thai Salafi Islamic awakening efforts since the first arrival of Salafi-reformist idea in Thailand in the early twentieth century. The outset of the Salafi or *khana mai* was started by an Islamic scholar-cum-activist from Minangkabau of Indonesia, Sheikh Ahmad Wahab (1883–1956), who first came ashore to Thailand at Bangkok Docks in Yannawa in 1907 (Mureed 2004: 22). He was a political refugee who had been exiled by the Dutch colonial authorities. Not to be confused with Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and another Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Al-Minangkabawi (1860–1916) who passed away in Mecca, Ahmad Wahab was known in Indonesia as Ahmad Khatib.

Before his sojourn in Mecca and Cairo, Wahab studied Islam in *pesantren* as well as from his father Sheikh Abdul Hamid and his uncle Sheikh Abbas Ladang Lawas Bukittinggi (Abbas 2008: 213).³⁰ In Egypt, Wahab met the prominent reformist Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935) who influenced him the idea of Islamic modernism. Wahab also thereafter contributed Islamic articles under the pseudonym '*Bangkok*' to *Al-Manar* magazine, the famous Islamic reformist magazine founded by Rashid Rida in 1898 (Mureed 2004: 28). Wahab's relative in Indonesia was hailed as one of Indonesia's key advocates of *modernisasi agama*

³⁰ While evidence about Ahmad Wahhab is scarce in Thailand, as well as in the English literature, this story about him was narrated by his relative in Indonesia, Haji Siradjuddin Abbas. I am grateful to Sunarwoto who came across this source and kindly sent it to me from Indonesia.

(Islamic modernisation) (Abbas 2008: 213). In addition, Wahab introduced what Scupin (no date: 22) called 'the Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian versions of Islamic modernism to Bangkok'. This version, did not demonstrate the ideological schism between the purists and the modernists in the *khana mai* society, something which appeared more visibly only with the conflict between Sheikh Rida and his purist-centric students.

The socio-cultural forms of popular Islam in Thailand in the early twentieth century reflected the same milieu of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's Saudi Arabia in the eighteenth century, that is, the prevalence of a syncretistic style of Islam. Thai popular Islam was a heterogeneous blend of Islam and Hindu-Brahmanist-Buddhist rituals. Unlike in the South, where Islamic and Malay traditions were integral to the syncretistic Islam influenced by the mystic and superstitious rituals from other local folks and beliefs, the form of popular Islam in Bangkok and other central and northern regions was highly influenced by the traditions of the Buddhist majority (Scupin 1988). Ahmad Wahab's reformist schema, therefore, exhibited the same mission as Middle Eastern prototypes of Salafism.

In just a short time, Wahab's Islamic impressive learning became well known to the urban Thai Muslim community which came to exalt people who knew both Arabic and the *kitab jawi*. When Wahab soon mastered the Thai language and became accepted for his academic credentials, he began to teach reformist and Salafi ideas to urban Thai Muslims. His direct legacies were evidenced by three *khana mai* mosques, three Salafi institutions, and two prominent reformist students.

In terms of mosques, Wahab first came to the New Mosque of Thanon Tok (Masjid Mai Thanon Tok), a mosque located in Thanon Tok, Charoenkrung, in the heart of Bangkok. In 1922, the mosque was registered as As-Salafiyyah Mosque, named after the Assalafiyyah Wittayalai School, an Islamic-integrated school established by Wahab earlier. Presently this mosque is no longer significant for contemporary *khana mai*, though it retains historical significance as a reminder of the first settlement of Ahmad Wahab in Thailand. By contrast, the Al-Atique Mosque, where Wahab later settled and spent much of his late life has been a stronghold of *khana mai* up to this day. The Al-Atique Mosque was one of the oldest

mosques in Bangkok's ancient Muslim area of Surau Suanluang, which was initially established in 1785, and was later augmented with prisoners of war from Kedah in 1809 during King Rama I's reign, later adding the word *kao* (meaning 'old') to its name. 'Surau Kau Suanluang' (Th. Suan Luang Old Mosque) was renamed by Wahab on 2 September 1952 with the Arabic name the Al-Atique Mosque. After his scholarship became known to some local Muslim leaders at Assalafiyah Mosque, Wahab was recommended to undertake a reformist mission at Bangkok Noi Mosque, subsequently renamed the Masjid Luang Ansarissunnah (Ansar al-Sunnah Royal Mosque – Ar. literally 'helper of the Sunnah'). Members of this community, which is located in the outer zone area of the ancient Bangkok royal palace, were descendants of Arab and Persian traders settling since before the reign of King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868–1910) (Kusuma 2007: 19). This mosque used to be a spot frequented by foreign Muslim traders. It later became a centre of Salafi academics and activities. Two Islamic reformist academic associations contributed by Wahab were located in this area. The Al-Islah Association contributed activities and documents regarding the Salafi creed while Jamiyatul Islam actively transmitted reformist messages from global reformist thinkers and movements through the Al-Jihad magazine.

Most of the physical legacies of Wahab except the Al-Atique and Bangkok Noi Mosques, as well as the associated Al-Islah Association, declined after he passed away. However, his reformist ideas enjoyed lasting influence and reached larger Muslim communities through his two leading students: Ismail Ahmad and Direck Kulsirisawasd. Wahab once defined their different salient characters as piety and intelligence, respectively (Mureed 2008: 53).

Ismail Ahmad, aka Kru Ismail, studied with Ahmad Wahab after his graduation from the Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulama in Lucknow of India. Wahab's pseudonym 'Bangkok' in Al-Manar magazine had impressed Ismail Ahmad since he was in India (Mureed 2004: 28). In 1945, Ismail Ahmad established the Sassanupatham Parkpayoon Islamic School in his hometown of Pattalung, launching Salafi ideas in the upper southern Thai region. In 1952, facing some political problems in the South, Ismail moved to Bangkok and built another Sassanupatham School in the Suanluang district of Bangkok. Towards the end of

his life, he also spent time teaching the Salafi creeds at the Al-Atique Mosque and worked at the Jumiyatul Islam Association.

Direck, or Ibrahim Quraishi, was known among *khana mai* followers as Ajarn Direck. Ajarn Direck, descended from Indian and Cham Muslims, and knew Thai, Urdu, English and Arabic, giving him access a wide range of Islamic literature. His translations and writings, including many of his own books and articles in Al-Jihad magazine, created a profound wave of reformist thought among urban Muslims in Bangkok. Scupin (1980: 1) hailed Direck as the 'foremost intellectual leader of the reformist movement from the 1950s to the 1970s'. Ajarn Direck also worked hand in hand with Kru Ismail in the same *khana mai* schools, mosques and associations, enabling Ahmad Wahab's idea to flourish among a wider range of urban Thai Muslims. One of his salient academic works was the Thai translation of the Qur'an, namely Bayanul Quran (Ar. Quran Explanation) first partially translated in 1953 and later in a complete version in 1969. Direck's version subsequently became a central point of controversy within the Salafi scholars over some contents that caused him to be criticised for belonging to the Ahmadiyah sect, referred among Thai Salafis as 'Godyani'.

There have been more than twenty Thai translations of the Quran since 1951 (Somsak 2005: 4-8), though only five were complete translations of all thirty chapters. Of these versions, the two most popular were the so called 'Chula Tuan' version, which was fully translated by the former Chularajmontri Tuan Suwannasart in 1969, and the translation by the Association of Thai Students Alumni of the Arab World, a complete version of which was published in 1992. The former was popular among *kana kao* communities, whilst the latter was the main reference for the *khana mai* and younger generations. The popularity of both versions partly resulted from their free distribution in massive numbers with sponsorship from the Thai and Saudi Kings respectively. The 'Chula Tuan' version was first sponsored by the late King Bhumibhol in 1964, as well as subsequent editions in 1987, 1996, and 2014 that appeared on the occasions of the late King's reign anniversary and the Queen's birthday. The Chula Tuan version was popular among *khana kao* Thai-speaking Muslims since this version of the Quran was distributed through Islamic councils to mosques throughout the country. The Arab

Alumni version was disseminated widely after it was published by the Saudi King Fahd Centre for Printing the Quran, Madinah in 1999. The Arab Alumni version, contains footnotes criticising Direck's version for making various mistakes in interpretation as opposed to linguistic errors. A lot of Ajarn Direck's works were also criticised by the traditionalist scholars for containing misinterpretations; he proposed new ideas unfamiliar to the traditionalists and did not receive a formal education in either Islam or Arabic. The main contributions of his interpretation were themselves influenced by a belief in scientific progress coupled with the development of Saudi Wahhabism thus making him believe in the compatibility between Quranic verses and science (Niran 2006: 8).

Another reformist figure during the outset of the *khana mai* was Chaem (Shamsuddin) Promyong (1901–89), the first Sunni Chularajmontri (Sheikh al-Islam or an official Muslim supreme leader) after 1932 and the end of absolutist monarchical rule. Chaem joined the People's Party, the group responsible for the 1932 seizure of power led by Pridi Phanomyong. Chaem and Pridi visited Ahmad Wahab many times to seek advice on political and religious issues (Mureed 2008: 49-50). Chaem admired Wahab for his reformist thought. While Chaem was fascinated by and adopted some of Abbuh's reformist ideas during his studies at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and was thus viewed by Scupin (1980) as a reformist and a leader of *khana mai*, whether he was a Salafi or not is disputed. Most contemporary scholars and activists of *khana mai*, according to my fieldwork, saw Chaem as a leader of the *khana kao*. However, even if Chaem was part of *khana kao*, owing to his progressive thought, he would not have been the type of traditionalists described by Shepard (2004: 81) as having a strong sense of obedience to the religious practices derived from the past while 'modernity' is merely their secondary concern. The ambiguity around Chaem's precise leanings may have been caused by his progressive and critical thinking towards the traditionalist community, in which he was deeply embedded, as well as his close relationship with *khana mai* figures. He was a close friend of Banchong Sricharoon, a *khana mai* leader from Bangkok Noi, who invited Chaem to join the People's Party. Much later, Banchong founded the first Muslim political party, *Phak Naew Santi* (Front for

Peace Party) in 1974 which failed due to its lack of support from the majority of *khana kau* (Scupin 1980: 1231).

The remaining *khana mai* figures and groups can be categorised broadly into two generations: the older and the younger generation. In terms of the senior generation, some figures shared similar experiences to Direck and Ismail. Sheikh Ali Isa, a senior Salafi scholar who migrated from Egypt 1965, first settled and married a Thai Muslim in a community called Ban Phetthongkham in the Bang-or area on Jaransanitwong Road, western Bangkok.³¹ This wealthy Muslim community has long been allied with the Bangkok Noi community due to shared social status and religious ideals with the *khana mai*. The Association of Thai Students Alumni of the Arab World, which was also located in the same area surrounding the Darul Ihsan Mosque, also became one of the centres of Islamic graduates from the Arab world. Sheikh Ali later moved to Ayutthaya province and established the Al-Furqan Islamic School. Presently, both Bangkok Noi and Ban Phetthingkham are still homes to many elite figures of the *khana mai*, even though their intellectual associations have become less important among *khana mai* society, especially since the recent younger generation leaders have been attract more young people and a wider range of other urban Muslim communities. The recent younger generation is more outstanding in their activism and are able to attract a wider audience due to the wide range of media available to them including radio, print media, and latterly television and the internet, whilst those from previous influentially Salafi institutions inherited from the pioneering generation are limited to their old networks and preach in an old-fashioned style.

After Wahab's pioneering work in shaping a new creed for Thai Muslims, it is hard to make a clear classification of periods and groupings since the evolution of *khana mai* has been continually added to both by Wahab's legacies and by independent graduates of Islamic studies coming back from studies abroad. Their next generations were varied in types of representation, such as independent

³¹ รายการพิเศษ กับ เซดอาลี อีซา เสียชีวิตแล้ว 9 เมษายน 56 (In Thai – Special programme with Sheikh Ali Isa, died 9 April 2013. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPuxLRuZz40> Accessed 15 June 2014.

scholars and their loose allied groupings, educational institutions, and social associations.

Another significant senior figure who has a lot of followers up to the present is Ajarn Shafi-e Naphakorn, aka Kru Ei, the Imam of the Mosque at the Foundation of Islamic Centre of Thailand (FICT) located in Klongtan district of Bangkok. This mosque is generally referred to as Soon-klang Islam (Th. Islamic Centre). It is one of the largest Friday prayer spots in Bangkok, assembling approximately 3,000 Muslims at a time.

Soon-klang Islam, which is viewed by *khana kau* as *khana mai*, is not part of mainstream Salafism. Rather, it is more open to general ordinary Muslims and intellectuals. The FICT was primarily established by reformist thinkers but later became more open to wider range of ideas, especially those of urban Muslim intellectuals. Many of those who gather around Soon-klang Islam can be framed as Islamic-cum-secular intellectuals and activists, especially former student activists of the Thai Muslim Students Association (TMSA), and the activists of the Young Muslim Association of Thailand (YMAT) and the Federation of Muslim Organisations of Thailand (FMOT).

There was a clear division of labour between Kru Ei and the intellectuals and activists. Kru Ei was responsible for education and religious affairs, while those intellectuals and activists looked after social affairs. Kru Ei's Institute of Informal Education of Adults created a large mass base of his students since the 1980s. His profile was raised after he became part of the Thai government's negotiating team during the 1972 Israeli Embassy hostage crisis, during which the Palestinian Black September militant organisation occupied the Israel's Bangkok embassy and held its six staff hostage for 19 hours. The hostages were released after the government pledged to provide safe passage for the militants to Egypt accompanied by Thai officials, including two ministers (*The Daily Telegraph* 1972). In terms of Islamic preaching, during his youth, Krue Ei was a rising Salafi scholar together with another widely recognised 'moderate' reformist and progressive scholar, Ajarn Ismail Wisutthipranee, aka Kru Air. Despite his personal humility, Kru Air became very well known over the three decades beginning in the 1980s from his radio programmes: over a hundred thousand of his lectures were issued in recorded

cassette form. Kru Air was one of the founders of the Santichon Foundation (see Brown 2014) which is best known as a centre for Muslim converts: it offered a course for new Muslims overseen by Banchong Binkasan, a well-known translator and author of Islamic books, pursuing the same tradition of Kru Air – although as an intellectual, not as a religious scholar.

The legacy of Ismail Ahmad to the present day can be seen from the Sassanupatham School in Klongkled, in the outer zone of Bangkok. Today, Ajarn Mustafa Yupensuk, one of the sons of Kru Hamzah Yupensuk who founded the school with Ismail, is considered as a senior among contemporary Salafis. Despite his old-fashioned style of preaching, which still attracted many followers, he was also open to new technology. This enabled Ajarn Mustafa to establish Thai Muslim TV (TMTV), the second Muslim satellite TV channel in Thailand. His Sassanupatham School founded in 1952 also continuously produced new Salafi scholars, including the recent generation, who are popular among mainstream Salafi preaching on four channels and via many religious schools throughout the country.

The contemporary younger generation, which was a product of the disciples of Ahmad Wahab through the Salafi network of schools and intellectual associations developed continually after Ahmad Wahab's introduction of Salafi reformist thought, was characterised by internal ruptures and the emergence of different factions. Most of the outstanding figures graduated from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, India, and Pakistan. Their ideological strands were inclined to puritanism rather than reformism, making them vulnerable to internal conflicts. They all commonly declare a rigid stance on protecting the purity of Islam: consequently, they were immature and intolerant towards any pluralism of ideas that they perceived contradicted pristine Islamic ideals. The cause of divisions ranged from different ideological inclination and divergent views on small *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) issues, to personal issues. The main styles of preaching of this generation were speaking on radio programmes, organising courses provided by foundations and associations, and hosting public panels rotating around various *khana mai* communities. These kinds of preaching were their mainstream methods from the 1990s to the 2000s, during which more than ten new Salafi intellectual

institutes were established throughout Bangkok. In the first decade of the new millennium, the development of media was drastically changed, starting from the flourishing of community radio, websites, social media, and satellite TV. The *khana mai*'s superior new media skills enabled them to attract more followers than the *khana kao*, especially among the youth, creating some tensions with traditionalist elders.

Among Salafi groups, earlier adopters of new media were better able to access wider audiences. While new media such as TV and online sources have replaced tape cassettes and radio broadcasts, organising public lectures directly in the community remains an effective classic method. Moreover, the wider the community scholars and groups are able to reach, the more success they have in improving their mass base. Since new media allows for this wider access, Salafi scholar target communities are not confined to Bangkok but throughout the country – especially in the southern area which was previously dominated by other Salafi reformist networks.

In the South, there was some difference between the preaching of Salafi reformists in the Malay speaking area of the Deep South and in the Upper South where the southern Thai dialect is spoken. Salafi reformist thought was introduced to the Upper South after Ismail Ahmad founded Sasanupatam Pakpayoon School in Pattalung in 1944. The same ideas were consequently transmitted via the Al-Muwahidun Mosque in Nakhian of Nakhon Srithamarat province, with its historic influence of Buddhist traditions and the Sri Vijaya pre-modern state. In other areas, especially Krabi and Satun, Salafi influence has been gradually expanded by subsequent Salafi students who had graduated from domestic and foreign Islamic institutions. Approximately half of them were independent or allied with the *khana mai* in the central region, while the other half were in the network of Ismail Lutfi spreading up from the lower southern area.

In the predominantly Malay Muslim majority area of the Deep South, prior to the inception of Ismail Lutfi's network there were other relevant noteworthy modernist groups. With the exception of the traditionalist *Ulamas* and elites, as well as the formalised authorities of the Islamic provincial councils, the prominent scholar-cum-activist Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir has been seen (Liow 2009a: 81) as

the dominant figure behind the initial wave of Islamic reformism in southern Thailand in the first half of the twentieth century. As with the ambiguous figure of Chaem, some studies (Joll 2012, Scupin 1980b, 1998) regard Haji Sulong as Salafi due to his progressive and critical ideas about the Malay Muslim condition, but there is no concrete evidence testifying to his Salafi credentials. Besides, the traditionalists also regard him as a major leader and many consider him 'The father of the Patani struggle,' as he was best known for his resistance towards the Thai state's cultural and political repression in Patani (Surin 1985: 146).

Malay nationalist groups, whether located inside or outside Thailand, had already 'occupied' certain areas of the country and had members embedded within many Malay Muslim communities. In a more specific and somewhat limited sense, there were two particular small groups that were widely known locally as being distinct from the typical Shafi-yyah majority. The group led by Haji Abdullah Buenaekbung in Yarang district of Pattani renounced some long-held rituals performed by the majority of local Muslims. The other group, which was not as large as Lutfi's, comprised the followers of Ustaz Abdullah Chinarong, alias Ustaz Lah India, who had studied with the Deobandi school in India (Liow 2009b: 159). Ustaz Lah India was viewed as the first leading scholar of Islamic reformism in southern Thailand (Yusuf 2007: 11).

Ustaz Lah India had a chance to privately study *hadith* (the Prophet's tradition), *tafsir* (Quranic exegesis), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and *usul al-din* (source of religion) with Haji Sulong for two years (Aryud 2014: 108). He absorbed some reformist ideas from Haji Sulong, which included incorporating social and political dimensions into the teaching of Islamic subjects. After studying with Haji Sulong, he spent three years in Kelantan studying at the Ahmadiyah Madrasah with Sheikh Muhammad Nur bin Ibrahim, the Mufti of Kelantan and nine years in Deoband in India, where he was the first student from Thailand. There he learned Islamic reformist thinking and met Sheikh Ismail Ahmad, a disciple of Ahmad Wahab.³² Ustaz Abdullah returned to Yala in 1968 and began to teach in the two most popular private Islamic schools in Yala: Pattana Wittaya School and Thamwittaya Mulnithi

³² Aryud Yahprung (2014) has written a detailed account of Ustaz Lah's educational biography and his ideological sources in southern Thailand, Malaysia, and Deoband in India.

School. The latter was the largest Islamic private school in Thailand and is known as an important site of traditionalist education.

Despite being famous for a new style of teaching that used the original sources of Arabic texts instead of *kitab jawi*, Ustaz Lah India quit both schools after teaching for five years due to major conflicts with the traditionalist *ulamas* and teachers regarding his rejection of some Malay traditions he perceived as reducing the purity of Islamic beliefs and practices. In his next job as a government official supervising Islamic teaching in primary and secondary schools in the Deep South, he had wider opportunities to propagate his reformist ideas, especially through his weekly public lectures on Sundays at the main conference hall of the Yala Provincial City Hall. His religious lessons integrating contemporary social problems of local communities attracted regular audiences of around two thousand, including civil servants, students, workers and people with non-Islamic education backgrounds (Aryud 2014: 111). Nevertheless, this programme lasted only two years. It was terminated in 1975 when his opponents submitted a complaint to the Yala Governor claiming that Ustaz Abdullah's teaching contradicted popular local practices and was likely to provoke disunity among Muslims. Ustaz Abdullah then resigned and founded an Islamic-integrated school, with his base of supporters. This school, Islam Prasarnwit, locally known as Pondok Aman, located in Sateng on the outskirts of Yala town, became his base for propagating the Salafi creed. His teachings, albeit puritanist-inclined, did not specify a clear distinction between the puritanist and modernist trends.

Ustaz Abdullah can be considered the first puritanist Salafi figure who introduced reformist principles to the southern Malay Muslim communities and gave rise to an Islamic intellectual awakening that challenged the unquestioned authority of the traditionalist *ulama* (Aryud 2014: 114). However, his promulgation of reformism was limited to a particular period and limited numbers of followers: he did not establish a specific institution or movement. This was unlike his reformist counterparts, especially Ismail Lutfi and Jihad Bungatanjong, who assumed the reformist mantle in the Deep South two decades after him. They created a wider network of cadres and followers throughout the southern region, culminating in the establishment of the Assalam movement.

In terms of the establishment of both Assalam and MGP, it is hard to pinpoint the exact moment that both movements began their activism because they gradually developed their network of supporters alongside recruiting their cadres and members. However, their evolutions can be broadly divided into three main periods: the early years of inception, the formation process phase and the development phases. This chapter covers the first period. The latter two phases will be described in the next chapter.

Historical Background of Assalam

The historical origins of Assalam can be traced from the formation period of movement, which was initially embedded in the context of Malay Muslim secessionist politics against the Thai state and was later shaped by the Salafi-Islamic reformist ideologies prevalent in the Middle East and South Asia from the late 1960s until the 1980s. This period was influenced by the dynamics of Malay nationalism in Southeast Asia and the prevailing Arab nationalism in conjunction with the rise of Salafi, Wahhabi, and Islamic reformist forces in the Middle East. The experiences of Assalam pioneers amidst this ideological crossroads affected their decisions alongside the movement's formation and subsequent evolution. This historical background section will be concluded at the point when Assalam settled in the kingdom of Thailand by launching different forms of Islamic teaching programmes, which constituted the bedrock of further organisational developments discussed in Chapter 5.

Although Assalam is generally depicted as a Salafi-Wahhabi group that is tied with global Islamic reformism, as opposed to the traditionalist Muslim majority or the Malay Muslim secessionism, the inception of Assalam was also rooted in the Malay Muslim politics of struggle against the Thai state since the late 1950s. The initial seed of the Assalam movement was planted in the context of Malay Muslims' grievances over the Thai state's centralisation and forced assimilationist schemes. However, it has also grown up within the ideological fertilising and catalysing processes in the context of global Islamic reformism. To emphasise further, it should be noted that Assalam's process of accommodation

has as its starting point not a Salafi position, but rather a Malay ethno-nationalist one.

Assalam's origins in the Malay Muslim politics of struggle

The current thoughts and characteristics of Ismail Lutfi and his networks are obviously distinct from those of the traditionalist Malay Muslim majority elites and the Malay Muslim secessionist movements. However, the inception of Assalam was not an isolated phenomenon, but part of the Malay Muslim politics of struggle against the Thai state since the late 1950s. The structural underpinnings of Malay Muslim grievances, in connection with the emergence of Assalam movement, reflect the socio-political and economic conditions of the Deep South between the 1940s and 1980s.

The grievances of Malay Muslims in southern Thailand against the Thai state were provoked by two sets of centralisation policies imposed by the Thai 'mono-ethnic' state. The first wave of resentment came from the Malay ruling elites and royal families as a result of the administrative centralisation policy launched by King Chulalongkorn beginning in the late nineteenth century.³³ The second wave occurred for Malay Muslims, especially the religious leaders or *tok gurus*, when this centralisation was reinforced by the assimilationist policies after the 1920s that imposed Thai cultural norms on Malay Muslim culture and religion. These intense cultural mandates were enforced under General Phibun Songkhram's nation-building and assimilationist scheme between 1938 and 1944. Muslim resistance transformed during this period from one that was restricted among the former ruling elites to a broader base of popular Malay Muslims. The leadership of the resistance efforts shifted 'from former aristocrats to religious elites' (Wan Kadir 1983: 51).

³³ Prior to the formal incorporation of the independent sultanate of Patani (1390–1902) into the Siamese state in 1902, which was reinforced by the 1909 Anglo-Siamese Treaty, there had been a long history of Siamese political domination and periodic rebellions from local *rajās* in the Thai southern area. The experience of the Siamese state with Patani rebellions since its first southward expansion in 1785 resulted in Bangkok initiating a series of 'divide and rule' measure that were aimed at reorganising the administration and power of Malay *rajās*. As a result the southern region was transformed from an independent sultanate into smaller tributary states, *monthon* or circles, and eventually, the current five border provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun and western part of Songkhla. See Nanthawan 1976.

One of the components of this struggle was led by Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir, a progressive religious leader who founded the Patani People's Movement in pursuit of autonomy rather than secession (Funston 2008: 9). Following his 'Seven Demands' proposal that centred on political rules and recognition of Malay Muslims cultural and religious identities which he submitted to the cabinet of Luang Thamrong Nawasawasdi on 3 April 1947, as well as subsequent efforts of negotiations and resistance, Haji Sulong disappeared after meeting police officers in Songkhla province in August 1954. He was later found dead. Haji Sulong's extra-judicial execution at the hands of Thai state as well as the strengthening of assimilationist policies after the 1957 coup led by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat stirred wider and deeper resentment and provoked new forms of resistance movement. The three major armed separatist movements that developed were the BNPP (MI. Patani National Liberation Front – est. 1959), the BRN (MI. National Revolutionary Front – est. 1961) and PULO (Patani United Liberation Organization – est. 1968). Apart from these domestic factors provoked by the Thai state, Malay resistance movements were also inspired by the achievements of nationalist movements in Indonesia and Malaysia, which attained independence for the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya in 1945 and 1957 respectively (Haemindra 1976: 207).

In terms of economic conditions between the 1940s and 1980s, Malay-Muslims in southern Thailand earned their livelihoods mainly through rice farming, fishing, rubber tapping and small scale farming of seasonal fruits such as durian, rambutan, and coconut. Most of the wealth in the area was based on the middle- and large-scale economy – including tin mines, larger rubber plantations and large commercial fishing boats, as well as business activities in town – and was dominated by Chinese and Buddhists, who constituted a minority in the area. According to Ladd Thomas (1975: 7), during two decades since the mid-1950s, the economic well-being of villagers in the area declined due to: 1) the decreased amount of land per family affected by the increase of the national population, 2) the low price of rubber in world market after the Korean War, 3) the decrease in fish catches by small fishing boats among villagers, and 4) the higher cost of living throughout the country. As a result of difficult economic situation, many Malay

villagers sought temporary employment in Malaysia and Singapore. Some of them also found better opportunities for employment in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries (Wan Kadir 1983: 64).

As for the then-Assalam movement, most of the founding members in the first generation had experiences with Malay separatist ideology and other movements. Stories and sentiments regarding Thai state oppression of Malay Muslims were widely circulated among Malay Muslim elites and religious leaders even before the outset of separatist movements from the late 1950s until the 1970s. During these three decades, it was popular for Malay Muslim elites and religious leaders in southern Thailand to send their children to study religious education in the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asian Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Yemen, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. Many of these students, who were considered as the cream of Malay Muslim communities, were inspired to study in pursuit of maintaining Islamic piety and to improve their communities, particularly through knowledge of Islamic studies. This trend shows just how deeply embedded religious beliefs were among Malay Muslim society in the three southern border provinces. The stronger the fear of being religiously and culturally assimilated, the more Malay Muslims aspired to support their youth to study abroad. On this basis, these future leaders of Malay Muslims were targeted and recruited by separatist movements, either before or during their studies.

Muslim countries in the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia from between the 1960s and 1980s offered a congenial environment for those who sympathized with Malay Muslim separatist movements in southern Thailand. These movements have been referred to by Malay Muslims as '*parti*'. Wan Kadir Che Man, a former president of Bersatu, a now-defunct umbrella organisation of Malay Muslim separatist groups, narrated his youthful experience in Mecca and Cairo during early 1960s when visions of Patani secessionism were imagined, exchanged and planned among Malay Muslim students and migrants in the clandestine meetings of different movements outside Thailand's territory (Zaki et al, 2015: 12-17). Most separatist groups had branches in the different countries of these regions. Almost every Malay Muslim student from Patani who studied abroad

in a Muslim country during the four decades from 1960 had become connected with one or other separatist movement, including BNPP, BRN, Pernas, and PULO. The most influential movements among youth and students of religious studies in local Malay Muslim communities between the 1960s and 1970s were the BRN and BNPP.³⁴ Most prospective students from Patani were targeted and recruited even before their landing overseas. Recruiters from different movements would eagerly vie to bring them on board, even at the airport.³⁵ The first generations of Assalam who left their homes in pursuit of studying Islam abroad during the two decades from 1970 were also among these students.

‘Group on the fence’: the convergence of Salafi-Islamic reformism

While the consolidation of Malay nationalism in Southeast Asia between the 1940s and 1950s gave rise to hope and encouraged Malay secessionists in Thailand, the dynamics of Islamism in the Middle East in the 1970s, especially the re-emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the early 1970s and the consolidation of Saudi Wahhabi-Salafism after the regime benefited from the rise of oil prices in 1973 (Gunning 2009: 30), had an important influence upon the adoption of Salafi-reformist ideologies among Thai Islamic scholars and activists.

Although senior members of Assalam, like cadres of other Malay Muslim groups, were graduates from various regions and countries, the most significant pioneering roots of Assalam can be traced to three main locations: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Thailand. Before the convergence of Islamic intellectuals and cadres from these countries that led to the formation of the movement, the prospective Assalam founders in those three countries already shared certain similar attributes in their ideological transitions. Such shared attributes included: grievances and distrust against the Thai state, a critical, sceptical view of the Malay Muslim separatist groups, and experiences influenced by the Salafi-Islamic reformist movements. The first attribute encouraged them to make efforts to emancipate Patani Malay people from the oppression of the Thai state and offer themselves as Malay Muslim activists or intellectuals. Meanwhile, the other two attributes led

³⁴ This view was also commonly presented by Ismail Lutfi, Ahmad Umar Japakia, Ismail Ali and Saleh Talek in the author’s interviews.

³⁵ Interview with Saleh Talek, 13 November 2014.

them to stay 'on the fence' and set up a splinter group from those separatist groups. This kind of critical standpoint was fostered by their understanding of Islam according to the Salafi orientation and their lessons of Islamic activism they learned from global Islamic reformist thinkers and other Islamist movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafi movements, the Indian- Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami, the Malaysian PAS (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia/ Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) and the Indonesian Masyumi (Partai Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia/Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations).

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia was the main site where Lutfi and his colleagues start framing their Islamic reformist ideology and activism. Saudi Arabia had a long history of Malay Muslim migration, ever since the war between Siam and the Malay Kingdom of Patani from 1785–1839, after which Patanians dispersed in various directions (Mohamad 2013: 1). Mecca was also significant to Patani through the reputation of Patani's Islamic scholarship as '*cermin Makkah*' (Ml.) or 'the mirror of Mecca' (Bustamam and Jory 2013: 117). The two dominant scholars of Patani origins who studied Islam in Mecca and became renowned for their contributions to Islamic scholarship and to the Malay-Indonesian world were Sheikh Da'ud al Fatani (1769–1847) and Sheikh Wan Ahmad bin Muhammad Zain Al-Fatani (1856–1908). The pioneering Patanian migrants to Mecca as well as their descendants, called *muwalladeen* (Ar.)³⁶, in all generations remained associated with their homeland through the pilgrimage (*hajj*), Islamic education contributions, trade, employment and family kinship.

According to the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs' National Archives, the Thais residing in Saudi Arabia in 1949 were classified into three different groups, including those who temporarily stayed for performing *hajj*, those who stayed for religious education and those who worked (Numan 2012: 124). In 1956, an estimated 90 percent of 679 Thais in Saudi Arabia classified as students were from Patani (Numan 2012: 124). These records, posits Numan (2014: 6), showed the concerns of Thai government over the Thai Muslims settling in Saudi Arabia and its

³⁶ This Arabic term refers to the non-Arabs who were born in Mecca. The singular term is *Muwallad*.

early effort to control and manage them. Wan Kadir (1990: 110) noted that there were up to 30,000 Southern Thai Muslims living in Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and the 1970s. This figure seems very high and was not based on strong evidence for such a drastic increase of Patanian migration.

In terms of Islamic education, Saudi Arabia offered both formal and informal religious instruction for Malay Muslims from Patani. Many of them partook in informal study circles taught in different corners around the Holy Mosque of Al-Haram by well-known Arab or Asian religious scholars, including Malay scholars, known among Patanians in Mecca as *ulama jawi*. The term *jawi* in Mecca encompassed Malay Muslims from *Nusantara* (Malay-Indonesian archipelago). Apart from informal classes, the young generations also attended public and private Islamic schools. Of these schools, Madrasah Darul U'lum and Madrasah Indonesia in Mecca were the two most popular among Patanians as both schools belonged to the Malay-Indonesian community and provided teaching in Bahasa Indonesia (Numan 2012: 122–125). Students from other parts of Thailand who were not familiar with the Malay language were likely to study in the *madrasahs* where the Arabic was a medium language of instruction (Hasan 2009, cited in Numan 2012: 125). Despite the longstanding Islamic educational ties between Patani and Mecca, most Patanian migrants after 1960 were not scholar-types who contributed to the fame of Patani as a centre of Islamic knowledge in the Malay-Indonesian world of the nineteenth century: many of them were actually more interested in working as tailors (Mohamad 2013: 111).

Many of those who benefited from Mecca both educationally and economically returned to build *madrasahs* (Ml. Malay traditional religious schools) in their homeland: there were more than four hundred traditional *pondoks* and Islamic private schools in the region. Lutfi's father, Babo Abdul Rahman Chapakiya was among these *pondok* founders. After ten years of study in the Madrasah Darul U'lum, as well as with other renowned *ulama* in the precincts of the Al Haram Mosque in Mecca, Babo Abdul Rahman returned to Patani in 1954 and founded Madrasah Rahmaniyyah, which incorporated modern sciences in its curriculum (Aryud 2014: 130). His *madrasah* was in the second generation of the two early generations of *madrasahs* in Patani. The first generation of *madrasah*, a new style

of Islamic institution that differed from the traditional *pondok*, began in the 1930s and 1940s. Of this generation, Madrasah Darul Ma'arif al-Wataniyyah was founded by the famous reformist Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir in 1933 (Numan 2012: 123).

In terms of tertiary education, opportunities for Malay Muslims to study in the formal Islamic higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia, which were dominated by Wahhabi and Salafi tradition, was limited based on a quota of scholarships allocated by the Saudi Kingdom. The late Sapae-ing Basor, for many years one of the Thai state's most wanted BRN leaders, was among those students who studied in tertiary level schools influenced by Salafi orientation. Most of Lutfi's group was also recruited from these Islamic university students, especially from the Islamic University of Madinah, the Islamic University of Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud and Umm al-Qura Universities.

Through performance of the *hajj*, employment and Islamic studies, Patani separatist ideas were transmitted to Patani communities in Saudi Arabia, especially after the early 1960s. However, according to their understanding of Islam and their lessons studied from the methods of many movements in Islamic history, as well as the suggestions received from some Islamic movements in Malaysia, Indonesia, and countries in the Middle East, Ismail Lutfi and their colleagues felt that the ideology and methods of these Malay nationalist movements lacked a clear Islamic perspective. Lutfi claimed that he tried to rectify this by talking to different leaders of those movements, including Ustaz Abdul Karim bin Hassan – alias Babo Karim or Uztaz Karim, the founder of BRN. It was clear to Lutfi that the ideology that their counterparts held was not legitimate in Islam: it included socialism, which had influenced their revolutionary *semangat* (Ml. spirit). Aryud argued that the political situation in the Middle East had a direct impact on the PULO, BRN, and the Salafi reform movements of Patani, especially since in Saudi Arabia and Egypt during the late 1960s and the early 1970s there was contestation between Islamic reformist ideologies and Arab nationalist socialist ideologies (Aryud 2014: 125).

Despite their view that separatist methods for educating and training cadres were against the 'righteous' path of Islam, Lutfi and his colleagues did not simply neglect or avoid their separatist brothers. Lutfi explained that he invested

considerable efforts during the period around 1975–1980 to convince key separatist figures to adopt his approach and ideology, a matter which he had consulted religious and political leaders as well as *mashayikhs* on (Ar. senior people – as a plural noun of sheikh) in Mecca. ‘We tried to talk to the key leaders of Malayu Patani movements so long as we could visit and convince them at that time, including BRN, BNPP, and PULO, but they did not believe us,’ contends Lutfi.³⁷

Disagreement over ideologies among Malay Muslims was not surprising given the fragmentation of previous Malay separatist movements, which were differently inclined to existing systems or orientations in the Muslim world, such as aristocracy, republican, secularism, democracy, ethno-nationalism and Islamism. In broad summary, the BNPP was a combination between the aristocracy and conservative Islamic elites, the BRN moulded Islam and socialism together into its aims of creating a Patani Republic, and PULO emphasised secular nationalism over Islam (Funston 2008: 9). As regards the BRN, originally a splinter movement from the BNPP, Wan Kadir (1983: 136) argued that one of the main factors that led to the split was the disagreement of the progressive religious elites led by Abdul Karim over the early objective of BNPP to restore the Patani sultanate. Abdul Karim set up the BRN with the aim of founding the Patani Republic. The BRN framed their ideology as ‘Islamic socialist’ (Wan Kadir 1983: 137, ICG 2005, Funston 2008: 9), which a BRN spokesman explained in 1980 was quite similar to what was practiced in Egypt under Gamal Abdul Nasser (Wan Kadir 1983: 137).

In the same way that Ustaz Karim hesitated to join the BNPP, Lutfi’s different ideological alignment from BRN also forced him and his colleagues form a new movement. The final straw that ended the fraught relationship between Lutfi and the BRN was provoked by an intense debate held in Mecca between Lutfi and Ustaz Karim in August 1976 regarding the root causes of Patani problems and the approaches needed to resolve them (Aryud 2014: 131). This debate was elaborated on by an informant who joined Lutfi’s group in Mecca, who told me that *Salafi-reformist* (my italics) approaches were proposed by Lutfi against the socialist

³⁷ Interview with Ismail Lutfi Chapakiya, 18 December 2014.

approach held by Ustaz Karim.³⁸ This was also reported by another former worker in Saudi Arabia (interviewed and cited by Aryud 2014: 131), who was one of the large crowd of Patani expatriates attending the debate, which resulted in most Patanians in Mecca supporting Lutfi's approach. Lutfi himself asserted that as a result of the debate, half of BRN's young generations in Mecca abandoned their socialist-inclined ideology and joined his group.³⁹ Some informants among Assalam leaders and members told the same story, claiming that one of the young people who took Lutfi's side was among those who had earlier drafted the BRN's constitution.

This contention marked the peak of disagreement between Lutfi and those of separatist leaders, leading to the idea of *halal darah* (blood is permissible, that it is allowed to kill) which was declared by the *ulamas* of BRN and PULO (Aryud 2014: 124).⁴⁰ This incident was believed by Lutfi and his colleagues to be the point when the label 'Wahhabi' was attached to them by their enemies and rivals.⁴¹ Senior Assalam leaders contended that the issue of Wahhabism was fabricated to destroy them and prevent people from joining them. Lutfi asserted that in fact, many of those separatist leaders had also studied like him. He insisted that he was not Wahhabi, as he has never taught even a single page from any books of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab or a single page from the book of Ibn Taymiyyah. Meanwhile, Lutfi pointed that out the book of Muhammad ibn Abdulwahab (*Al Kitaab at-Tawheed*) was taught in Pondok Pho-ming even before he went to Medina, but no one had called them Wahhabi.⁴² However, McCargo (2008: 22) has noted that while Lutfi himself and most of his supporters rejected the term Wahhabi, an academic who was a part of Lutfi's network informed him that he was happy to call himself 'Wahhabi,' as it was the most original form of Islam.⁴³

³⁸ Interview with the former worker in Mecca and MAJDA member, subsequently Assalam, at Amphur Muaeng Pattani, 22 March 2015. This informant referred to Lutfi's ideology as *Salaf* and *Tajdid*. I adjusted this to my term 'Salafi-reformist'.

³⁹ Interview with Ismail Lutfi Chapakiya, 18 December 2014

⁴⁰ It was also confirmed by the author's interview with Ismail Lutfi Chapakiya, 18 December 2014.

⁴¹ Interviews with Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014; Ismail Lutfi Chapakiya, 18 December 2014; Ahmad Umar Chapakia, 3 February 2015.

⁴² Interview with Ismail Lutfi Chapakiya, 18 December 2014.

⁴³ See more discussion on Wahhabi as a pejorative term and its controversial status in the three southern border provinces in McCargo 2009: 22–23.

During his 14 years in Saudi Arabia (1972–1986), apart from his outstanding academic credentials and personality, Lutfi was also actively involved in student activities at the university. Not only students from Thailand, but all students from other ASEAN countries were under his responsibility after he was chosen to be a leader of ASEAN students' activities. This special status enabled him to meet significant Islamic scholars and activists from various ideologies and movement, one of whom, as indicated by Liow (2009: 90), was the renowned moderate Syrian Muslim Brotherhood scholar Sayyid Hawwa, during Lutfi's study at the Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University.

Another experienced leader who fascinated Lutfi was Mohammad Natsir (1908-93), the founder of the Indonesian Masyumi Islamist movement and the former Indonesian fifth Prime Minister in 1950–51. Lutfi had a chance to meet him several times. It enabled Lutfi to develop strategies suitable for developing Malay Muslim communities. The first meeting took place in Mecca when Lutfi served as a leader of the Southeast Asian student coalition in Saudi Arabia. Another was also in Mecca when Lutfi invited him to meet his group of Islamic-inclined students from Patani who studied in Medina and Riyadh. In a personal meeting, Natsir advised Lutfi to apply the knowledge and experiences he had learned from global Islamic leaders and ideologies in his home region by developing his own strategies and establishing his own movement, rather than following existing approaches and ideologies that do not conform to Islam. In other words, Natsir suggested Lutfi develop an Islamic-oriented movement that ran separately from nationalist-oriented movements. Natsir's suggestion encouraged him to exert himself to study lessons from Islamic countries and movements, such as in Arab countries, Pakistan and India. Lutfi also read texts about the Islamic struggles in Indonesia, Malaysia (PAS), and other books in order to start the mission of *da'wah*.⁴⁴ As noted by Anthony Reid (2015: 403), Natsir was the leading channel for Saudi Salafi ideas into Indonesia, through the Saudi-funded Muslim World League (MWL) and its scholarships for study in Saudi Arabia; Lutfi's later role followed in these footsteps.

⁴⁴ Interview with Ismail Lutfi Chapakiya, 18 December 2014.

Not long after the establishment of informal groups, with quite simple names such as 'Jama'ah al Iman' (a group of the belief) and 'Jama'ah Islamiyah' (Islamic group), Lutfi and a few of his Salafi Islamic-oriented colleagues set up their relatively formal Patanian student activist representation as the Jemaah Pelajar Islam Patani – JPIP (the Patani Islamic Student Movement), which was established in Riyadh in 1977.⁴⁵ JPIP was known among their members as *Jeem*, an abbreviation of Arabic letter of J. However, not all of these names were known to outsiders, except JPIP, which was used as a heading on their formal letters used for coordinating and organising activities. There were less than ten students who founded the group, including Ismail Lutfi, Ismail Ali, Jihad Bungatanjung, Abdul Halim Saising, and Ahmad Umar Chapakia.

In 1980, Majlis Da'wah Islamiyah – MAJDA (Council for Islamic Preaching), or internally known as Meem (Ar. letter M.), was informally founded to serve as another 'vehicle' for graduating cadres to continue their preaching mission beyond the campus, both in Saudi Arabia and their homeland. This informal movement, with approximately three hundred members, also included non-student Malays who resided in Mecca who shared a Salafi-Islamic orientation. Most of them had dropped their previous separatist ideologies and were taught by Lutfi and his friends, especially Jihad Bungatanjong. Jihad had a more pivotal role than Lutfi in giving Islamic education to Meem's members as he spent his entire ten years of study from Bachelor's degree to PhD in Mecca,⁴⁶ where most Patanians lived, while Lutfi did his first degree in Medina and the other two in Riyadh.

Nevertheless, these group names were merely known among them and used for contacting other groups or agencies in Saudi Arabia. According to Patani independence movements, Lutfi's group was referred to as '*puak atas pagar*', meaning 'a group on the fence'. This term connotes the meaning of being cowardly for refusing to fight and engage in the armed movement.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Interview with Ahmad Umar Chapakia, 3 February 2015.

⁴⁶ Interview with a member of ex-MAJDA, 27 March 2015 in Pattani.

⁴⁷ Interviews with Saleh Talek, 13 November 2014; Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014; Ismail Lutfi 18 December 2014; Ahmad Umar Chapakia, 18 December 2014; and Ismail Ali, 17 January 2015.

Pakistan

In Pakistan, the prospective Assalam leaders were highly influenced by the Jama'at-e-Islami's ideologies and activism. The Jama'at was an Islamist movement founded by the renowned scholar Syed Abul Ala Maududi (1903–79) in 1941 in India before Partition. One of Assalam's key leaders who also graduated from Pakistan is Saleh Talek. Saleh was the acting director of the International Islamic Relief Organisation of Saudi Arabia (IIROSA) and later served for a time as Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology, Fatoni University. He encompassed a very interesting ideological transformation from Malay nationalism and socialism to Islamism, as well as from a negative view of the Thai state to a more accommodative approach. His progressive and critical mind later made him an essential node linking the old and the new generations within the movement, as well as becoming one of key drivers of the movement's accommodative and pragmatic direction.⁴⁸

As an academically-inclined Islamic student who read various kinds of books, including Islamic studies, Islamic reformism and other socialist revolutionary ideas from Thailand and the Malay world, Saleh was not likely to believe or blindly follow any particular political or religious orientation, especially one that contradicted his sense of morality or Islamic values. In the so called 'Pattani Demonstration', the 45-day mass demonstrations at the Pattani Central Mosque and the Pattani Provincial Hall between late 1975 and early 1976 provoked by the killing of six young Muslims at Kor Tor bridge by Thai marines, seventeen-year-old Saleh was one of the speakers delivering an important speech to the masses. Although the demonstrations were, remarkably, an instance of non-violent resistance by Malay Muslims,⁴⁹ Saleh witnessed the downside of Malay Muslim resistance efforts. He was not satisfied with some of the behaviour and strategies used in the protest that went against Islamic principles, such as the fabrication of evidence cited in speeches to discredit the government, the

⁴⁸ Interviews with Shakirin Sumalee, Assalam's third-generation activist, Secretary of the Assalam Smart School Association (ASSA), 26 March 2015; Abdullah Seng, Assalam's fourth-generation activist, 25 February 2015.

⁴⁹ See Chaiwat, 2001.

intermingling between men and women, and the neglect of prayers among some Muslim cadres.⁵⁰

In Pakistan, Saleh was outstanding among Malay Muslim students. He was selected to become the head of the Jama'ah Patani (Ml. Patani Council), aka Rumah Patani (Ml. Patani House) in Pakistan, which was the hub for students from different Malay Muslim movements. He made changes to many aspects in the Jama'ah Patani so it could be more 'legitimately' Islamic according to his understanding of Islam and his critical observations on separatist movements. Parts of the outcomes included adding 'Islam' into its official name, titled 'Persatuan Pelajar Islam Melayu Patani di Pakistan' (Ml. the Association of Patani Malay Islamic Students in Pakistan). Criticising the unfair domination over Rumah Patani by BRN, he also rearranged the proportion of delegates from different movements in the *majlis shura* (Ar. advisory council) to balance power within the council.

Saleh's ideological distance from separatist counterparts gradually increased after he became involved in Jama'at-e-Islami's activities and got to know non-Malay speaking students from Thailand's upper south and central regions. Most Patanian students did not get on very well with the Thai-speaking students owing to language differences.⁵¹ Saleh differed from most Malay-speaking students in that he enjoyed socialising with non-Malay speaking students from regions outside Patani and other international students. He covertly set up a group with some students from Patani who shared the same ideas and included Thai-speaking students from the upper southern and central regions, who were rejected by typical Patanian students.⁵² The group's activities were meant to develop Islamic cadres and a tangible Muslim brotherhood beyond cultural difference and chauvinism. Like his Islamicist counterparts in Saudi Arabia, the ideological alienation from other Malay nationalist groups made Saleh's group viewed as '*puak atas pagar*'. When ideological differences became more visible and led to more

⁵⁰ Interview with Saleh Talek, 13 December 2014.

⁵¹ Interview with Saleh Talek, 13 December 2014. This language barrier resulting in the inharmonious relationship between Muslim students from the South and from other upper regions was usual in Islamic private schools and pondoks in the Deep South, as well as in Islamic universities abroad.

⁵² Interview with Saleh Talek, 13 December 2014.

conflict, Saleh eventually split from the Malay nationalist network and later joined Lutfi's group. Saleh's reputation for progressive ideological orientation was communicated to Lutfi by Ahmad Umar Chapakia, who pursued his Master's degree in Pakistan in 1981. Saleh agreed to join the group after Lutfi flew to Pakistan to meet and invite him in person.⁵³

Another graduate from Pakistan who crucially influenced the ideological framing of Lutfi's movement was Seni Madakakul, aka Ajarn Seni in Thai and Sha'rani in Malay. Seni earned a bachelor and a masters degree in politics from Karachi University approximately a decade before Saleh went to Pakistan. Seni was considered to have a good blend of Islamic and secular political knowledge.⁵⁴ He made a great contribution to Lutfi's movement by transmitting his understandings of integrated Islamic-secular politics to some Malay Muslim intellectuals. Some of them later became key leaders within Lutfi's movement. In Pakistan Seni joined the Jama'at-e-Islami but he never tried to recruit Malay Muslim cadres to the movement or propagate ideologies with reference to the Jama'at. His experience in Pakistan later constituted another political ideational alternative in Malay Muslim politics, besides that of Malay nationalism. However, in Pakistan, Seni did not leave any profound influence on the Malay Muslim students who came after him.

Saleh, nevertheless, displayed the same traits as Seni, and regularly joined Jama'at-e-Islami's activities in Pakistan. During the Pattani Mosque demonstration of 1975 in which Saleh joined, Seni, by then a lecturer at Prince of Songkla University at that time, gave crucial support to the protest. In the 1979 general election, in which Seni was first elected as an MP, Saleh was also an active volunteer for an election campaign exhorting Muslims in Narathiwat to vote for Muslim delegates, after a long period during which Malay Muslims had largely declined to participate in Thai politics. In addition, Seni and Saleh came from from same district: Yingor, in Narathiwat.

⁵³ Interviews with Saleh Talek, 13 December 2014; Ahmad Umar Chapakia, 29 January 2015.

⁵⁴ Interview with Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014.

Thailand

The idea of standing in a neutral position from those existing Malay-Muslim nationalist movements in Thailand at that time was framed and disseminated by Seni. Prior to the emergence of Lutfi's movement in Patani, Seni brought back with him the Islamic political ideology emanating from the Jama'at-e-Islami and combined it with his own study of western secular political perspectives. Although no one from Lutfi's movement claimed that Seni was one of the direct founders of the movement, it can be argued that Seni actively paved the way to modern Islamic reformism and created the necessary tools for later Islamist movements to utilise and pursue his Islamist aspiration to reform Malay Muslim lives conforming to Islamic beliefs and practices.

During his academic career as a lecturer in the Political Science Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (which later became the Faculty of Political Science), Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Seni set up an informal study group teaching Islamic political ideas to a small number of students at his home within the campus.⁵⁵ His students included Nideh Waba, later an Islamic Court Judge (*Datuk Yutitham – Th. / tok qadi – Ml.*) and senator; Muk Sulaiman, later a member of parliament; Sayyed Abdullah Al Yufree, later a university lecturer at PSU; and Shafi-e Baru, later-Vice President of Fatoni University.⁵⁶ Seni informally named this group, in English, the 'Neutral Group', the same ideological platform as '*atas pagar*'.⁵⁷

'Neutral' described the objective of the group with reference to the existing Malay Muslim nationalist movements and ideologies. The group was aimed at promoting Islamic political ideas to improve the condition of the Malay Muslim community and to be free from any nationalist ideas. The incompatibility of Islamic political thought and nationalism was emphasised by Syed Abul Ala Maududi, the founder of the Jama'at-e-Islami. This idea became the ideological terrain that prevented later generations of Malay Muslim elites and intellectuals from adopting Malay nationalist-separatist ideology.

⁵⁵ Interview with Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014.

⁵⁶ Interview with Shafie Baru, 23 December 2014.

⁵⁷ Interview with Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014.

It is also worth noting that Seni was a friend of Tuankubira or Kabir Abdulrahman, better known as Kubira, the founder of PULO.⁵⁸ They were from the same district of Yingor, Narathiwat and went to study high school in Bangkok together, at Islamwittayalai School (Islamic College of Thailand). Kubira later pursued his bachelor's degree in New Delhi University in India and adopted a secular nationalist ideology, leading up to his establishment of the PULO in 1968. Seni, on the other hand, was influenced by Islamist ideology in Pakistan.

Seni also disseminated his informal teachings to local communities by meeting and talking with local people in local '*kedai kopi*' (Ml. coffee shops). He digested academic political debates and world political updates into simple versions that could be understood by locals. Bangpu and Pujud, two villages close to Pattani town both contained a very high concentration of Malay Muslim intellectuals and seemed to be more developed than other villages, partly the outcome of Seni's efforts of educating local Malays.⁵⁹ Pujud is the village adjoining Bra-o, the village where Lutfi's home and Pondok Rahmaniah (later upgraded to "Bamrung Islam" Islamic Private School) as well as Worawidh Baru's home were located. Among many Malay Muslims, Bra-o is also pejoratively referred to as Wahhabi by the *kaum tua* because it is the base of Lutfi's Saturday teaching meetings, in which over a thousand people from across the five southern provinces regularly participate. At the Ibadul-Rahman Mosque in Bra-o, Lutfi has given weekly public lectures, which consist of Quranic exegesis and his perspectives upon contemporary issues, for over 30 years since 1986. The well-known Malay Muslim intellectual, the late Ahmad Somboon Bualuang and the former Pattani MP, Sudin Puyudhanon also came from Pujud. Bangpu also became a strong base of support for Lutfi's network.

After the Pattani Demonstration of 1975, many Malay Muslim activists associated with the protest were pursued by the authorities.⁶⁰ Some of them were threatened, found killed, or disappeared. Worawidh Baru, who assisted Seni in some activities during the protest, later revealed that Seni had covertly but actively

⁵⁸ Interview with Saleh Talek, 13 December 2014.

⁵⁹ Interview with Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014.

⁶⁰ Interview with Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014; interview with Saleh Talek, 13 December 2014.

supported the demonstration.⁶¹ Owing to this role, as well as his other activism, Seni received various threats, and believed it was too risky to continue teaching at the university.⁶² He decided to gain greater protection by joining Kukrit Pramoj's Kitsangkhom (Social Action) Party. In his first run for MP in 1979, Seni was elected in a Narathiwat constituency. Wan Muhammad Nor Matha, aka Wan Nor, who later became the President of Parliament, Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of Communications, was also first elected in the same year. Wan Nor, who had previously served as a vice rector of Songkhla Teachers' College had been invited to enter politics by Seni.⁶³

After moving into the parliamentary realm, Seni had less time to supervise Islamic cadres. He handed over his Islamic reformist ideological mission to Lutfi. However, this ideological transfer to Lutfi did not include all of his students. Only Shafi-e and Worawidh joined Lutfi's group. Some students, such as Sayed Abdullah Al-Yufree, continued their 'neutral' standpoint by staying independent, but became more detached supporters of Lutfi. He taught at PSU, but was closely associated with the establishment of Lutfi's Yala Islamic College. Some other students became prominent Malay Muslim elites, one of whom was Datuk Nideh Waba, who owned a large Islamic private school in Pattani, Saiburi Islam Witthaya School. Nideh was depicted as a key traditionalist figure, but he pursued Seni's ideology of non-violence and neutrality from Malay nationalism. Despite appearing to be with *kaum tua*, some of his favourite students became active cadres in Lutfi's movement. A public university lecturer in Islamic finance who was a second generation Assalam cadre and had a pivotal role in establishing Islamic cooperatives revealed that he was ideationally 'fenced' or 'vaccinated' by this *orang tua* (Ml. senior person) to keep away from violent ideology.⁶⁴ This shows how Seni's ideological stance against nationalism and violence were indirectly transferred to Assalam, not through the organisational cohesion of its membership structure, but the communication of ideas through independent teaching.

⁶¹ Interview with Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014.

⁶² Interview with Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014.

⁶³ Interview with Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014; interview with Shafie Baru, 23 December 2014.

⁶⁴ Interview with an academic (anonymous), 18 February 2015.

Seni's ideology also reflected in another Assalam key leader, Worawidh Baru, who was a lecturer in Malay Studies and subsequently Vice President for Student Affairs at Prince of Songkla University's Pattani campus. He later became an elected senator in 2006 – his first time running in an election – and again from 2008 to 2014. His first term in 2006 lasted a mere five months due to the September 2006 coup. After he retired from both formal academic and political careers, he nonetheless remained President of the Ibnu Affan Islamic Cooperative (1998–2001 and 2013–16) and Chairman of the Thailand Islamic Cooperative Network (TICON), a post he had held since its establishment in 2002. The former was the largest Islamic cooperative in Thailand with more than 70,000 members and circulating fund of 1.2 billion baht in 2012. The latter was a coalition network consisting of twenty-two Islamic cooperatives in Thailand with over 200,000 members and totals funds of more than 7 billion baht in 2013. Privileges derived from being a politician helped Worawidh to stabilise and strengthen many aspects of Assalam. However, his efforts to amend the Cooperative Act B.E. 2542 (1999) to secure the legal status of Islamic co-cooperatives was not successful. He had sought to designate Islamic cooperatives as an eighth type, in addition to the seven existing categories governing legal cooperatives.

Worawidh followed Seni's career route, making the transition from university lecturer to politician, although he was not the first generation that was directly inherited Islamic political ideas from Seni. Worawidh's elder brother, Shafie Baru, who served as a vice rector of Fatoni University, was one of the students who had formed the Neutral Group with Seni; but assumed a lower profile than Worawidh in the political realm as well as in the wider Muslim society. Seni and Worawidh alike were successful in being elected to political positions but neither were strong enough to promote tangible ideal Islamic content into the Thai political realm. Whether or not they failed to translate their Islamic political ideas into practice is debatable, and I will return to this in Chapter 5. However, it should be noted that Worawidh made greater advances in translating Islamic economic principles into practice through the running of Islamic cooperatives – something which was indirectly facilitated by his political background.

Since both Seni and Worawidh were part of Assalam's establishment, their relative success in politics was possible thanks to the openness of the Thai parliamentary system. This unquestionably benefited the establishment of Yala Islamic College and its subsequent development, as well as the expansion of other social and economic organisations within their network. To re-iterate my argument about the link between reformist adoption and the greater accommodation movements tend to achieve, the above evidence has hinted at how the use of political opportunities contributed to Assalam's organisational development process, so facilitating greater contacts with the state and other elements in Muslim community, which will be seen from more evidence toward the end of the thesis. The decisions of Seni and Worawidh to partake in electoral politics does not simply reflect their personal ambitions, but also shows their trust in the Thai state's political process. This kind of trust in opportunity structures is a crucial factor that always played an important role in the Assalam movement's accommodation.

Return to the homeland

Balik ke tanah Patani (Ml. back to the land of Patani) was a phrase commonly used by foreign-educated founding members of Assalam with reference to the beginning of their aspirations for reformist activism in Thailand. The decision to return to the homeland, rather than seeking refuge or spending a more comfortable life abroad, was on account of their interpretation of the local contexts, in which they had to evaluate threats and opportunities for them to pursue their ideology through their main strength – Islamic education. The two challenging contexts they had to navigate were the Thai state and the separatist movements.

At the Thai state level, notwithstanding the increase of the Malay Muslim resistance and the escalation of violence in the late 1970s and early 1980s, reformed security policies during this period provided some incentives for the JPIP to expect political opportunities within the kingdom. The two cases of armed resistance operated by the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in different regions of Thailand and the separatist movements in the Deep South necessitated that the 1980s government under the then-Prime Minister General Prem Tinsulanond

think more carefully about the political and social factors causing insurgency in both cases, albeit prioritising communism. The two Ministerial Orders, number 66/2523 (1980) and number 65/2525 (1982), which supplemented the military means with political-socioeconomic measures, led to an end of the communist insurgency in 1983. These orders paved the way for dovish approaches within the military and contributed to the incorporation of development projects as alternatives to military operations (Ockey 2001: 197). The Harapan Baru (Ml. New Hope), for instance, was a development project launched for the south in 1988 by General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh when he was commander-in-chief of the army.

In comparison with the Malay separatists, the end of ideological conflict with the CPT was not so difficult because CPT members wanted to take over the state and install a different political ideology; moreover, the insurgents did not have any identity problems (Pathan 2011). The Malay separatists, as an ethno-nationalist movement, on the other hand, wanted their homeland back. The aim of the separatists combined the quest for Malay-ethnic recognition and an independent entity, whilst the Thai state was based on the constructed, supposedly homogenous identity of Thai-ness: these two ideas were structurally incompatible.

The aims of Lutfi's movement, which focused on religious issues, were more feasible goals to strive for because there was wider space regarding freedom of religion in the Thai socio-political structure, despite persistent political manipulation and control of Islamic institutions. However, the decision of Lutfi and his colleagues to turn their faces towards the Thai state was very challenging, owing to the unpredictable characteristics of Thai political structure in which the conservative and liberal forces contested alongside a fraught and disputed democratisation process. The best example that stunted the prospect for Malay Muslim movements to accommodate with the Thai state was the death of Haji Sulong at the hands of Thai authorities 1954. In Ahmad Umar's account,⁶⁵ Haji Sulong was courageous enough to submit his seven-point petition because he put his trust in the Thai state after the removal of the Phibun government in 1944. Subsequent governments suspended the forced integrationist and assimilationist

⁶⁵ Interview with Ahmad Umar Chapakia, 18 December 2014.

policy over Malay Muslims and were more sympathetic to the Muslim predicaments. For instance, Islamic patronage and reform in 1945-47 was carried out according to the Islamic Patronage Act of 1945. Islamic judges or Dato Yuttitham within the Thai Civil courts were restored. The government also sent a commission of inquiry to investigate the situation and listen to Muslims and the problems they faced in the four southern provinces, concerning which Haji Sulong submitted a set of proposals for a form of autonomy. Although many in the Thai state deemed these attempts problematic, the state was perceived to be listening: this suggested that the government was also more aware of and responsive to the Malay Muslim plight. Unfortunately, Haji Sulong's interpretation was wrong. His proposals were rejected and dismissed as a form of separatism. The situation became worse when Phibun resumed the premiership after the November 1947 military coup. Despite his defiant stance and a commitment to peaceful negotiations, Haji Sulong was ultimately murdered by agents of a repressive Thai state.

Notwithstanding this concern, Lutfi and friends pragmatically decided to engage with the Thai state instead of fleeing to Malaysia like many intellectuals who later became prominent scholars in Malaysian universities. Unquestionably, Lutfi was also qualified to teach in a Saudi Arabian university and to receive a high salary, but he declined to do so.⁶⁶ The improvement of relations between the Malay Muslim community and the Thai state in 1980s supported Lutfi's view of Patani as a *dar al-Islam* (Ar. abode of Islam, as opposed to abode of war) (Fatani 1990: 72–73, cited in Liow 2009: 106). This can also be considered as evidence of an opportunity structure that facilitated Lutfi and his supporters' decision to accommodate with the Thai state. The decision is also best framed in the words of Ahmad Umar Chapakia, one of the founding members:

We used to have a grievance against the Thai state but we decided not to use violence or flee to Malaysia. We have to face reality, this has led us to gradually accommodate and cooperate with the Thai state in some aspects. Many of our fellows are knowledgeable and smart, but they could

⁶⁶ Interviews with Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014; Ahmad Umar Chapakia, 18 December 2014; Muhamadnasir Habaye, Director of Assalam Institute, 23 December 2014;

not live in their motherland because they chose a wrong way. If we fight in mountains, we would get mountains whilst the government would get 'rakyat kita' (Ml. our people). So, we decided to use knowledge as our weapon and a university as our base. And from this educational base, we have so far extended our work to other social and economic aspects.⁶⁷

At another level, the highly popular traditionalist Muslim society posed a challenging front for Lutfi's movement, but it was not as threatening as the separatist movements, with which they had fallen out in a different setting. Lutfi's sense of insecurity came from the aforementioned *halal darah* declared by some separatists after the Mecca debate. When he first returned home in 1985, Lutfi was guarded 24 hours a day, but was never subject to a violent attack, mainly perhaps because Lutfi himself never publicly criticised the secessionist ideologies of those rivals. Some of his colleagues, despite having ideological disagreements, also maintained good relationships with separatists and were respected by certain of them.

This kind of stance has always been held by Lutfi. During the new round of insurgency which remerged in 2004 and continues until the present, different figures, especially from the Buddhist community, have called for Islamic religious leaders to denounce violence carried out by the separatists. Yet Lutfi has never articulated his disagreements with or criticism of those separatists. Instead, playing the role of a peace-builder, he has merely persisted with his ideal Islamic concept of peace and tried to convince people of its practicality by expanding his university and related educational projects.

The obvious rivalry between the two groups in the Deep South, however, became centred on the difference of religious creeds between the *kaum tua-kaum muda*. In the early years, some of Lutfi's attempts at 'purifying' Muslim beliefs and practices were deemed offensive by local traditionalists. The conflict was striking because the long-unchallenged local Islam was confronted by the universal purified Islam brought in by young scholars fresh from the Middle East. Traditionalist *ulamas* and institutions supplanted the separatists as Lutfi's main adversaries, because the JPIP challenged their religious market share, rather than

⁶⁷ Interview with Ahmad Umar Chapakia, 18 December 2014.

directly competing for political power with the separatists. However, an overlap in the Islamic education area with the dominant traditionalists was inevitable.

The Four Doctors

The beginning of the Lutfi network in Thailand revolved around educational activities led by the leaders known as 'the Four Doctors' who had all earned PhD's from Saudi Arabia. The four comprised Dr. Ismail Ali, Dr. Ismail Lutfi Japakiya, Dr. Jihad Bungatanyong, and Dr. Abdul Halim Saising. Apart from these, Dr. Ahmad Umar Chapakia (PhD from Malaysia) and other pioneering members with BA and MA degrees from Saudi Arabia, such as Davud Sa and Muhammad Faisal also had a pivotal role from the outset. Formal and informal Islamic teaching programmes were employed to reach out to broader Malay Muslim communities and, at the same time, to recruit new cadres.

In their early years, informal programmes were more pronounced, especially weekend Islamic lectures in Yala and Pattani. In 1986, Ismail Lutfi started a programme called 'Majlis al-Ilmi' (Ar. Assembly of Knowledge) on Saturday mornings at Ibadu al-Rahman Mosque in his Bamrung Islam School, known as *pondok Bra-o*, which was located on the main Yala-Pattani road in the suburban area of Pujud. His classes attracted large audiences from the five southern provinces ranging from local people and *ustazs*, to the wider middle classes. Within a few years, the size of the audience had increased from dozens to over a thousand. The same phenomenon also occurred with Jihad Bungatayong who launched the 'Majlis al-Tafuquh fi al-Deen' (Ar. Assembly of the Understanding of Religion) in 1990 at the Idadu al-Musliheen Mosque within his Islahiyah School in Nat Tokmong outskirts area of Yala. This *majlis* continued from his 13-year programme in Mecca, in which he started teaching at Al-Haram Mosque with a small circle of five students in 1977 before moving to other places and eventually attaining audiences of around 500 from 1983 to 1990 (Konitah 2007: 100-102). In 1999, when Yala Islamic College was founded, Lutfi set up another Majlis al-Ilmi scheduled on Sundays in the College by combining three *majlises*, including another Majlis al-Iman of Abdul Haleem into one programme.

Thus far, Lutfi's *Majlis al-Ilmi* in Bra-o of Pattani has continued to coexist with the other *majlis* at the original Yala Islamic College campus in Paramitae village near Muaeng Yala. Interestingly, both weekend programmes coincided with the weekly lectures of the renowned traditionalist *ulama* Ismail Sapanyang (alias Babo Air Sepanyae) on Saturday and Sunday mornings at the Central Mosques of Pattani and Yala, which drew larger crowds of local Malays. McCargo (2008: 23) marked these weekend lectures as "the clearest symbolic distinction between the two *khana*" (or *kaum* in Malay). Another form of informal education was also conducted through the *halaqah* or study circles in the schools, mosques, communities, and individual houses. The *halaqah* played a significant role in framing the same idea between the cadres and their target audience of villagers as it allowed them to have interactive learning as well as strengthening Islamic brotherhood.⁶⁸

In terms of formal Islamic education, Lutfi and his Saudi-graduated colleagues began their works by teaching in Islamic private schools and at the same time, of preparing for the establishment of the Islamic higher education institution. Ismail Ali had started his career as a lecturer at the faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Prince of Songkla University in 1986, but he was the only one to teach in a university. Some others revived pondoks and Islamic private schools previously run by their families, some of them set up new schools and many of them were employed as religious teachers or *ustaz* in Islamic schools remaining within and outside their network. According to Liow (2009: 154), more than twenty Islamic private schools in three southern provinces employed significant numbers of Saudi graduates. Most of them were Salafi-oriented schools. In 2013, the Assalam Smart School Association had thirty-six schools in three southern provinces registered as its members, including the other eleven schools from the Upper South Satun, Phattalung, Nakorn Sri Thammarat, Suratthani, Phangga and Phuket. During the beginning period, Lutfi's Bamrung Islam in Pattani, Jihad's Islahiyah in Yala, Alawiyah in Banangsata, Yala and Muslim Patthanasart in Bangpu village of Yaring, Pattani, were known as the main Islamic private schools teaching Salafi creeds and

⁶⁸ Interview with Saleh Talek, 13 December 2014.

producing new cadres. Talented students from these schools were chosen to study abroad in Muslim countries.

The idea of setting up an Islamic university was first discussed in 1978 at a meeting between local scholars in the Deep South, and graduates and students from Middle Eastern countries. Their dream came true in 1998 in the form of the Yala Islamic College (YIC), the first private Islamic tertiary educational institution in Thailand. In 1980, local scholars led by Seni Madakakul submitted their draft blueprint to Lutfi in order to pursue the project, while Lutfi was pursuing a Master's degree at the Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud in Riyadh. The first seed funds were donated to Lutfi by Abdullah Al-Busey, a Saudi ring craftsman, who provided a million baht in total. This sum, along with another 600,000 baht donated by other individuals in Thailand and Saudi Arabia was spent on purchasing a 72-rai piece of land in Sarong village of Pattani, which subsequently became the second campus of the YIC. The YIC subsequently obtained the status of University in 2002 (YIU) and was renamed Fatoni University (FTU) in 2013.

The establishment of YIU was made possible by three main factors: academic strength, *waqf-based* (ar. endowment) foreign aid, and political connections. Firstly, Lutfi's network included numerous capable religious scholars who had graduated from different countries of Islamic world. Among these graduates, the five PhD holders, most of whom had high academic credentials, were a key strength. For instance, Lutfi's strong recognition and connections with significant scholars and organisations in the Middle East equipped him with substantial support.

To summarise, the historical background of Assalam illustrated in this chapter can be considered as one-third of the whole thread of evolution of the Assalam. Considering the transition points viewed by some of its leaders, I classify the movement's evolution into three periods: 1) the establishment period (1965-1997), 2) the formation period – after establishing the Yala Islamic College (1998-2012), and 3) the development period – after the formalisation of the movement (2012-present). Its establishment period provides the early evolution of the movement in relation to contextual elements, which are the contexts in which the movement originated, different ideologies and geographies that the movement's

leader travelled and experienced, and the domestic arena in which the movement founders eventually situated themselves in. Further developments in the movement's networks and organisations are examined in the next chapter.

Historical Background of MGP

Unlike Assalam, which began from an ethno-nationalist point of origin, MGP's accommodation has its starting point in the narrow, rigid position of the purist Salafi as well as the leader's lack of knowledge and experience regarding Thai political culture. Similar to Assalam, MGP's adoption of Islamic reformist ideas and greater interactions with the Thai state through its organisational developments alongside its expansion of social activism drove it dramatically to adjust its strategies and kept them on the path of accommodation. MGP shared some of the same features as Assalam as a network of affiliated groups revolving around a dominant charismatic leader. However, MGP was much more focused than Assalam on its founder, Rida Ahmad Samadi, usually known as Sheikh Rida. In other words, Sheikh Rida's leadership is more crucial to the evolution of MGP than other organisational factors of the movement. To understand the evolution of Muslim for Peace, therefore, requires the tracing of Sheikh Rida's biography along with the emergence of different kinds of religious and social networks around him.

The life and experience of Sheikh Rida

Sheikh Rida was a son of a Thai father working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and an Egyptian mother. He was born at Siriraj Hospital in Bangkok in 1969, with Thai citizenship and given a typically Thai legal name, Pramote Samadi. He is descended from a family of Islamic scholars: his mother's grandfather was a *qadi* (Ar. judge in Shariah court) in Egypt during the monarchical period. On his father's side, his family lineage could be traced back to Sultan Sulaiman.⁶⁹ His grandfather was the Imam of Ansarissunnah Mosque, in Bangkok Noi, which has been one of the *khana mai's* strongholds ever since its outset. His father, Ahmad, was the editor

⁶⁹ Sheikh Rida's claim of his lineal descent from Sultan Sulaiman was based on his father's reading from the book called, Prawat Saisakul, Bangkok Noi (Th. History of Bangkok Noi Lineage). I could not find this book during the course of my research.

for the Al-Islah Association, which a leading publisher of Islamic books and articles with a *khana mai* orientation. Ahmad also spent 10 years translating two-thirds of Al-Quran into Thai. His translated version became the most popular of the four versions, as it was chosen by the King Fahd's printing house in Medina, Saudi Arabia to be published and widely distributed. His ancestors' association with public Islamic contributions partly encouraged him to put his efforts into religious and public affairs.

In his youth, however, Sheikh Rida was neither interested in Islamic studies nor committed to Islamic activism until he met some Salafi scholars in Egypt when he was 16 years old. His life abroad involved regular moves because of his father's job at Royal Thai Embassies in various countries. His international journey started when he was two years old, and included spending two years in Malaysia, eleven years in Saudi Arabia, and fifteen years in Egypt before returning to Thailand in 1999.

In Saudi Arabia, he was chosen as a leader of student activities ever since he was in primary school. For instance, he became a school representative for a speech contest in the Kingdom's Eastern Region and accompanied his teachers in distributing leaflets and organising exhibitions. Most of the campaigns and events he joined in during that time were organised by the Muslim Brotherhood. This experience made him fascinated by public speaking and voluntary work, which led him to take an activist path.

In terms of educational background, Sheikh Rida studied mainstream academic subject from kindergarten up until secondary level in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia before taking Islamic studies in high school at Al-Azhar. Rida was talented and was previously interested in Arabic language and literature. Notwithstanding being a Thai native, he always received high scores in Arabic and writing. This linguistic interest led him to meet Egyptian scholars in ancient Arabic language studies (*Nassi*) when he pursued his high school education in Egypt. In the *Nassi* class at Al-Azhar University, he was always chosen over Arabic native speakers to read ancient texts. His *Nassi* studies enabled him to access classical Islamic literatures written by many great scholars in the Islamic world. Sheikh Rida claimed that most of the Islamic scholars nowadays studied through contemporary

texts rather than the original classical texts, which were considered too challenging and difficult to understand. His advanced linguistic knowledge underpinned his expertise in Islamic methodology and interpretation.

Sheikh Rida benefitted from alternative studies at Salafi institutes and with scholars outside the university, rather than relying on the formal education he earned from BA and MA degrees in Islamic Jurisprudence from the faculty of Shari'ah, Al-Azhar University and in Philosophy and Comparative Religions from Al-Qurawiyun University, Morocco. According to the Islamic pedagogy of Sunni scholars, alternative study with knowledgeable Islamic scholars is more revered than studies in the modern Islamic curriculum. This system is known as *ijazah*, which means the granting of permission or licence that the knowledge seeker has been given by higher or more senior scholars to transmit a certain subject or text of Islamic knowledge to others. This grant is usually represented in the form of hand written guarantee letter. Sheikh Rida received *ijazahs* from different students of well-known scholars in different subjects, including al-Quran memorisation, al-Hadith, *al-fiqh* and *usul-al-fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence and roots of Islamic jurisprudence) and *nahw* (Arabic grammar).⁷⁰

In the Shade of the Egyptian Salafi⁷¹

Based on his deep Islamic knowledge and his talent in public speaking, Rida became an active member in the network of Salafi scholars in Cairo. In Egypt, there were two types of Salafis: the *salafiyyah al-ilmiyah* (Ar. the academic Salafi) and the *salafiyyah al-harakiyyah* (Ar. the activist Salafi). Rida was nurtured by the former group and later adjusted himself to associate with the latter. Both of them during that period were apolitical and disagreed with establishing a structured movement, which they believed would cause divisions among Muslim nations.⁷²

Sheikh Rida's activism began with teaching and delivering Friday sermons at a small mosque in the Pyramid area of Cairo from the age of seventeen. The title

⁷⁰ The evidence of these *ijazahs* are shown on his own website. Available from: www.islaminthailand.org/dp6/node/21 Accessed 6 March 2016.

⁷¹ This section relies primarily on interviews with Sheikh Rida. All detailed claims are from his own accounts. However, to make the narrative as reliable as possible, I have triangulated the data by checking facts from other sources, including documents and interviews with other people.

⁷² Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

'*sheikh*' used by his followers and colleagues expressed the level of his knowledge as an Islamic scholar. He also partook in Salafi group meetings, organising Islamic lecture programmes at Al-Rahmah Mosque, which was the largest mosque on the Shar-il-Haram (al-Haram Road) and was previously dominated by a *Sufi-tariqat* (Ar. denotes a school of Sufism accentuating the mystical teachings and spiritual practices). His group's weekly lecture programme on Friday nights became popular, attracting larger and larger followers from different provinces. These lecture followers initially thought Al-Rahmah Mosque belonged to the Salafis. But one day when they came early to join the Friday prayers, they found the sermon's contents unacceptable to them as it was delivered by a Sufi *khateeb* (Ar. sermon speaker). They then put pressure on the mosque committee to change the *khateeb*. After the speaker had been replaced, the mosque was completely occupied and managed by the Salafis and became the largest Salafi group in Cairo within a couple of years. One sign of their growing influence was that they were able to block Shar-il-Haram, which was one of the main roads in Cairo, to organise large-scale lecture events.

Initially, Rida was merely one of the volunteers assisting in organizing lecture programmes at Al-Rahmah, although he already gave lectures and *Friday khutbahs* (Ar. sermons) at other smaller mosques in Cairo. After he was appointed to lead night prayers during the month of Ramadan at Al-Rahmah Mosque, Rida had more opportunities to expand his role among senior scholars. He was made responsible for managing lecture schedules. When the mosque opened the Dawah Academy to train preachers, Rida was appointed as a manager of the academy and organised the two year training programme for preachers, as well as launching the teaching of *Usul al Fiqh* at the mosque. He was then selected to be one of the *Shura* (Ar. advisory council) of the Cairo Salafis. He was assigned to look after Salafi student societies in the four largest universities in Egypt, including Al-Azhar, Cairo, Hulwan, and Inshams. His supervision covered the activities of universities, dormitories, and youth camps.

As part of this role, Rida made contact with his *salafiyyah al-harakiyyah* counterparts in Alexandria to learn about methods of activism. The Alexandrian Salafi group led by Yasir Burhami was well-structured and its members were

considered 'progressive Salafis.' This group, which later set up the An-Nour Party after the 2011 revolution, was as strong as its great rival, the Muslim Brotherhood. In Tariq Ramadan's categories of Islamic-religious based preferences, this group can be classified as 'political literalist Salafi' (Ramadan 2004: 27). Rida and his young colleagues gradually integrated activist aspects into their academic Salafi identity and became activists whose zeal went far beyond that of their senior academic Salafi colleagues. Their growing prominence as the 'Dawah Salafiyyah fi Shar-il-Haram' (Salafi preaching group of Pyramid Road) set the authorities' alarm bells ringing.

Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Jihad, Salafi groups had long escaped the close attentions of the Egyptian intelligence services. The Salafis had a relatively free hand in society since former President Anwar Sadat allowed them to work freely in universities in order to counter the creeping influence of communism (Hassan 2012). Under these circumstances, up until 2002, Egyptians who preferred studying *shari'ah* outside the state curriculum went to Salafi clerics (Hassan 2012).⁷³ Meanwhile, the Salafis maintained their apolitical stance and kept a low profile in the eyes of the authorities.

When the considerable increases in Salafi size and activism became known to the authorities, senior Salafi clerics asked Rida to cease his youth-related activities. Rida publicly agreed, but covertly continued running the youth camp, along with some colleagues who disagreed with the suggestion. Unfortunately, the youth camp he organised coincided with the arrest of members of another Salafi group, which had no significant connection with Rida's youth group, except that some of their scholars had previously given a few lectures at Al-Rahmah Mosque. Fuazi Shaheed, Muhammad Abdul Maqsud as well as other clerics of his group at At-Tawhid Mosque were arrested and interrogated due to the suspicion that their group mobilised and sent money to Gaza, which was prohibited by the Egyptian government.

The security authorities also suspected that this group had a connection with Rida's group and thus arrested them in the youth camp. Rida took

⁷³ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

responsibility for supervising the youth and told them earlier that the running of the youth camp had not been approved by senior clerics. He then was kept in police custody and was brutally interrogated by the officers for five days, who squeezed him to disclose any Salafi organisational ties in Cairo, which did not exist. Then they spent another five days treating his injuries. The police assumed that the Salafis in Egypt had upgraded themselves to become an organised movement. However, although the police found Sheikh Rida innocent of collaborating with those Salafi groups arrested earlier, higher ranking security officers still ordered him deported from Egypt. Eventually, he had no choice except to renounce his visa (which had five years left to run) and allowed the authorities to deport him in 1999. Sheikh Rida explained,

This calamity was not entirely unexpected, though it came sooner than I had anticipated. One of my closest friends, whose father owned the biggest zoo in Egypt, after knowing that I received a chance to work at Al-Rahmah Mosque, mentioned to me before long that my role would become more prominent and would irritate the authorities, and warned me to be ready to accept my future fate.⁷⁴

Sheikh Rida's journey of ideological and strategic adjustments at this stage can be seen to have moved a little further from academic idealistic Salafism towards a more pragmatic Salafism, which allowed him religious and moral space to carry out activism. This transition paved the way for his eventual support for political accommodation with Thai authorities.

Joining a Thai Salafi Ring

After being deported from Egypt, Sheikh Rida arrived in Thailand on 5 June 1999, where he found himself, as a hard-line Salafi, completely alienated from the prevailing Thai Muslim environment. His alienation not only occurred at the wider level of Thai-Buddhist society and the traditionalist Muslim majority communities, but even also within Thai Salafi society. This was, therefore, a major challenge in his life and became one of the critical transition points of his ideological accommodation.

⁷⁴ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

In addition to these socio-cultural barriers, his poor command of the Thai language and his lack of contextual understanding also hindered him from setting up any ideological propagation and preaching activities, besides giving small classes and answering religious questions at the Ansarissunnah Mosque in Bangkok Noi. During a year's pause in his Islamic activism, he spent his time writing a book and pursuing a Master's degree in Morocco. The book, entitled *30 Tareeqah li Khadimat at-Deen* (30 Ways to Serve Religion) was published in Arabic by Egypt's Darul Watan Press in 2001 and the Darul Khulafa ar-Rashideen wan-Nashr wat-Tazi'a Press in 2007, as well as in an Indonesian version in 2007 by Qisthi Press. The Thai version was still being translated at the time of writing by one of his students.⁷⁵ This book later became a key reading in Sheikh Rida's Islamic activism alongside a series of contextual interpretations as applied in Thailand.

After coming back from Morocco in 2001, Sheikh Rida worked full time at the Muslim Wittayakhan Islamic School at Klong 19, Chachengsao province and linked his lecture programmes to the Al-Islah Association in Bangkok Noi. He succeeded his father as publishing editor for the association. His unique style of delivering and unfamiliar content made him popular, and he became a prominent Salafi scholar in Bangkok. His message intersected between religious teachings and contemporary issues and he was crucial in inspiring the audience to orientate their lives towards God and religion. Ansarissunnah Royal Mosque, in which the regular congregation had been limited to its community members and other *khana mai* alliances, had a chance to welcome strangers who attended Sheikh Rida's classes, which attracted many non-Salafi background learners.

With his talent for learning languages, as well as strong support from his wife, whom he married in 2002, Sheikh Rida took less than two years to achieve fluency in Thai, and was soon giving frequent lectures in response to numerous invitations from Salafi communities and groups. These lectures enabled him to get to know many local Salafi scholars, which were scattered in around five major *khana mai* communities in Bangkok. His own community, Bangkok Noi, was long allied with Darul Ihsan Mosque, also called as Ban Phetch Thong Kham community

⁷⁵ I received a portion of the incomplete work from the translator, 'Abu Hanzalah', to use in my research.

in Bang-or area on Jaransanitwong Road. Both of these communities, which were richer and had a higher standard of living than other *khana mai* communities, were influenced by the senior Egyptian migrant, Sheikh Ali Isa. Ban Phetch is also the location of the Association of Arab Alumni. Another community, the Al-Atique Mosque, one of Ahmad Wahab's legacies located close to the central business district of Bangkok was another pioneer of *khana mai*. One emerging scholar of Al-Atique, Mureed Thimasen, aka Ajarn Mureed, was the first Thai Salafi colleague of Sheikh Rida, and remains his longest-serving ally to date. In the Klong Kled area of Suanluang district, the aforementioned Sassanupatham School founded by Ismail Ahmad and actively supported by Ajarn Direck, has produced more than two generations of Salafi scholars. Among those scholars, Siddiq Muhammad Sa-id and Abdul Wahed Wangprayoch, who had been popular among audiences of Yateem TV and TMTV, subsequently joined and became a part of the main scholars of White Channel in 2014. In the Nongchok district as well as other suburban areas near Bangkok there are dozens of *khana mai* communities that either had their own Salafi scholars or rotated external scholars within the Salafi network. Apart from these communities, the Salafi in Bangkok also came together to form institutes, such as the Sathachon Foundation for Orphans, the Foundation for Preserving Islamic Heritages, and the Salafiyyun group. The first two institutes were Sheikh Rida's allies in forming MGP.

Restrained Period

The most difficult period (2003–10) Sheikh Rida experienced in Thailand was an outcome of his rigid interpretation of Islam and his assertive personality. Unlike Ismail Lutfi, who always compromised and was more tolerant of diverse views, Sheikh Rida at the beginning held a more rigid stance: he was reluctant to compromise with any ideas that he perceived contradicted the purity of Islam. He would not let go if he believed that an issue would seriously undermine Islamic principles: as a result, he could not get along with anyone he perceived as morally or religiously unacceptable. He always clearly distinguished himself from such people, groups, and situations in order to declare that he did not accept or endorse their immoral behaviour. Rida asserts,

I believed that Islamic scholars should set the norms of society. Everything spoken or displayed by scholars should be morally sound or religiously approved, as they are '*matratharn tee sangkhom cha patibat tarm*' (literally meaning the standard that the society will follow).⁷⁶

Despite the fact – narrated by most of his students and staff – that Sheikh Rida is easy-going, modest, and accessible, his intolerance towards something unacceptable to him makes him, on some level, fail to develop subordinates or be a good institution builder. When he perceives the purity of Islam being violated or when someone acts immorally, he is loath to accept and compromise – especially if witnessing such violations. He strongly believes that everything he does will be evaluated on the Day of Judgement. However, because of his confident, forceful personality and his outspoken criticism on contemporary issues, Sheikh Rida has been commonly described by a lot of people who know him as emotional or easily moved to anger, purportedly because he has 'Arab blood'.

Such an assertive personality has also made Sheikh Rida fail to maintain relations with many Salafi scholars and groups with whom he had made earlier contact with: many of these relationships deteriorated and ended in conflict. One of the major conflicts that seriously affected his activism was the one with the influential Sheikh Ali Isa following their disagreement over the case of moon sighting for Eid Day. Related to this was the conflict over Sheikh Ali's criticism of Ajarn Direck, accusing him of being an Ahmadiyah or Qadyani, which was perceived as misguided according Salafi traditions.⁷⁷

Sheikh Rida's use of different interpretations for moon sightings and his defence of Direk against being labelled an Ahmadi by Ali Isa caused him to be boycotted by some Salafi scholars and communities allied with Ali Isa. This also

⁷⁶ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

⁷⁷ The Ahmadiyyah is an Islamic religious movement founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) in Punjab, British India during the end of the nineteenth century. The adherents of this movement are referred to as Ahmadis, who believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad received divine guidance from God like the previous prophets.

The use of adjective 'Islamic' attached above to the Ahmadiyyah is to give the meaning of a religious movement, as distinct from cultural. This does not connote any religious legitimacy, which would be strongly contested by many Islamic scholars.

included his own former community at the Ansarissunnah Mosque, where he has been prohibited to teach since 2003.

As a result, Sheikh Rida was left with limited places to go, such as Al-Atique Mosque and other programmes working with Islamic scholars from the Saththachon Foundation and the Foundation for Preserving Islamic Heritages. In the southern region where he became better known, he was also blocked by many scholars within Ismail Lutfi's network, as initially they were unsure whether Sheikh Rida was a hard-line Salafi or associated with the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (Jama'at al-Jihad al-Islami). This concern arose from witnessing his forceful speeches during protests against western governments over the Iraq war, Israeli attacks in Gaza, and the Danish caricature of the Prophet Muhammad. Suspicions and concerns from Lutfi's group were allayed after Sheikh Rida clarified himself to Lutfi in 2005, explaining that he was raised by Egyptian Salafi scholars and had nothing to do with the Egyptian Islamic Jihad after being questioned by Lutfi's group, considering Rida's 'hard-line' teachings. Some scholars within Lutfi's movement even used to suspect that Sheikh Rida might have some connection with Al-Qaida since some parts of his lecture praised Al-Qaida. Sheikh Rida admitted that he did access the Al-Qaida web-board and had debated on many issues he disagreed with them on. Praise and condemnation of any individuals or groups should be done fairly, explains Sheikh Rida.⁷⁸ More reliable evidence other than his own words to prove his non-violent orientation can be seen from his recorded teachings, his movement's activities and ideas as well as the activities of his students. Iddris, a reverted Muslim who has followed Sheikh Rida since the early years explains,

I have never heard even a single word from the Sheikh [Rida] encouraging us or supporting people who use violence, except in 'justified' warfare. For example, he justified Hamas's use of violence against Israel on the basis of the severe conditions there. In the case of Al-Qaeda, he expressed both agreement and disagreement with them. He praised them for their bravery to stand against western oppression and invasions, but he disagreed with killing innocent people.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

⁷⁹ Interview with Iddris Rojchanamee, 25 March 2015.

In Bangkok Noi, where he fell out with some committee members of the Ansarissunnah Mosque and Al-Islah Association owing to his conflict with Sheikh Ali Isa, Sheikh Rida could still continue his teaching programmes with the support of his followers within the community. Despite his being prevented from teaching at the mosque, some of these followers opened their houses for him to organise weekly teachings and lectures. Most of his followers still remained with him after the conflict. Some of them formed the As-Sunnah Group in support of Sheikh Rida's teaching activities. Later, all Sheikh Rida's religious teachings within and outside Bangkok Noi were done on behalf of the As-Sunnah Group instead of Al-Islah Association, from which he resigned because of the conflict.

Cultivating ideologies

During the same period that Sheikh Rida started giving small lectures at Ansarissunnah Mosque, a group of university students from leading universities, such as Chulalongkorn University and Thammasat University asked him to teach them *tafsir al-Quran*. This class was previously a small circle with less than 15 students but gradually expanded to more than one hundred students, including some from different universities and general audiences of various ages who lived far away from Bangkok Noi. After the conflict within Bangkok Noi, the *tafsir al-Quran* class was then moved from the Al-Islah Association building to his mother-in-law's house.⁸⁰

As with his class in Cairo, most of his students were students from modern science fields rather than students of religious subjects. In his teaching of *tafsir al-Quran*, he always emphasised the importance of applying knowledge into practice in daily life together with explaining as well as interpreting the texts by connecting these with real-life contexts. He also encouraged the youth to find gaps in society with Islamic knowledge and their own specialised skills.⁸¹ This encouragement became an ideological reference point shared by most of his students. They

⁸⁰ Interview with Iddris Rojchanamee, 25 March 2015.

⁸¹ This issue was commonly expressed by most of his students and group leaders that I interviewed. Interviews with Hamzah Al-Karimi, 2 April 2015; Iddris Rojchanamee, 25 March 2015; Farid Chunnagarm, 31 March 2015; Andaman focus group, 9 April 2015; Anis Toleb 22 April 2015; Hanif Yongstar 25 April 2015, 2015. This idea was also consistent in Rida's book "30 Ways to serve religion".

translated this ideological quest into practice by grouping themselves based on different interests and skills according to their previous relationship and types of activity preferences. All groups appointed Sheikh Rida as their main counsellor. These groups (as discussed in Chapter 5) became one of the main tools that Sheikh Rida employed to transmit his message and transform society.

According to Sheikh Rida, there were two approaches applied with two *chon* (Th. group) that he used for reforming society: 1. through attracting the masses (Th. *muanchon*) and 2. nurturing the determined youth (Th. *yaowachon*) to become cadres.⁸² Highly motivated youths were placed as key drivers in his planned projects or organisation while the masses benefited as the supporters of his projects. In other words, the core of social change was expected from youth activism while the mass was expected to be the supporters of each project and the transmitter of the social agenda.⁸³ The upcoming groups created by his students later became an integral part of the informal network that supported the development of the network-based movement of Muslims for Peace (Chapter 5).

Community Outreach

Apart from giving a large number of public lectures both to his own groups and being invited by external networks, Sheikh Rida was assisted by his students in conveying his message to an even wider public.⁸⁴ Media development was gradually done,⁸⁵ starting from copying and distributing CDs of thousands of his lectures (2003–13),⁸⁶ creating the website www.islaminthailand.org, organising a radio programme called 'Islam in Thailand' (2008–12), founding the TND Multimedia Company to produce the Thailand News Darussalam newspaper (2008), and establishing a satellite TV Channel 'White Channel' (2012-present). Each media accessed different sections of the public. Sheikh Rida's use of these media has gradually increased his public support and popularity. This support is not only confined to *khana mai* networks, but has expanded to wider Muslim

⁸² Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

⁸³ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

⁸⁴ Interviews with Hamzah Al-Karimi, 2 April 2015; Iddris Rojchanmee, 25 March 2015; Farid Chunnarm, 31 March 2015; Bunleng Hassanee, 31 March 2015; Andaman focus group, 9 April 2015; Anis Toleb, 22 April 2015; Hanif Yongstar, 25 April 2015.

⁸⁵ Interviews with Hamzah Al-Karimi, 2 April 2015; Anis Toleb, 22 April 2015.

⁸⁶ Interview with Sarawut Samadi, 23 April 2015; Hanif Yongstar, 25 April 2015.

groups, especially the cultural, non-practising Muslims, who were born Muslims but had not attached themselves to any Islamic traditional ideas. Hanif has referred to this group as 'the middle group'.⁸⁷ Indicators of this religious background can be assumed from the trend of questions asked in the religious Q&A programmes.⁸⁸

The increasing level of support from the audience was evidenced by the money they donated through each project. In August and September 2010, the 'Islam in Thailand' radio programme mobilised 5 million baht for flood relief in Pakistan.⁸⁹ Following the launch of White Channel TV, support was even greater, including 1 million baht for White Channel's monthly expenses, 10 million baht donated for Rohingya Muslims in 2012, and 5.6 million baht donated for Syria in March 2016. In the month of Ramadan in 2016, the channel raised 23 million for the whole year's budget, whereas Lutfi's campaign for Assalam's Madinah al-Salam project mobilised through a grand event on 6–7 June 2017 and through internet and local radio programmes within his network received a mere 16 million baht (*Sinaran Online* 2017). While the exact size of Rida's audiences is difficult to pinpoint, indicators can be estimated from the turnout of people in their field events organised every year in Bangkok, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun, Songkla, Phuket and Chiang Mai. The number of attendees has ranged from 10,000 to 30,000.⁹⁰ The venue of events has developed from using mosque lawns and local

⁸⁷ Interview with Hanif Yongstar, 25 April 2015.

⁸⁸ Observation notes from watching the TV programme titled, *Assirat al- Mustaqim*. White Channel, Every Wednesday, 20.30-22.30. Available from: <http://whitechannel.tv>; interviews with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015; Hanif Yongstar, 25 April 2015.

During the election campaign in 2014, Sheikh Rida told his staff that he was more confident in receiving votes from the *khana kao* than the *khana mai* alliances. He deduced this by reference to the questions asked on his TV programme and the fact that a lot came from the non-*khana mai* audience.

⁸⁹ มุสลิมเพื่อสันติโอนแล้วงวดแรก 4 แสนบาท บรรเทาทุกข์น้ำท่วมปากีสถาน [In Thai – Muslim for Peace transfers first instalment - 400,000 baht to relieve flood in Pakistan]. [Online]. Available from: <http://muslim4peace.net/dp6/?q=frontpage&page=41&order=title&sort=desc> [Accessed 10 June 2013].

ไฟล์เสียงรายการวิทยุอิสลามอินไทยแลนด์ 23 สค 2553. [In Thai – Audio file of radio programme 'Islam in Thailand'. Available from: <http://www.islaminthailand.org/media/audio/radio/2010Q3/islaminthailand046820100823.mp3> [Accessed 10 June 2013].

⁹⁰ These estimated numbers were made via triangulation of various sources, including interviews, participant observation, and media sources. Observation from White events in Bangkok, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Songkhla, and Satun during the course of fieldwork in October 2014-April 2015 and interview with Sumet Momin, Manager of White Channel, 1 April 2015. White Channel's YouTube pages:

school halls to larger provincial public parks, gymnasiums, stadiums, shopping mall conventional halls, and even national convention halls.

In the same way that the establishment of Assalam's Islamic university was a transition point that shaped Assalam leaders to accommodate with the Thai state and other elements of Malay Muslim society, the founding of the White Channel was also a major development that affected Sheikh Rida's methodology of Islamic interpretation, his stance on contemporary issues and accommodation with the wider plural society, as well as the Thai authorities. At this point, based on the above evidence, I argue that the essential opportunity structure that enabled Sheikh Rida and his group to transmit their revivalist and reformist messages to the public is the media tools available at different times. Upon the use and development of these media channels and the attempts to access different groups of a wider target audience, they had to adjust some ideas and strategies, many of which might not be in line with Salafi traditions. Here, the application of modernity pushes them to review their previous ways of thinking and organizing, and to become more adaptive. Eventually, this brought them to be more accommodating of new ideas, methods, and target contexts.

Aside from media outreach projects, Sheikh Rida and his students have also developed different types of social organisations in pursuit of spreading Islamic messages, reviving Islamic way of life among Muslims and protecting Muslim rights, domestically and abroad. All of these efforts were carried out within the broad network of Muslim Group for Peace. In other words, the Muslim Group for Peace is an umbrella movement for Sheikh Rida's affiliations and projects.

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1. "Spot ขอบคุณอะหุลัน ยะลา" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVcUeybqYZQ> [Accessed 20 November 2017].
 2. "สปอตขอบคุณไวก์สเปซ@ยะลา" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wF4Dm64yio> [Accessed 20 November 2017].
 3. "สปอตขอบคุณงานชุกรอน" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63-ymCZpFA8> [Accessed 20 November 2017].
 4. "PR 59-03-29 สปอตขอบคุณงานริสกีที่ดี" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FbcWF6UDLs> [Accessed 20 November 2017].

The Muslim Group for Peace (MGP)

MGP was initially set up on an ad hoc basis in response to the trigger of the American invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001. Previously, the group of Salafi scholars allied with the Sathachon Foundation for Orphans, Foundation for Preserving Islamic Heritage, Darussalam Foundation and other independent scholars had met regularly in lecture programmes and Salafi events. Before the United States started the war, this group of scholars had already given public lectures on world events involving Muslim concerns, especially the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, they organised events that delivered information about the possibility of the US war on Afghanistan and made a pledge to protest at the US Embassy in Bangkok soon after the war started. They also mobilised money used in the group's events. Their demonstrations appeared to be peaceful and well-organised (Punthin 2003).

The main activities during the beginning included the holding of peaceful demonstrations over different issues over which they perceived that Muslims were oppressed, including the US led war on Iraq in 2003, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Danish cartoonist's 2005 caricature of Prophet Muhammad. The demonstrations in front of those western embassies were the very first points of contact between Sheikh Rida, MGP and the authorities. From this, they learned how deal with the police and media, as well as how to organise the protest with a positive image and without violating state regulations. This opportunity structure allowed MGP to establish its activism on a safe path thanks to legal protection. Although MGP in this period was still based on a rigid Salafi approach, its coordination with the state can be counted as the initial point of accommodation.

From late 2001 to 2003, MGP also continually organised a monthly event called 'Jihad Day,' updating Muslims about oppression worldwide and emphasising the sense of a borderless connection of Islamic brotherhood. Approximately 3,000 members registered with the group in 2003.⁹¹ However, the network of scholars who took part became weaker after many internal conflicts within the Salafi

⁹¹ Interview with Hanif Yongstar, Secretary of Muslim Group for Peace, 22 April 2014.

community and gradually shrank to a smaller core of scholars who strongly agreed with Sheikh Rida.

Sheikh Rida's present day domination of MGP has made members unaware of the origins of the organisation, which was initially merely a loose network that mediated between Salafi groups and focused solely on the suffering of Muslims in the Middle East and various other parts of the world. My interviews with MGP members show that the historical network that existed at the outset of MGP had become a forgotten or understated fact for many of them.

Neo-MGP

The new MGP under the supervision of Sheikh Rida reflects his ideological framework completely. Previously, the focus of the group was merely limited to campaigning and standing for global Muslim rights by holding demonstrations and raising awareness among Muslims. The new MGP has expanded its work to wider ranges of issues, covering various aspects of Muslim rights protection in the context of Thailand and neighbouring countries. The original loose network of Salafi scholars was replaced by determined youth from among Sheikh Rida's students and new volunteers, including both professionals and low-skilled cadres.

The neo-MGP's activism was based on the relationship between the revitalisation of Islamic identity among Muslims and the support of their rights to practice Islam in public life. When Sheikh Rida made people more aware of Islam and began changing their way of life accordingly, the next problem to address was Muslim religious rights. 'MGP had a social commitment to protecting their rights', said Haneef Yongstar, MGP secretary.⁹²

The effort of Sheikh Rida and MGP in the reform of Muslims' religious life was not stopping short merely at the stage of making them aware of the Islamic way of life, but also facilitated them to practice it frictionlessly. For instance, when Muslims became more aware of wearing hijab, whether by Sheikh Rida or other factors in the Islamisation process, then

⁹² Interview with Hanif Yongstar, Secretary of Muslim Group for Peace, 22 April 2014.

he/she insisted to practice it in the workplace [and] MGP would give them a hand when problems occurred with this.⁹³

The most frequent complaints reported to them concerned hijab and halal cases. Most of the cases ended successfully. On hijab issues, most of the complaints were from students in public schools, colleges, universities, and nurses in public hospitals. The cases were from Bangkok and the whole southern area, primarily the Upper South. The means MGP used for its campaigns ranged from informal verbal negotiations to legal procedures, all of which were hinged on their rights in accordance with the Constitution. In some cases, such as the hijab case of a student in Petchburi province, which was MGP's first case at the request of local people, simply a letter from MGP stating the importance of the hijab to religious belief and reference to the rights guaranteed by the Constitution was sufficient to convince those opposing it to drop their case. Some cases were promoted by their media, White Channel. One of the more famous and successful cases concerned the Hadyai Wittayalai School, a leading school of the southern region. The school reversed its persistent hijab ban after the Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha confirmed to a White Channel journalist during a press conference on 30 December 2014 that no one could ban the hijab in schools. In April 2015, the director of Baan Nai Yong School in Phang Nga province banned schoolgirls from wearing the hijab, claiming that it violated the school uniform rules and caused divisions among students (*Bangkok Post*, 2016). The MGP staff in Phuket branch intervened and publicised it via White News. The ban later instigated protest from residents in the area and drew the attention of the local Islamic Council. On 20 April, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said public schools in the south should not impose rules that encroach on the identity of local Muslims. Eventually, Kamol Rodklai, the Secretary-General of the Office of the Basic Education Commission transferred the school director to an inactive post (*Khaosod English*, 2015).⁹⁴

⁹³ Interview with Hanif Yongstar, Secretary of Muslim Group for Peace, 22 April 2014.

⁹⁴ *Khaosod English* newspaper also reported the interview exchange between the school director and White News. A quote from the director spread on social media and incited Muslim complaints: 'Muslim children can veil their heads at home. When they are at school, they have to obey the school regulations. Don't bring divisions to my school. Nowadays, there's already problems in the three southern provinces, isn't that enough?' says the director to White News."

Considering the organisational strategic aspect, each affiliated group within MGP was established for two reasons: firstly, in response to fill gaps remaining in society, especially regarding Muslim rights; and secondly, to apply the right mechanism to the right job – that is to address problems that the existing MGP affiliated groups were not equipped to deal with properly. For example, in 2007, Himayah (the Muslim Consumer Protection group) emerged from the case of a food product called Hoi Cho, which had received a halal certificate but was subsequently found to contain pork. MGP was asked by people to follow the case. This led to the launching of a group working on halal inspection issues. Many cases were transferred to the halal division of the Central Islamic Council of Thailand. ‘As our aim is just to fill the gap, not compete with formalised institutions, thus we did it by receiving complaints, inspecting the case and handing it over to the authorised institution’.⁹⁵

This example of creating a new mechanism by setting up function-based organisation not only reflects the aim of reaching out to the masses discussed earlier, but also revealed MGP’s organisational adjustment in response to limitations in its work or new problems it encountered. A clearer example of this idea can also be seen from the birth of the White Channel and the Party for Peace. One of the reasons the movement was inspired to develop its own news agency and media, leading to the creation of the White Channel in 2012, was that it was limited in the capacity to publicise the hijab case concerning the Matthayom Wat Nong Chok School. During this case, MGP also faced political obstruction which made its leaders realise that the problem could not be solved solely by legal processes. The Party for Peace was therefore established in November 2013 to support different dimensions of their work that required political support and connections to fix or put pressure on dysfunctional or obstructionist processes, especially when they had to deal with corrupt authorities within the Thai bureaucratic system. As Hanif argued,

Everything we do is based on the Thai Constitution, which is our opportunity. We started our Muslims’ right protection by relying on legal process. Nevertheless, when some cases are blocked due to something

⁹⁵ Interview with Anis Toleb, Head of Himayah, 4 February 2015.

being wrong with the bureaucratic system, we have to make the process work as it should. And this requires political activism, whether formal or informal.⁹⁶

Despite its awareness of the importance of politics, MGP's development and application of political tools was still weak and largely ineffective. Legal means seemed to be its main approach. In its mission to help 218 Uighur Muslim migrants who were detained in Songkhla in March 2014, overseen by the Songkhla immigration office (*Bangkok Post*, 2014), when MGP used legal measures to put pressure on the officers, the process became bogged down. An activist from the Council for Humanitarian Networking of Sheikhul Islam Office (CHN-SIS) heard a complaint about MGP's pressure from senior immigration officers.⁹⁷ Dr. Arifeen, who was a member of the Council, expressed his concern that the naive emphasis of MGP on legal means while ignoring political realities in the Thai bureaucratic system would damage their attempts to affect change.⁹⁸ In this regard, Hanif contended that the Council [CHN-SIS] attempted to maintain a good relationship with the senior officers and did not want to challenge the authorities, while MGP believed that the right of Uighurs not to be detained was the first priority and must not be violated. Hanif elaborated,

Samnak Chula [the Office of Sheikhul Islam] criticised that MGP's approach was too aggressive and did not comply with the Council's policy. However, our policy is that when it comes to the issue of human right violations, we cannot compromise and have to watch and put pressure closely.⁹⁹

In summary, alongside the organisational evolution of the MGP, we can see the development of a religious education network that transformed into a set of social organisations which have also worked cohesively on the common theme of 'filling the gaps in society by applying Islamic knowledge and piety.' On this basis, Islamic preaching, an emphasis on morally reforming society and protecting as well as widening Muslim rights have constantly been reflected in the coexistence

⁹⁶ Interview with Hanif Yongstar, Secretary of Muslim Group for Peace. 22 April 2014.

⁹⁷ Interview with Anantachai Thaiprathan, 23 February 2015.

⁹⁸ Interview with Anantachai Thaiprathan, 23 February 2015.

⁹⁹ Interview with Hanif Yongstar, Secretary of Muslim Group for Peace. 22 April 2014.

between the movement's ideological transformation, pragmatic strategic adjustments and more extensive interactions with the prevailing socio-political context. In spite of MGP's naivety concerning political realities, its greater engagement with wider social elements has allowed it to move further in the process of accommodation with contexts beyond the theological sphere.

Conclusion

The investigation of the origins and evolutions of the two Islamist movements in this chapter finds that the settings of both movements in Thailand offered them distinctive opportunity structures as well as a range of constraints. These structural dynamics had a great impact on their attitudes towards the Thai state and led to a substantial adjustment in their ideologies, interpretation of contexts, evaluation of platforms, and reconfiguration of their internal organisation.

This chapter also illustrated both distinctive and common features of their historical backgrounds. In terms of distinctive features, this chapter has laid different geographical backgrounds in which both movements originated and evolved domestically and globally. The domestic area covers the background of the Salafi in Bangkok, from which MGP network emerged, and the background of Malay Muslim politics in the southern Muslim majority area where Assalam emerged and primarily operated. In the global arena, in which the dynamism of Islamic reformist ideologies circulated, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are elucidated as the main sites where Assalam's Salafi-reformism was adopted as their ideological orientation, whilst Egypt significantly contributed as the main ideological terrain nurturing Sheikh Rida's Safafi ideas and activism.

This chapter also provided contextual factors that contributed to both movements' accommodation. I have argued that Assalam's switch from an antagonistic perspective towards the Thai state to a pragmatic emphasis on peaceful means were highly influenced by the moderate, universal (as opposed to local) Salafi Islamic teachings, as well as examples and suggestions they gleaned from contemporary Middle Eastern and Indonesian Islamic reformist literature, movements and scholars. MGP, which relied massively on Sheikh Rida's

experiences and guidance, was initially limited in its efforts towards Islamic revitalisation and had little direct contact with the state and mainstream plural secular society. Its accommodation saw it move from the theological dimension to socio-political dimensions, that is, from a narrow, rigid purist Salafi to a wider reformist modernist trend. The influence for this stemmed from the changing context the group found themselves in, alongside Sheikh Rida's own travels and experiences. The most crucial context for both Assalam and MGP was the Thai socio-political environment that they established their activism in. The Thai state's policies towards, and improvement in the relationship with, Muslims also offered political opportunities for both movements to become more accommodating.

Assalam and MGP also had in common their trajectory of engagement with wider contexts – with the Thai state, to be sure, but also the traditionalist Malay Muslim communities. The two movements also share some themes in their origins and evolution, such as the Salafi-reformist ideological strain and influences from the Middle East, the domestication of activism with Islamic teaching programmes, the network creation of informal groups and organisation revolving around the spiritual leaders, the exercise of public facilities and infrastructures in formalising their movements, and the adoption of modernity and progressive thought in adjusting their strategies and outreach towards wider targets, especially the middle classes.

To conclude, while this chapter provides a backdrop to the early development of both movements from their ideational origins in the Middle East to their early years of settling in Thailand, it also hints at trends towards ideological, organisational, and behavioural dimensions of accommodation. All of these themes will be unpacked in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Accommodation Through Network-Based Movements: Organisational and Ideological Strategies

Introduction

The preceding chapter chronicled the journey of religious scholars, Dr. Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida, who transformed into Islamic-reformist activists alongside the development of the Assalam and the Muslim Group for Peace (MGP). These two Islamic reformist movements evolved from groups of students engaged in Islamic studies to organised movements that expanded into wider socio-political roles beyond the religious arena. Despite having relatively small memberships within the larger milieu of traditionalist Muslim communities, and operating in a Buddhist majority country, they have managed to consolidate their movements and gain growing influence over Muslim society. The rise of these movements raises three important questions as pertains to the Islamic activism and social movement literature: How do Islamist movements reach out to potential recruits? How do they mobilise resources? What form of organisational ties enable them to succeed or fail in conveying their ideational message to the intended target audience?

These questions reflect one of the thesis's secondary research questions: to what extent and how have Islamist movements successfully developed their organisational strategies based on network-based structures of organisation in order to create space for Islamic reformist activism within Thai society? My answer to this question lies in the use of organisational strategies. The chapter also provides evidence of how these strategies lead to accommodation in specific contexts. In dealing with the organisational dimension, the chapter will critically address how the Assalam and MGP movements used organisational strategies to create space to carry out Islamic reformist agendas, and how these strategies allowed them to domesticate their ideologies and organisations. In so doing, the organisational strategies are presented in two sections: mobilisation and network-based movements. The mobilisation strategies include the use of Islamic education mechanisms, youth-centric recruitment, and mobilisation of Islamic charities. The

network-based organisational strategies consisted of creating informal networks, formalising network organisations, and making alliances with different external networks.

The chapter begins by discussing the conceptualisation of the 'network-based movement' to demonstrate the significant networked nature of Islamist movements which shaped the organisational structure of Assalam and MGP. Building on the emergence and evolution of the movements described in the previous chapter, I will then explore the mobilising methods deployed during the movements' establishment and formation periods. These mobilisation methods revolve around the launching of various Islamic education programmes in pursuit of mass influence, and the recruitment of young cadres. Alongside their early recruitment periods, both movements created networks of informal organisations in order to engage in activism and disseminate their ideas. The significance of informal networks as an organisational strategy used by the movements in the relatively repressive Thai environment will be discussed, followed by an analysis of the formalisation of movements to reveal the level of trust of Islamists towards the Thai state. The establishment of the Assalam's Yala Islamic College in 1998 and MGP's White Channel in 2012, as well as the development of other formal organisations within their networks became critical transition points for both movements to accommodate and gain more recognition in society. In addition, I will scrutinise the network relations within the loose network of Salafi scholars and Islamic activists as well as external contacts with traditionalist leaders, bureaucrats, politicians and international linkages.

In making sense of the movements' accommodation, ideological strategies are inseparable from organisational ones. Therefore, in the third section, this chapter also examines how the Islamic reformist ideologies of the Islamist movements have evolved, and how the movements used ideological strategies alongside their organisational elements.

Network-Based Movements

Describing Assalam and MGP by referring to them simply as 'a movement' is not sufficient to demonstrate their salient feature, which is based on, and composed of, networks of informal and formal organisations. A more specific term would make their network attribute become more apparent. I use the term 'network-based movement' as a subset of 'movement' to describe the organisational form of the chosen case studies. The formulation of this term is drawn empirically from their attributes, and conceptually from the literature on social movements and networks.

On the empirical level, network attributes can be observed at organisational and individual levels. At the organisational level, the two specific movements are constituted by complex networks of affiliated groups and organisations, rather than being unified within single formal organisations. At the centre of each movement are Sheikh Rida's Muslim Group for Peace and Ismail Lutfi's Fatoni University – FTU (previously named Yala Islamic University – YIU). However, these organisations can be categorised as 'a movement organisation' rather than merely 'a movement' or as 'an organisation' as they do not always represent all affiliations within the same networks. Despite the lack of a single overarching official organisation that embraces all affiliations of the movement, each of them has been informally recognised in the public as Klum Muslim Phue Santi (the Muslim Group for Peace) and Mor Or Yor (YIU), later renamed the Mor For Nor (FTU, or Fatoni University) network. Both were also often informally named after their leaders: Sheikh Rida's network and Dr. Lutfi's network. In the case of Lutfi's network, the name 'Assalam' was introduced to the public after the establishment of the Assalam Institute as a unit under YIU in 2006. Later the name was attached to its various organisations and activities, such as the Assalam Smart Schools Association, Assalam Institute regional coordinative offices, Assalam Business Network and Assalam Network Football League.

Apart from the network of organisations, the other salient network aspect of both movements is the network of individuals. These individuals sympathise, support, or follow particular leaders or groups within the movements, even though

their state of membership is unclear; for instance, those who regularly attend Lutfi's *Majlis al-Ilmi* weekly preaching programme and Rida's weekly Quranic and Hadith classes, as well those who are the main audience of Lutfi's radio station networks and Rida's White Channel TV station. These followers might support the movements' activities without formally joining as members, though some of these are also prospective members.

In terms of the conceptual basis necessary to understand the political accommodation of the Assalam and MGP movements, the internal networks can take various forms. In a grievance-based explanation, collective behaviours are based upon shared values, grievances and motivations, as well as the same ideology among different affiliations and levels of members. Alternatively, taking the opposing resource mobilisation and political process perspectives on mobilising structures, movements recruit supporters for collective action either through formal or informal organisational elements of mobilisation processes (McAdam, McCarthy, Zald 1996: 3–4).

Notwithstanding the expansion of network based studies of social movements, existing explanations and concepts are still not adequate to capture the nature of many social movements, which are arguably 'complex and highly heterogeneous network structures' (Diani 2003: 1). As such, my empirical investigation needs alternative terms to specify the network features of the case studies. With this in mind, 'network-based movement' is the most suitable operational term. Within this network-type organisation, it may be difficult to distinguish the boundaries of membership, not only for outsiders, but also for members. Understanding of both movements' leaders and memberships are varied. Many of those involved, especially cadres who were not paid staff of organisations within the movement, could not define what someone's precise membership status was. In the broadest classification sense, membership in Assalam and the MGP is twofold: the informal membership of a broad movement and membership of a formal organisation within a movement. A member of the first category, which does not necessarily hold membership of a formal organisation belonging to the movement, tends to be in ideological agreement and share collective identity and action. This kind of membership, which mostly

includes cadres and volunteers, is invisible to outsiders and is difficult to recognise. On the other hand, the ordinary paid staff of formal organisation do not necessarily understand or agree with the ideology of the movement that employs them. Cadres can be categorised in both types of membership. However, 'cadre' connotes the meaning of an activist, a volunteer, or a zealous member who dedicates herself (or himself) to the movement or who was recruited and trained by the movement.

Mobilisation Strategies

According to the resource mobilisation theory (RMT), movements are not formed by emotional, psychologically distressed people who get involved in groups for no particular reason; rather, they are 'rational, organised manifestations of collective action' (Wicktorowic 2004: 9–10). Movements collectivise and translate individualised grievances into organised contention, which is constructed through mechanisms of mobilisation that yield resources for continued collective action (McCarthy and Zald 1987).

The previous chapter demonstrated that Assalam and the MGP, though similarly aggrieved over the crisis facing the Muslim *ummah*, emerged from different sources of grievance. The former emerged against the backdrop of issues facing Malay Muslims in the Deep South, whereas the latter was initially formed based on Muslim grievances at the global level. While Assalam pioneers rejected separatist ideologies owing to their different views over how to improve the condition of the Patani people – in other words, embracing Islamic reformism as an alternative to the Malay nationalist perspective on how change should come about – the MGP's early activities and gatherings were primarily marked by protests at different foreign embassies, including those of the United States, Israel and Denmark, over international controversies.

Notwithstanding these 'provocations', both movements similarly found that a key solution to improve the condition of Muslims lay in the revitalisation of Islamic identity through a 'true' and 'righteous' Islam. In other words, they both adopted Islamic reformist-cum-puritanist orientations as their methodology of

choice. Therefore, their activism was framed around the core of Islamic education in relation to contextual interpretations and engagement.

In the relationship between mobilisation and activism, many social movement theorists have highlighted the significance of collective identity. Collective identity, which functions as a source of solidarity among like-minded people, can emerge before mobilisation (Melucci 1995: 52–53, Singerman 2004: 153). The collective identity that underpinned the mobilisation of the Assalam and the MGP came from a pre-existing Salafi legacy in Thai Islam; as well as their own efforts implemented through the Islamic education programmes they organised before and during mobilisation. Islamic education has been the keystone of Assalam and the MGP at every step in the evolution of the movements. Islamic teaching programmes played a critical role in nurturing a collective identity, which brought people from different backgrounds into the same network. The collective identities of Assalam and the MGP were manifested in their ideological cores, which were concerned with improving self-piety based on ‘true’ Islam, and joining together to reform society.

In terms of both movements’ mobilisation and organisational development process, I argue that Islamic education scholarship has always been a core strength that the leaders used to justify their ideologies, recruiting new cadres and building wider networks of sympathisers, funding sources and alliances. There have been three interrelated parallels in the mobilisation of Assalam and the MGP: Islamic education programmes, youth recruitment and Islamic charities.

Islamic education functioned as a mechanism for fulfilling two roles in the movements’ mobilisation. Firstly, it was used to instil and frame ideologies among their cadres. Moreover, recruitment of youth played a major role in both movements’ early development and subsequent transformation. It was, moreover, used for propagating their reformist messages to the public, some of whom later became their sympathisers and supporters to mobilise capital resources for activism. These resources derived from home-grown mobilisation and international Islamic charitable sources.

Islamic education credentials as a keystone of activism

At the beginning stages of the movements, most of their founders came from an Islamic studies educational background. Therefore, they strategically considered Islamic education as a form of capital from which their ideology and activism could be built.¹⁰⁰ A range of Islamic education programmes have been an essential source for the activism of Assalam and the MGP, including teaching of Quranic exegesis, *hadith* (prophetic practice), *seerah* (Islamic history), *aqidah* (belief), *tawhid* (the oneness of God), *khutbah* (sermons), public lectures and seminars on contemporary issues and discussions about the state of the Muslim world, *halaqahs* (study circles), youth camps, workshops, exhibitions, events, and media programmes.

Beginning activism by organising Islamic educational programmes is logical, both in practical and strategic terms. It is practical in the sense that while pioneering leaders of both movements had strengths in Islamic knowledge and had places to start their teaching programmes, they were unfamiliar with the Thai state and rather alienated from the traditionalist Muslim community. Thus, the avenues for activism were limited; they started from the simple task of teaching, which revolved around their *kaum muda/khana mai* communities. Dr. Jihad and Dr. Ismail Lutfi used mosques and Islamic schools founded by their fathers in the suburb area of Yala and Pattani. Sheikh Rida likewise started his teaching programmes at Al-Islah Association and Ansarissunnah Mosque in Bangkoknoi, where his father was an editor and preacher.

Considering the strategic reasons for propagating Islamic reformism, the movement's founders only had Islamic credentials for small numbers of *khana mai/kaum muda* members and supporters at the beginning. Assalam initially had less than a thousand cadres and active followers scattered around ten Islamic schools in the Deep South and the Upper South. The MGP had a few hundred students attending Sheikh Rida's classes. Accessing a larger base was difficult and required efficient mechanisms, resources, and cadres. Under such limitations, the two organisational strategic purposes of organising Islamic educational

¹⁰⁰ Interviews with Rida Ahmad Samadi 22 April 2015; Ahmad Umar Chapakia, 29 January 2015.

programmes were 1) to increase the mass base of supporters and sympathisers, and 2) to recruit cadres and members.¹⁰¹

Recruitment does not occur simply through structural strength and ideological conformity with movement norms – rather, it is part of a conscious effort by movement activists to selectively target prospective cadres in sympathetic social networks and communities (Clark 2004: 166). Similarly, Assalam and the MGP purposefully recruited cadres using more elaborate criteria, such as *akhlaq* (manners), *amal* (religious practice), *aqidah* (creed), and *amanah* (trustworthiness).

In the case of Assalam, which was embedded in a more difficult and repressive environment than the MGP, their Islamic learning programmes organised for cadres differed from the ones for general audiences. During their early years in Saudi Arabia (1970–85), they divided their work into that of the JPIP (Ml. Jama'ah Pelajar Islam Patani, the Patani Islamic Students Movement established in 1977) and the MAJDA (Ml. Majlis Dawah Islamiyah established in 1980). Serving different purposes, the JPIP was a group of student activists and intellectuals, while the MAJDA aimed to educate general audiences and followers, who were mainly Malay Muslim traders and workers in Mecca. General Islamic knowledge such as Islamic teachings, Quran exegesis, Hadith explanations, and Islamic history could be accessed by both general audiences and cadres through the teaching programmes and *halaqah* (study circles) provided by Jihad Bungatayong, Ismail Lutfi and other leading students. As for specific knowledge about Islamic movements and other higher levels of Islamic knowledge, such as the interpretation of Islamic texts and contemporary issues, only selected cadres could access this through campus academic seminars, closed meetings and study circles.

In Thailand, at the outset of the Assalam movement, Seni's informal teaching programmes in the suburban villages and the forum in the PSU campus described in the previous chapter also reflects this two-typed classification of cadres and general audience. After the return of educated leaders beginning in 1975, the same differentiation of programmes according to the two groups of target audience was

¹⁰¹ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

also applied through a varied range of methods. In terms of members, specific programmes and activities such as courses, youth camps, study circles, closed meetings, seminars, and workshops were exclusively organised with the use of facilities equipped by Fatoni University as well as Islamic cooperatives, Islamic private schools, mosques, and private homes within their network. These programmes, apart from aiming to increase Islamic knowledge and the necessary skills to perform *da'wah* (Islamic preaching), they were also strategically aimed at forging uniform understanding of Islamic ideologies. The topics of seminars organised for members and *da'ee* (preachers) reflects the 'campaign' agenda that the movement launched at different occasions, such as 'Islam as a religion of peace', 'Islamic moderation' (*Wasatiyyah*), 'one nation' (*Ummah Wahidah*), and 'Al-Quran: the guidance for mankind'. However, members were also encouraged to attend programmes aimed at general audiences, too.

To reach a mass audience, the Islamic messages in the Patani Salafi-reformist version were disseminated through Islamic teaching programmes, Islamic educational institutions and different kinds of media and texts. This Patani Salafi-reformist programme was a combination of Salafi ideas influenced by the Saudi curriculum, the contextual interpretation framed by reformist orientations, and the engagement with the contemporary local realities facing Malay Muslims. Such a combination required a high level of knowledge and a good understanding of basic issues at the local level. The main contributors were the Saudi-educated 'Four Doctors,' comprising Jihad Bungatanjong, Abdul Haleem Saising, as well as other leading scholars. Dr Lutfi and the late Dr Jihad were adept at simplifying high level knowledge of Islam for local audiences, allowing their respective weekly sermons or *Majlis al-Ilmi* to grow into large gatherings of over a thousand Malay Muslim villagers and middle-class Muslims, as described in the previous chapter.

Comparing Ismail Lutfi's Saturday *Majlis al-Ilmi* at Bra-o, Pattani, with the traditionalist *ulama* Ismail Sapanyan's weekends sermons at Yala and Pattani central mosques, McCargo (2008: 23–24) noted the contrast between the two gatherings. Ismail Sapanyan's sermons were delivered in simple language using easily-understandable metaphors, which were attractive to audiences of villagers and created an open and friendly atmosphere. In *Majlis al-Ilmi*, more serious issues

were dealt with: the emphasis was on spiritual authority and authentic sources taught to an audience dominated by educated, middle class Muslims, many of whom were government officials.

Assalam connected more to the middle class than villagers, though it would be misleading to conclude that Assalam failed to reach out to local communities at all. Indeed, Assalam leaders started their activism in rural and suburban areas rather than urban ones: the only urban activity was the Seni programme at the PSU campus. They successfully expanded to wider local constituencies, despite a small, limited number within the dominant traditionalist majority population. The most effective mechanisms that enabled them to penetrate local areas were the *Majlis al-Ilmi* as well as other formal and informal Islamic teaching programmes taught in different communities throughout the lower and upper southern regions. The Brao *Majlis al-Ilmi*, for instance, was not solely attended by educated, middle class Muslims, as illustrated by McCargo (2008: 24) but rather was more strategically aimed to target the villagers – albeit while still being accessible to the middle class.¹⁰²

A government official who attended the sermons of Dr Jihad and Dr Lutfi explained that both scholars were good in using accessible language and metaphors that could be easily understood by both villagers and the middle classes.¹⁰³ The urban middle class or new generation who did not grow up in the village might not be able to understand some local terms, jokes, metaphors, such as types of local cows, trees, herbs, or even traditional kitchenware.¹⁰⁴ The attractiveness of the two classes to audience can be seen in the fact that during the sermons hundreds of cars were parked in three lines – on the left, right, and middle – of the Yala-Pattani highway no. 410, in the Puyud area. According to my observations over the past ten years, roughly a quarter of the vehicles were brand-new, expensive cars, whereas the rest were motorcycles and overcrowded old vehicles that carried groups of villagers.

¹⁰² Interview with Muhammad Nasir Habeye, 18 December 2014.

¹⁰³ Informal talk with retired officials, Pakistan Mosque, Pattani. 9 February 2015.

¹⁰⁴ Informal talk with retired officials, Pakistan Mosque, Pattani. 9 February 2015.

Another mechanism that enabled the reformist message to penetrate the homes of local Malay Muslims were the radio broadcasts, through which the *Majlis al-Ilmi* sermon was repeatedly delivered. There were many stories of listeners who were previously traditionalists but became fascinated by Lutfi's sermons without realising that they were listening to a 'Wahhabi' speaker.¹⁰⁵ During my fieldwork in Narathiwat, I witnessed this example at first hand from a shopkeeper on the so-called Bypass Road. When I entered the grocery store, I heard Lutfi's sermon being broadcast on the radio. However, I noticed that the way he and his wife dressed did not look like typical followers of Lutfi (men generally have beards and women wear large hijab covering the head and chest). The shopkeeper's wife just wore a hijab inner cap loosely covering her head. When I asked him about the sermon, he replied that it was very nice but he did not know who the speaker was.

Another example can be seen from the late Baboma Kamiyor who always sat at the front row of the Bra-o *Majlis al-Ilmi*. He told about when he started to follow Lutfi's teaching programmes; initially, he listened unwilling to Lutfi's sermons through the radio programmes and cassettes favoured by his son in law. He always turned the sermons off. However, after a few months, he became gradually convinced by Lutfi's teachings and eventually became addicted to the *Majlis al-Ilmi*.¹⁰⁶ These examples demonstrate how Salafi-reformist messages reached Patani people through Lutfi's knowledgeability and skill in adapting the texts into local vernacular. No matter how busy Ismail Lutfi was in overseeing official responsibilities alongside the movement's growth and the greater social recognition this came with, he constantly prioritised and maintained the Bra-o *Majlis al-Ilmi* for over three decades beginning in 1986.¹⁰⁷ Unless it was absolutely essential, Lutfi never missed delivering this Saturday sermon. Opening ceremonies or other events that required his presence could not conflict with his Saturday morning commitment. One of the reasons that he took this so seriously was that he had to respect the time dedicated by his audience, who not only came from the

¹⁰⁵ Observation note and informal talk at Bra-o *Majlis al-Ilmi*, Pattani, 7 February 2015.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Baboma Kamiyor, 10 December 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Interviews with Ismail Lutfi 10 February 2015; Muhammad Nasir Habaye, 23 December 2014; Ajarn Davud, Ismail Lutfi's secretary, 10 February 2015.

three provinces, but from as far afield as Satun and Songkhla.¹⁰⁸ Many cadres, especially *ustazs* and *imams* who attended the sermons, passed Lutfi's teachings on to their local communities in the five southern border provinces through local Islamic teaching programme channels and study circles at schools, mosques and private homes. Their different forms of Salafi Islamic practice as well as their criticisms of those Shafi-e traditionalist villagers when it came to *bid'a* (innovation) in religious rituals, caused conflict and tension at the local level through these channels.

In the first decade of Lutfi's teaching, prior to the establishment of the YIU, the main message transmitted to rural communities appeared to be more purist than reformist in tone. In other words, the reformist educators at the beginning sought to perform their activism with emphasis on purifying Islamic beliefs and practices among Malay Muslims rather than propagating their reformist ideas, which has socio-economic dimensions. To reiterate the earlier discussion in Chapter 2, this was more about renewal than reform, if we are to use Esposito's (1983) terms. The parallel terms in *kaum muda/kaum tua* relations, in which Lutfi's followers referred themselves as *ahli sunah* or *puak salaf*, in contrast to such reductionist terms as *ahli bid'a* or *puak khalaf*, confirm the reach of the purist trend rather than reformist-modernist trends. With a focus on the significance of purity of belief (*tawhid*) and the authenticity of the prophetic practice (*sunnah*) in their teachings, criticism of local practices that were largely based on mysticism and Sufism was unavoidable for Salafi-reformist educators. In line with McCargo's (2008: 22) and Liow's (2009: 105) descriptions of Lutfi's initial stance on religious issues as hard-line, inflexible and uncompromising, Lutfi himself also confirmed in my interviews his own relatively aggressive (*baekhaeng* in Patani Malay dialect) style of teaching at the outset.¹⁰⁹

Another key mechanism that became Assalam's significant source of disseminating reformist ideas to the Malay Muslim masses was the Friday sermon or *khutbah*. While most of the *khateeb* (a person who delivers *khutbah*) of the

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Ismail Lutfi, 10 February 2015; Observation note on at Bra-o *Majlis -al-Ilmi*, Pattani, 7 February 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Ismail Lutfi, 10 February 2015.

traditionalist mosques throughout the southern provinces delivered the Friday *khutbah* in a formal, written Malay language by reading from the static lesson drawn from the *kitab Jawi*, the reformist version of *khutbah* was delivered in semi-formal, understandable language (Thai and Malay) and engaged with contemporary issues. At the Prince of Songkla University (PSU) mosque managed by the College of Islamic Studies (CIS), the Friday *khutbah* were most frequently delivered in Thai. Of an audience of nearly a thousand strong, approximately half were university staff and middle-class worshippers from outside the campus, especially educated workers and government officials, while the rest were students on campus. The majority of Muslim students were traditionalists, and most of them prayed outside the campus at the Pattani Central Mosque or other mosques in the nearby villages, such as Rusamilae and Pakara. In 2006, Saudara, a group of Malay nationalist, traditionalist Muslim students, informally campaigned for PSU students to boycott the campus mosque (McCargo 2008: 27).

In general, the traditionalists had used typical old methods of teaching which relied entirely on the explanation of *tok guru* and the texts from *kitab Jawi*. This form of knowledge dissemination could be accessed mainly by people who studied through *pondoks* or Islamic schools. Children of middle class people or villagers who chose to send their children to public schools could not understand those *Jawi* texts and most of the Friday *khutbah*. When an easier version was produced by the reformists, whether in Malay or Thai languages, those middle class and young generation Muslims were more likely to understand the message. Moreover, they were attracted to new forms and methods of disseminating Islamic lessons, such as events, workshops, seminars, and public lectures, not to mention interesting topics and more fashionable, modern activities.

In a more formal way, the Salafi-reformist message was also transmitted through curricula in secondary and tertiary Islamic education institutions within the Assalam network. Apart from the movement's 'hub' at Fatoni University, which offered 18 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes covering Islamic studies, social sciences, and science subjects, the College of Islamic Studies at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus, where Ismail Ali was one of the founding committee members and served as a director for four terms covering 1990–1998

and 2002–2010, was also a target for propagating Salafi-reformist messages. McCargo (2008: 22) described the CIS as ‘an outpost of Yala Islamic College’ because most of CIS’s academic staff recognised Lutfi as their inspiration. In the eyes of Malay nationalists and traditionalist students, the CIS was the propagator of the ‘Wahhabi’ creed, which stirred up concerns amongst the parents that their children studying at PSU would be forced to follow Wahhabi teachings (McCargo 2008: 27–28). In a monthly seminar of Muslim women organised by the CIS’s Office of Academic and Community Service Affairs, most of the rotated guest speakers were invited from Fatoni University or other religious scholars of the Assalam network.

Apart from the significance of the *Majlis al-Ilmi* which were taught by knowledgeable leaders, the successes of the Assalam in using Islamic education as a tool to open more space in the Malay southern region lay in its effective ‘capture’ of the region’s higher educational institutions. While the informal education programmes and Islamic private schools allowed them to gain a small number of Malay Muslims as compared to the traditionalist majority, their superiority in tertiary institutions was a key mechanism that sustained the reformist influence among intellectuals, the middle classes and relations with the Thai state.

Liow (2009: 76) observed that Islamic education was a political arena where internal tension and competition between the traditionalists and reformists took place. Despite the fact that traditionalist influence was overwhelmingly dominant in secondary Islamic institutions, its lack of higher education institutions enabled the reformists to gain a significant advantage. While most students who graduated from schools of the Assalam network had clear destinations along three paths, including studying Islam abroad, shifting to modern sciences in Thai universities, and studying Islam in Thailand at the CIS or FTU, students who graduated from traditionalist institutions had limited choices to pursue further studies. For those who chose to take a degree in Islamic studies in Thailand between 1986 and 2006, their only options were the so-called ‘Wahhabi’ Islamic colleges and universities. Some of those who chose this path adopted reformist ideas. For many years, those who refused it had no other avenues for Islamic higher education in the region. However, in 2007 the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies

at the Prince of Narathiwat University opened with a bigger role taken up by the traditionalist side.¹¹⁰ The government approved it, and it had the backing of politicians in Narathiwat as well as academic technical support from Al-Azhar University in Egypt.

Notwithstanding their inferiority in Islamic higher education, the traditionalists were unquestionably superior at the *sannawi* level (secondary level), especially considering their more numerous schools and their deep admiration for the legacies of Patani *ulamas* and the traditional *pondok* system, which were widely respected by local Malay Muslims. Based on the different strengths of these two schools, the reformists enjoyed more advantages with the urban Muslim middle class and intellectuals, whereas the traditionalists were more closely aligned with local elites, religious leaders, and the majority of local Malay Muslims.

While Assalam started their activism in the rural and suburban areas, the MGP started with the middle class in the metropolitan and university campuses. For the MGP, the role of education programmes that solidified the movement's ideologies and activism largely depended on the role of Sheikh Rida. Although he articulated ideas about these two types of strategic target audience, which were referred to as the two *chon* in Chapter 4,¹¹¹ his Islamic teaching programmes did not distinguish between his cadres and general audiences. From 2000 to 2010, before his movement was formed, Sheikh Rida's main weekly teachings were the Tuesday night *tafsir*, Thursday Hadith explanatory classes, Friday sermons rotating between different communities, and weekend lectures on other Islamic lessons and contemporary issues. In the Quran and Hadith classes, most of the ideological messages were directed towards recruited and potential cadres. The number of participants varied from 50 to 200. Since the establishment of the White Channel in 2012, these classes have been largely replaced by new programmes broadcast on TV, except for the Quran and the Hadith classes. Moreover, even these classes now have reduced attendance, partly because audiences today can turn to Islamic

¹¹⁰ Interview with academics, Prince of Narathiwat University, Prince of Songkla University, and Fatoni University.

¹¹¹ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

TV channels for religious knowledge, instead of attending classes in person. Since the 2010 founding of the MGP (2010), cadres are still encouraged to attend the Quranic *tafsir* class in order to receive the same ideological messages and revise their understanding of contemporary issues. However, there were many cases of members splitting from his networks and affiliations. Hanif, the secretary of the Muslim for Peace Foundation gave observed that those cadres, students, or staff who disagreed with some of Sheikh Rida's ideas did not regularly attended his *tafsir* class.¹¹²

One of the salient findings that came out from my interviews with the cadres of different affiliations was that they collectively captured the main ideological message directed by Sheikh Rida through over a decade of his teaching. Every group used 'filling the gap in the society' as their core ideology. The translation of this message into action is manifested in a wide range of the MGP's projects. Sheikh Rida's students used this ideological core to consider the problems that were left unsolved or missed by prevailing Islamic organisations such as the hijab ban, fraudulent *halal* products, Muslim inmates' religious rights in prison, and other issues related to Muslims' religious practices within a plural society.

Apart from the general educational programmes provided by Sheikh Rida, youth camps and other seminars organised by his affiliations of youth groups have played an important role in fostering ideology: these activities were another channel for him to frame reformist ideas and supervise their activities to follow a desired direction. This youth group recruitment also served as one of the channels that raised and selected determined cadres to join different projects within the movement.

Recruiting pious modernist youth

In Islamic activism scholarship, the significance of organisational resources has been emphasised, such as the use of mosques as 'a religiospatial mobilising structure' by various Islamist groups (Wiktorowicz 2004: 10). Within the physical structure of the mosque or other Islamic institutions such as schools, colleges and universities, Islamists offer sermons, teaching programmes, and study groups to

¹¹² Interview with Hanif Yongstar, 25 April 2015.

raise social consciousness of particular contemporary issues, organise collective action, promote the movement's ideology and recruit new cadres. Despite being located in a different context to those counterparts in Muslim countries, Islamists in Thailand shared similar mobilising strategies.

Although this chapter focuses on the organisational and strategic dimensions of movements' mobilisation, it is important to note that ideological dimensions are inextricable from the process of youth recruitment. Ideological contexts are dynamic in the recruitment strategy of the movements, especially the Assalam, which was formed during important period of the contemporary global Islamic resurgence.

Both movements recruited younger members through their Islamic education programmes, while their recruitment was also advanced by the dynamism of Islamic students and youth activism. Although both movements eventually included cadres from different educational backgrounds, including religious and more conventional backgrounds, the Assalam started recruiting from students of Islamic studies while the MGP started with the students on university campuses. The age and educational background of recruits had an impact on how the movements developed. For example, the young and middle-aged groups, especially those with modern science educational backgrounds were skilled in organisational management and the use of media, and seemed optimistic about the opportunities provided by the Thai state. These progressive groups enabled the movements to develop their organisations rapidly. In contrast, most senior members with religious studies degrees were hesitant about expanding organisations and associating with the authorities. Many of them were suspicious of the state and worried about state repression.

The recruitment of youth cadres to Assalam took place over three periods of mobilisation: the establishment period (1965–1997), the formation period (1998–2012), and the development period (2012–present). These second-generation cadres were trained and recruited by Lutfi and his Patani colleagues during the time they studied in Saudi Arabia. They came back to Patani every year to organise summer youth camps and Islamic exhibitions in order to recruit cadres. Lutfi selected talented youths and sent them to study in Saudi Arabia. Malay Muslim

students who wanted to study in leading universities in Saudi Arabia had to secure scholarships from the Saudi government. Lutfi's recommendation was recognised by the Saudi government and was crucial in the awarding of scholarships. His apparent monopoly over scholarship recruitment brought about discontent among traditionalist scholars. They complained about this to many outsiders. This is also one of the reasons that Lutfi's network was able to dominate Islamic higher education provision for Malay Muslims.

In the early 1990s, their Islamic teaching expanded into university campuses, especially the Prince of Songkla University's Hadyai and Pattani campuses and the Srinakharinwirot University, Songkhla campus (which became Taksin University in 1996). Their Islamic scholars were invited to give lectures at the university Islamic societies. The *halaqah* was also introduced to student activists. This marked the Islamic scholars' access to scientific and social science students, which later became their cadres. These cadres subsequently contributed to major developments of the movement that reached out from Islamic education to the wider socio-economic realm, such as Islamic cooperatives and other social associations.

Mobilisation literature suggests two major strands of motivations for recruitment: access to benefits and the moral obligations. Both movements attempted to expand their activities and organisation far beyond religious activities in order to translate the concept 'Islam a comprehensive way of life' into practice, and their recruits were primarily driven by ideological incentives to perform Islamic missions rather than by self-interest. For example, both movements owned Islamic cooperatives: the main beneficiaries of these micro finance institutions were not cadres but the Muslim masses, most of whom were not actively involved in the movement. On the contrary, those cadres were expected to give, rather than take from the movement. Some of the senior and devout cadres of Assalam became less active after being insufficiently looked after by the movement with regards to their welfare. This was also observed by many

key informants and represents one of the movement's weaknesses.¹¹³ For example, most of the orphans who benefitted from charitable projects of the International Islamic Relief Organisation of Saudi Arabia (IIROSA) and the Muslim Foundation for Orphans, which were both run by Saleh Talek between 1995 and 2001, did not ultimately become cadres of Assalam.

As compared to Assalam, the influence of external student activism was less dynamic to MGP. MGP's youth recruitment took place in a different period from Assalam's. Assalam's recruits came during the time that a revival of Islamic identity was at its peak, especially under the influence of the Iranian revolution in 1979. Similar to mainstream Thai student activism in the early 2000s, which was much lower profile in terms of political participation as compared to the 1970s, Muslim student activists did not generate much of political significance.

Preeda (2001: 105) claimed that the Thai Muslim Student Association (TMSA) played a pivotal role among the student organisations in leading universities in the 1960s, which enhanced political awareness in student activism and eventually contributed to the student movements against the military dictatorship in the early 1970s. A TMSA committee member from Chulalongkorn University was on the working group drafting the constitution of the National Student Centre of Thailand founded in 1971, of which Teerayudh Boonmee served as the first secretary general. The TMSA also produced many Muslim political figures, such as Wan Muhammad Nor Matha, Areepen Utarasint, and Surin Pitsuwan (Preeda 2001: 106). Areepen, a Narathiwat MP, introduced a ministerial order permitting the wearing of hijab in public schools during his time as deputy minister for education in 1997. After that pioneering generation of the Thai Muslim student movement, most of the Muslim student activities in university failed to make a substantial impact on the broader Muslim society. They focused on the relationship between Muslim students and the revitalisation of Islamic identities, which yielded somewhat superficial results.

¹¹³ Interviews with Muhamadnasir Habaye, Director of Assalam Institute, 23 December 2014, Saleh Talek, 10 December 2014, and Shakirin Sumalee, Secretary of the Assalam Smart School Association (ASSA), 26 March 2015.

During the period of passive political awareness in Thai student activism after the 1970s, Muslim student activism shifted towards spiritual development and *tarbiyah* (self-restructuring). During that period, the TMSA and the YMAT were influenced by Islamic reformist thoughts from global Islamic movements and thinkers and were motivated by global and regional Islamic resurgences, especially the role of the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, or ABIM) founded in 1972 and the Iranian revolution of 1979. Salafi, unlike the reformists, did not emerge in university Muslim student activities until the early 2000s, thanks to the influence of Sheikh Rida.

Sheikh Rida did not intervene in student activism directly. He started his teaching at Ansarissunnah, Bangkoknoi Mosque, which was located opposite Thammasat University on the other side of the Chaophraya River. A group of Muslim students who were committee members of the Muslim student association of Thammasat University and accompanied by some students from Chulalongkorn University and Kasetsart University joined his sermons and asked him to teach *tafsir al-Quran*. As committee members of the Muslim student associations, these students sought advice from Sheikh Rida about their activities. The influence of Salafism on Thai Muslim university activism started from this point. Strict application of Sheikh Rida's rigid interpretation shaped Muslim student activities in Thammasat University and Chulalongkorn University, especially the strict segregation of men and women. In the Thammasat Muslim Student Association between 2001 and 2005, a curtain was installed to separate men and women even during meetings. One of its committee members was the first Muslim female student among the universities in Bangkok to wear the *niqab* (face veil) in a classroom. Women's activities, which previously worked alongside male activities were separated and re-organised in the nearby area of Bangkok, as they believed in the *sharia* rule that women should not travel long distances without a *mahram* (an unmarriageable kin or caretaker, also called *muhrem*). This policy was directly launched and supervised by Sheikh Rida. The reason behind this rule relates to protecting women from any danger that may arise from traveling alone. Despite agreement with the *sharia*, Ismail Lutfi applied it slightly differently and was more

flexible. He believed that women should not travel long journeys without a *mahram* unless it was considered necessary.¹¹⁴

Sheikh Rida underlined the importance of youth on many occasions. In many public sermons, while other Salafi scholars in the same panel mainly spoke from religious accounts, Sheikh Rida always made a connection with contemporary contexts with the focus on the role of youth in reforming society.¹¹⁵ At the beginning of their study with Sheikh Rida, most of his students' typical outlook resembled what Hinnebusch (1988: 205–6, cited in Wickham 2013: 37) illustrated about the characteristics of Egyptian Islamist student leaders in the 1970s, which were influenced by Sayyid Qutb and Salafi thinkers. Egyptian students wished to create a pure Islamic society modelled on the Prophetic period: they were on the piety path and isolated themselves from mainstream culture in the campus. Similarly, Sheikh Rida's students developed new forms of Islamic social norms in student activities within the Muslim student associations, such as the strict segregation between men and women and the application of the Islamic *shura* system in selecting a leader. Their typical modes of dress were wearing a round *kufi/kupiah* (prayer hat), a loose casual shirt or T-shirt and loose casual trousers above the ankle. As with Ismail Lutfi's followers, wearing jeans and other trousers was frowned upon by Sheikh Rida's students. It was considered inappropriate for a *da'i* to wear close fitting, trendy garments.

Sheikh Rida's recruitment of young people to his movements was done through three channels: his study programmes, youth groups, and Muslim Group for Peace projects. These channels were interrelated and indivisible. When youth were impressed with his teachings and became regular audience members, they were encouraged to do something to contribute knowledge and piety to society. Apart from their own choice of performing *da'wah*, they were introduced to alternative activities within Sheikh Rida's network along the different youth groups and projects under the MGP. As for those who were recruited to the youth groups, they were given a chance to meet with Sheikh Rida and listen to his teachings

¹¹⁴ Interview with Uthman Ratniyom, 12 February 2015.

¹¹⁵ Interview Rattasart Rojchanamee, founder and former president of Fityatulhaq Group, 14 March 2014.

through the groups' activities, as well as being induced to improve their Islamic knowledge by regularly attending Sheikh Rida's teaching programmes. As for other youth who were not interested in pious activities, they might be impressed by the MGP's outreach projects to different dimensions of society, and would later be encouraged to learn and practice Islam.

To sum up, Islamic education can be evaluated in terms of two key roles it fulfilled in both movements' activism: as a contribution to sustaining Islamic reformist influences, and in enabling the wider accommodation of the movements. The first dimension can be seen from Liow's observation (2009: 81) that tertiary Islamic institutions and the growing number of Thai students in the Middle East and South Asia enabled Islamic reformism to regain power in Thai Muslim society after receding since the 1970s, thanks to the collaboration between the traditionalist religious establishment and successive Thai authoritarian regimes. However, the White Channel, as well as the other three Salafi Islamic TV channels subsequently emerged as a new educational mechanism that made *khana mai* gain wider power in Muslim public sphere.

In terms of the accommodative dimension, while Islamic education was a source for both movements to expand the reformist influence and thus challenge the traditionalists' authority, it was also a source of the recent accommodationist tendencies that both movements used to soften their reformist messages to access wider population and compromise with the traditionalist authority.

Islamic charities

Establishing YIU rested on three main factors: academic strength, *waqf-based* (endowment) foreign aid and political connections. Firstly, Lutfi's network(s) were made up of well-qualified religious scholars who had graduated from different countries in the Islamic world. Among these graduates, the five senior leaders, most of whom had high academic credentials, were the principal strength. For instance, Lutfi's recognition and connections with significant scholars and organisations in the Middle East equipped him with substantial support.

The establishment of YIC, as well as upcoming developments, rested upon foreign financial and technical support from the government, crown princes, and

charitable organisations from four Gulf countries: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, and Kuwait. In 1986, a budget of 1.2 million USD (approximately 30 million baht) was approved by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for the construction of six buildings of the first campus of YIU in Paramitae, Yala. The Muslim World League (MWL) or Al-Rabitah, to which Lutfi was appointed as a committee member of its World Mosque Council in 1989 and the Founding Assembly in 1991, approved the budget for the administration of the university and other academic support from the University of Imam Muhammad ibn Saud. His position as the representative of the Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs of Kuwait appointed in 1989 also facilitated the Kuwaiti Ministry's approval of total 23 million baht for the construction of buildings in 2002 and 2003, as well as other donations of 18 million baht in 2003 and 25 million baht in 2006 from two Kuwaiti individuals. In addition, YIC received a donation of 3 million Qatar Riyal (30 million baht) from the previous Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Ahmad bin Khalifah Al-Thani as a consequence of a recommendation by a Saudi scholar who had visited the YIC in 2002 (Yala Islamic University, no date: 26). In April 2017, the Saudi Arabia's charge d' affaires to Thailand sent a letter to Lutfi and Wan Nor, announcing King Salman's funding of \$20 million (700 million baht) for the construction of a mosque and Islamic centre under the Madinah as-Salam project.¹¹⁶ Other donations from the Gulf came from the Saudi-based Al-Haramein Charity (7 million baht) in 2002 and the UAE's Sharjah Charity House (27 million baht) in 2006. All of the buildings in the university were named after budget contributors.

Fatoni University also received a large amount of budget from domestic sources that resulted from Assalam's networking with a wide range of influential figures in the area, especially politicians and authorities. In 2003, the educationist-cum-politician Wan Nor as the President YIU Council contributed 9 million baht for the construction of University Hall, subsequently named *Wan Muhamad Nor Hall* (Yala Islamic University, no date: 26). In 2015, the construction of the largest building of the university was completed with a budget of 175 million baht granted by the Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre (SBPAC) under the leadership of Thavee Sordsong (*Risalah University Fatoni* 2014: 15). It was the first

¹¹⁶ Available from: <http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/en/node/10610> Accessed 26 April 2017.

and only Fatoni University building funded by the national government, bringing an end of Lutfi's oft repeated claims that in contrast with the Gulf's contributions, his university had never received a single baht from the Thai state for its construction. Both Thavee and Wan Nor were Thaksin Shinawatra's right-hand men in the Deep South.

MGP primarily relied on domestic donations. In comparison with Assalam, which received a moderate amount of money donated by its mass base, MGP received a wider range of funding from sources beyond the *khana mai*. The White Channel, which requires a large amount of budget to run – at least two million baht per month for the cost of administration and a satellite transponder – has been able to survive on donations since 2013.¹¹⁷ This is not to mention ad hoc projects helping Muslims who suffered from natural disasters and armed conflict, money for which was gathered via donation drives.

Network-Based Organisational Strategies

This section explains the relationship between informal networks, formalised networked organisations and networks of alliance. The movements used these strategies to situate themselves into contexts and to open space for Islamic reformism. As mentioned earlier, based on my analysis of opinions of Assalam and MGP leaders and members, I have classified the transition of both movements into three periods. Assalam's transitional periods are: 1) the establishment period (1965–1997), the formation period – after establishing Yala Islamic College and other socio-economics organisations (1998–2011) and 3) the development period – after the formalisation of the movement (2012–present). For the MGP, we can also classify this into three periods: 1) the establishment period (1999–2007), 2) the formation period – after the establishment of semi-formal social and media organisations (2008-2011), and 3) the development period – that is, the period beginning with the Nong Chok Matthayom School Hijab-ban protest, MPF registration and establishment of White Channel – all of which took place in 2012.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Sumet Momin. 4 January 2015. In August 2017, White Channel also made a short clip broadcast discussing its monthly expenses of around 2.6 million baht (Observations, www.whitechannel.tv, 20 August 2017).

In the first period, Assalam and MGP recruited cadres through Islamic teaching programmes together with setting up informal groups. In the second period, more semi-formal and formal social, economic, and media organisations were created. In the third period, which start in the same year (2012) both movements formalised as well as attempted to combine all affiliations into formalised cohesive networks of organisations. Both movements' organisational strategies were based on the transformation of informal groups into formal organisations. Their formalisation processes are inextricable from the political contexts they were embedded in. Social movement theorists suggested that movements tend to use social networks and informal groups in the relatively closed political setting in order to be safe from regime repression. In more open polities, in which rule of law and freedom of activism can be reliably guaranteed, movements use opportunity structures within the regime to develop their organisations. Inferring from this, changes in forms of their organisations are clear evidence of interaction – something which leads to accommodation.

Informal networks

Social networks have long been an important element in the political life of the Muslim world. However, these networks were most likely informal and relatively invisible. Thus, they have not been recognised sufficiently by Western social scientists despite the focus of social movement theory on social networks as vital to the development and base of social movements (Singerman 2004: 154). In the Islamic social movement scholarship, there were two main narratives about informal networks of Islamist movements. Firstly, the idea that Islamist movements relied on social networks to develop their movements. The second narrative underlined the advantage of informal networks in avoiding state repression. As compared to a formal organisation, an informal group is more capable of operating outside the surveillance of the state since it is invisible, unlicensed, and unregulated in nature. Wiktorowicz (2004: 12) posited that informal social networks were most likely used by movements in their collective action in less open political circumstances since informal social networks are less vulnerable to regime control while formal visible organisations are more vulnerable to state repression.

In the establishment and formation periods of Assalam and MGP, informal activities were still limited to their own networks, and there was little contact with the state. Their teachings and activism, which were mostly based on Salafi theological positions, in some respects clashed with local Islamic elites, practices and beliefs of the mainstream Muslim community, including Islamic institutions, communities, Islamic private schools, and university campuses. In the context of the sensitive relationship between Malay Muslim elites and the Thai state in the Deep South, Assalam tended to avoid state repression thanks to its informal and covert activities as it developed its movement. MGP had no serious security concerns regarding state repression in the context of Bangkok.

The level of repressive treatment these movement experienced at the hands of the Thai state is debateable. The reactions of Malay Muslims hinged upon their different perceptions and interpretations of the context, other than the extent to which the Thai polity is highly repressive itself. This was based on the Malay Muslim ethno-nationalist perception that the Siamese state was a colonial invader of the Patani Sultanate, and thus the Thai state's incorporation of Patani was illegitimate. This narrative was elaborated by accounts of historical assimilationist policies and the repressive treatment of the Malay Muslims, and formed a legitimating rationale for militant groups to confront the Thai state by organising armed separatist activities.

It is not the actual degree of repression by the Thai state that mattered to Malay Muslim movements in making a choice between accommodation and armed confrontation, but their perceptions concerning this repression. This argument is evident in the trajectory of Assalam's decision making over the years. The assumptions that lead to the formation of both a formal organisation and an informal group reflects the degree of openness and repression in the political environment in which an Islamist group embeds itself in (Wickham 2002: 176-77). The decision-making of Assalam and MGP in opting for informal or formal network as their preferred strategies hinged upon their different perceptions and interpretations of the Thai state's openness to them. As for Assalam, the lessons from the killing of Haji Sulong and the sensitive and volatile situation in the Deep South compelled them to opt for a covert informal structure of organisation and

relatively clandestine activism as an organisational strategy at the outset. The decision to formalise the organisation was a reluctant one.

The use of informal social networks in collective action are most regularly seen in less open political systems, in which open formal organisations risk being targeted by the state (Wickham 2001: 8). The informal structure of Assalam at the beginning reflects their low level of trust of the state. The gradual formalisation of informal networks, on the other hand, implies more trust towards the state. By contrast, MGP showed eagerness to openly show the movement's activism from the beginning, although it started a formalisation process later in the formation period beginning in 2008. While Assalam spent almost three decades trying to formalise their movement, MGP took only a decade to present themselves to the public. In the 1980s and 1990s, Assalam activism targeted local audiences through informal and semi-formal Islamic educational programmes in schools and mosques. These informal ties only provided Assalam and MGP with a small number of cadres, but they were highly motivated and ideologically determined. However, access to the masses had been relatively limited within the *khana mai/ kaum muda* network until they developed formal organisations, which allowed them to access a wider mass base of other general audiences and *khana kau*.

Within these informal networks, there were double layers of individual networks of supporters/followers and networks of the movements' cadres and members. The second layer was already discussed in the previous section. As for the first layer, Diani (2003: 9) posits that an individual network is the foundation of 'social movement communities', in which personal relations become part of resource mobilisation projects and individuals share same lifestyles or cultural identities. Within individual network movements also frame their ideologies. Prior to the use of new media in 2012, Assalam framed an ideological understanding among its mass base through Majlis al-Ilmi Pattani and networked radio covering three border provinces. News stories and updates about Fatoni University and Assalam activities had been circulated after Saturday sermons at Majlis al-Ilmi Pattani. The the Majlis al-Ilmi Pattani's weekly booklet 'Mingguan Tazkirah' (Ml. Weekly Admonition) was first issued on 1 August 1992. Of the booklet's whole

eight pages, the last page always reported Muslim world news and updates pertaining to Assalam and its networks.¹¹⁸

Similarly, MGP framed a sense of movement community cohesion through Sheikh Rida's teachings, both before and after the establishment of White Channel in 2012. Although MGP attempted to combine all of its activities and organisations into the same formal network in 2012 – when the Muslim for Peace Foundation was registered, its followers seemed to recognise their ties or support to White Channel rather than the MGP. For instance, when some followers saw others wearing shirts and hats with the White Channel logo, they felt a sense of belonging to the community.¹¹⁹ Drivers with stickers featuring the White Channel logo exchanged greetings by giving a honk on their horns, despite not knowing each other.¹²⁰

Initially this Assalam and MGP, originated in and had developed different networks. Assalam had a large mass base among the majority of *kaum muda* in the Deep South and the Upper South through networks of communities and private Islamic schools, in which their Islamic studies graduated cadres worked in. MGP was mainly supported by individual followers from *khana mai* communities in Bangkok and connecting provinces where Sheikh Rida and his Salafi colleagues rotated the delivery of lectures and sermons.

Aside from media outreach projects, Sheikh Rida and his students also developed different types of social organisations in pursuit of spreading Islamic messages, reviving an Islamic way of life among Muslims and protecting Muslim rights both domestically and abroad. All of these efforts were undertaken within the broad network of MGP.

Networks of young cadres

Young cadres were key drivers of Assalam and MGP, especially during their periods of organisational formation. Both movements' significant recruitment of young cadres took place during the establishment periods. Key Assalam cadres that had

¹¹⁸ Observations from reviewing *Mingguan Tazkirah* no. 1-285 (1992–2007).

¹¹⁹ Interview Iddris Rojchanamee, 25 March 2015.

¹²⁰ Interview Iddris Rojchanamee, 25 March 2015.

pivotal role in the movement development were recruited during the wave of global Islamic resurgence in the 1980s and 1990s, whereas MGP cadres – who also had an essential role in developing MGP's media and social organisation beginning in 2008 – were mostly recruited in the post 9/11 period.

Assalam activists were influenced and inspired by other global Islamic reformist texts, individuals and movements. Most of these activists are intellectuals and university students who had experience of working in Muslim youth associations, such as the Thai Muslim Students Association (TMSA) and the Young Muslims Association of Thailand (YMAT), as well as the local Young Muslim Society of Yala (YMSY). Some of them, such as Sukree Langputeh and Ibrahim Narongraksakhet, now lecturers at Fatoni University and Prince of Songkhla University respectively, showed their talent for activism during the hijab crisis and demonstration in Yala in 1988. The crisis began on 11 December 1987 when the administration of Yala Teacher's Training College (later Yala Rajabhat University) rejected a petition from female Muslim students to wear the hijab. The case led to mass protests from 23 February to 2 March 1988, during which around tens of thousands of students and external Muslims assembled at Yala Central Mosque, before the Education Ministry ordered the college to accommodate the demands of Muslim students (Chaiwat 2005: 78–100). Islamic resurgence activism in this crisis reveals how Islamic legitimation was able to question the dominant legitimation used by the Thai state that rested on the centrality of Buddhism and bureaucratic rationality.

Those young people envisioned creating the same kind of modern Islamic movement locally, and tried to imitate the global movements which inspired them: YMAT was influenced by Muslim Brotherhood's Hasan al Banna and Sayd Qutb, as well as Jama'at-e Islami's Abul Ala Maududi. Many writings of these reformists were translated and published by YMAT and TMSA during the 1980s and 1990s. YMAT's establishment in 1964 followed the example of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and was later highly influenced by the Malaysian ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia - The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia) and especially the leadership of Anwar Ibrahim (Liow 2009b: 192).

The group headed by Lutfi and friends, at the early period after their graduation was generally perceived by Muslim activists as a group of *tok guru* (Ml. religious scholars) or as Salafi, rather than a group of modern Islamic reformists.¹²¹ Therefore, they were not that attracted by Lutfi's movement. Many of them were proud of being Muslim activists and intellectuals with modern academic educational backgrounds. Students of Islamic studies or *ustazs* were viewed by many of those academically-trained activists as being intellectually inferior.

However, a few of them, such as Ibrahim Narongraksakhet, and Anantachai Thaiprathan, acknowledged Lutfi's qualities and saw some features of Lutfi's group in common with those of global Islamic reformist movements, especially Lutfi's comprehensive perspective covering social, economic, and political issues and not just religious matters.¹²² Thus, they agreed to work closely in an alliance with Lutfi's movement. Ibrahim, who emerged as a zealous student activist in the hijab demonstration in 1987–88 and is currently an associate professor of Islamic education at PSU's College of Islamic Studies, actively supported the educational projects of Assalam. In 1998, he was appointed as a secretary of the Project Board for Establishing the Islamic College, in which he took part in preparing the College's curriculum. Through his expertise in Islamic education, he has been actively involved in the development of the Islamic private schools under Assalam. In 2014, he served as a president of the Assalam Smart School Association of Thailand (ASSA), which consisted of 42 members of Islamic Private Schools. Ibrahim argued that most ideologies and features of Lutfi's group reflected what he read from the modern Islamic reformist movement literature.¹²³

Anantachai Thaiprathan, aka *Mhor Fin*, or Doctor Arifeen, who is of Pashtun origin, was the former President of the Young Muslim Association of Thailand (YMAT) and the founder of the Thailand's Islamic Medical Association (TIMA). TIMA was an assembly of medical and health science professionals aimed at integrating Islam into health services, yet lack of knowledge among staff regarding Islamic jurisprudence required the support of religious scholars. Dr. Arifeen linked

¹²¹ Interview with Anantachai Thaiprathan, 23 February 2015.

¹²² Interviews with Ibrahim Narongraksakhet, 13 February 2015; Anantachai Thaipratan 23 February 2015.

¹²³ Interview Ibrahim Narongraksakhet, 13 February 2015.

the activities of TIMA with Islamic scholars from Assalam in running their projects, such as organising seminars and producing Islamic-health integrated materials. In 2010, the TIMA signed an MoU with Assalam. In Assalam's Madinah as-Salam project, in which an Islamic hospital and health science campus are included, Dr Arifeen was promoted to director of the Fatoni University's Sheikh Jasim bin Muhammad al-Thani Hospital under the Madinah al-Salam project. At the TIMA's annual conference on Islamic health science, both Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida, were invited as guest speakers in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Another significant network of enthusiastic members of Assalam can be seen in the creation of micro-economic institutions. Most current heads and administrative committees of Islamic cooperatives in upper and lower southern Thailand were an outcome of Assalam recruitment on university campuses in Pattani and Songkhla in the 1990s. For examples, Ismail Rani was a key founder and now committee of Ibnu Affan Islamic Cooperative, which had more than 70,000 members and operated by 13 branches across the three SPBs.¹²⁴ Wan Abdulrani Lehduwee, the current managing director was recruited a few years after Ismail Rani. The late-Gosi Useng was a managing director of As-siddiq Islami Cooperative in Songkhla. Gosi, by this time at Srinakharinwirot University, Songkla campus had been President of the Muslim Students Society of 10 Southern Institutions, which was established in the time of Ismail Rani.¹²⁵ The late Yusuf Nima, a chemistry graduate from PSU Hadyai in the mid 1990s, had a leading role in proposing and drafting Assalam's strategy for formalising organisations within the network. Uthman Ratniyom, had a low-official profile as an educational administrative officer, and a high-public profile than many academic staffs at the CIS and was known as eloquent speaker of the CIS. Uthman presented in countless projects organised by Lutfi's network. Although the CIS is not an affiliate of Assalam, its curricula and projects conformed to Assalam's interests in many ways.¹²⁶ Many lecturers and staff at the CIS were Assalam cadres and alliance members.

¹²⁴ Interview with Ismail Rani, 18 February 2015.

¹²⁵ Interview with Gosi Useng, 25 February 2015.

¹²⁶ Interview with Uthman Ratniyom, 2 December 2014.

Within the MGP, there are four groups of youths who designed their groups and activism on their own initiative and were supervised by Sheikh Rida. These groups functioned as the stations for mobilising and training prospective cadres of MGP.

Fityatulhaq (Ar. Youth of the Truth) focused their work on youth camps, Islamic study circles, training programmes for university and high school students, and producing media. They initially focused on personal piety and devotion. They started their activities in 2000, before they even met Sheikh Rida, by bringing together around ten students from leading universities in Bangkok to do a weekly *halaqah* at Ansarissunnah Mosque Bangkok Noi and other city mosques. After they felt that they had reached a level of piety, they wanted to channel it for the benefit of society. They then decided to do some small social events to raise Islamic social awareness by focusing on youth. Since 2003, a yearly Fityatulhaq Youth Summer Camp has been organised. Today, the camps have almost a thousand alumni. Many of these youths later became MGP cadres and staff of its affiliations. Some others became zealous activists in other organisations.

Assabiqoon (Ar. The Vanguard) emphasised preaching to non-Muslims and refuting misconceptions about Islam. Assabiqun group was formed by around ten university students in order to produce Islamic materials and call people to Islam. They were initially inspired by Sheikh Rida but afterwards influenced by the Saudi Salafi movement, which is considered 'hard-line' and is different from Ismail Lutfi's orientation. Their social views have gradually become more rigid, in contrast with Sheikh Rida's pragmatic tendencies. Their activities include criticising other Muslim groups, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, as misguided and having deviated from the righteous track of the Salaf, through their programme on TV Muslim Thailand (one of the four Muslim TV channels). Sheikh Rida eventually issued a statement through his website on 3 July 2012 denouncing them for blaming other people. He followed this with two more critical messages on 27 July and 3 September of the same year. This conflict represents one of the internal conflicts within the *khana mai*.

Chao Tonmai (Th. The People of the Tree) came from *Ahlul-Shajarah* (Ar.) and established their group after asking themselves what could they do to change

society and propagate the beautiful teachings of Islam. Their first activity was producing a small booklet containing questions and answers to facilitate understanding and to deal with misconceptions about Islam. They mobilised volunteers from other groups of Sheikh Rida students to set up *da'wah* stalls in tourist congested areas of Bangkok distributing booklets and talked to people walking around. However, the success of these activities did not extend beyond fulfilling the obligations of Muslims in relation to serving the community according to the concept of *fardu kifayah* (Ar. communally obligatory); it was nonetheless encouraged by their spiritual leader.

Chao Tonmai was not a properly established group, but purely a working group which united to organise ad hoc activities or support other groups in the same network. They described the modus operandi of their group as a 'pocket park', in which activities took the form of organising small scale work via a creative working style that opened space for people to join voluntarily and modestly benefitting the public.¹²⁷ Some members of *Chao Tonmai* became key drivers within MGP affiliates, such as full-time staff of the White Channel and the head of Himayah.

Banatul Huda (Ar. Women of Guidance) was a group of female Salafi students mainly set up by students from leading universities, such as Thammasat University, Chulalongkorn University, Kasetsart University, and Silpakorn University. They were part of groups who attended Sheikh Rida's *Tafsir al Quran* class, as well as organising inclusive lessons for women. Sheikh Rida was a main speaker and supervised their activities. Their main activities were organising female youth camps and courses to raise Islamic consciousness among the youth and students in high schools, colleges and universities. Most of the pioneers wore *niqab* and dressed in black. Later, they tried to recruit more members with less outwardly pious appearances. Banatul Huda became the women's wing of MGP. The main approach of their activism within MGP as well as in wider society is 'women as a force behind the curtain. Although at the beginning they set up various informal groups from scratch, with the aims of teaching Islam and *da'wah*, they have gradually developed more working groups to promote their ideals to society.

¹²⁷ Interview with Anis Toleb, the co-founder of *Chao Tonmai* and the head of Himayah, 22 April 2015.

Formalising a movement

Many social movement theorists pointed that the most important resource for mobilisation is the formal social movement organisation (SMO). Formal organisations are considered an effective tool for strengthening collective action of the movement by combining individualised grievances and concerns (Wickham 2002: 7).

Both movements had Islamic education as a core of their activism, which was implemented through network-based organisations; however, their vehicles are different. Assalam centred on educational institutions whereas MGP equally centred on media organisations and Muslim rights activist foundations. Most of Assalam's activities organised by affiliates used the Assalam Institute logo under the Fatoni University one which clearly marked them as co-organisers (Figure 1). Similarly, the logos of the White Channel and the Muslim for Peace Foundation have always been on posters publicising projects under the MGP network (Figure 2).

Figure 1 Assalam's logos of networked organisations and political alliances

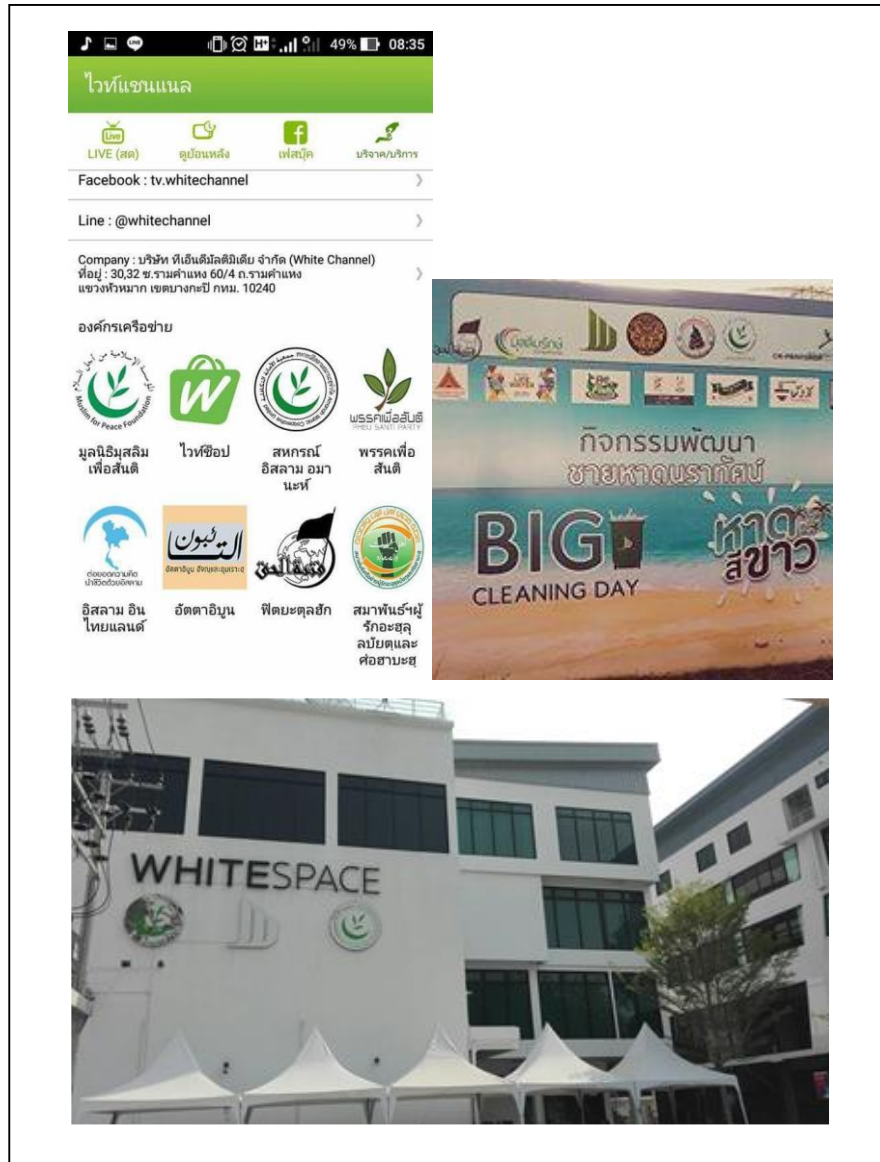


Source: Facebook page: WAQAF Madinahalsalam วากัฟ ความดีที่ไม่สิ้นสุด [Online],

Accessed 20 July 2017]. Available from:

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/WAQAF.MadinahAlSalam/photos/>

Figure 2 MGP's logos of networked organisations



Source: www.whitechannel.tv

The formalisation process of both Assalam and MGP which was clearly seen in 2012 was a development that continued from their semi-formal and formal organisational establishments in their respective formation periods (Assalam: 1998–2011; MGP: 2008–2011). Formalisation strategies served both to officialise informal groups and to create a cohesive movement by combining those groups

with existing formal organisations. Another reason that MGP gave was to 'give the right job to the right organisation'.¹²⁸

In 2012, after facing political challenges in MGP's efforts against the hijab ban in Mattayom Nong Chok School, MGP leaders realised the significance of owning media and political organisation in increasing its bargaining power and hence sharpened their campaign agenda. It accelerated the process of establishing the White Channel and registration of MGP as a foundation in 2012. In 2013, MGP set up the Party for Peace (*Phak Phue Santi*) with 4,000 registered members. Of this number, there were new members from the neo-MGP and White Channel audiences; supplementing these were older members who had split affiliations. In addition, many White Channel audience members also supported the anti-Thaksin People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC), which boycotted the election in February 2014. When the Party for Peace decided to join the election, many of them stopped their support for White Channel, and withdrew their names from party registers. In 2013 and 2014, MGP's perspectives on Islamic political ideas and Thai politics were discussed through and presented by MGP's Institute for Research and Promotion of Islamic Politics, which was quite a low-profile operation, attracting less attention than Sheikh Rida's lectures through other channels.

According to the bottom picture shown in Figure 2, the main formal organisations that run MGP's day-to-day activities were the MPF, White Channel and the Amanah Islamic Co-operative. They systematically supported one another's work. White Channel was a project run by MGP and financially supported by Amanah Islamic Co-operative together with donations from audiences. The same cohesiveness can also be more clearly seen in Assalam, with its larger scale of organisations and networks.

Assalam operated its activism revolved around Fatoni University. Prior to the formalization process, it already had extensive informal, semi-formal and formal organisation across *kaum muda* communities in the South. 2012 marked a year of Assalam formalisation of networks. According to the resolution from

¹²⁸ Interview with Hamzah Al-Karimi, 2 April 2015

Multaqa Muslimah (Ar. Muslim women's assembly) event organised at Fatoni University on 13 April 2011 by the Assalam Institute's Women Affairs attended by another 21 Muslim women organisations, the Council of Muslim Women's Organisation Cooperation for Peace (CMCP) was later established in 2012 aiming to coordinate between Muslim women groups, especially in improving children, women, and family (CMCP [leaflet], no date). Its upgrade of those organisations helped in making use of state facilities and infrastructures. The Thailand Islamic Co-operatives Network (TICON) was registered June 2012, as an upgraded network of 22 Islamic Co-operatives in the South and Bangkok, which included cooperatives outside Assalam's network. Assalam's main alliance of co-operatives was unified under the The Southern Thailand Islamic Cooperative Network established in May 2002.¹²⁹ In November 2012, the Assalam Smart School Association of Thailand (ASSA) consisting of 42 Islamic Private Schools was established.

Since the establishment of the Yala Islamic College in 1997, hundreds of pictures have been published showing University ceremonies during which Ismail Lutfi stood side by side with former minister Wan Nor and other figures who represent different Assalam alliances. The composition of distinguished guests often include an SBPAC secretary, a commander of the regional army division, an MP, a senator, a president of the Provincial Administrative Organisation (PAO), an Arab sheikh in a traditional gown, and a member of the provincial Islamic council. These ubiquitous pictures, which could be seen in all media of the Assalam, symbolically indicated the pragmatic strategy of the movement in making alliance with other significant actors. Wan Nor, as an experienced educationist-cum-politician figure in the area was approached to be the president of Fatoni University. Sait Al-Yufree, who was re-elected as Pattani PAO president for over ten years, has been a consistent ally of Lutfi's network. The Pattani PAO has sponsored most Asslam's major events.

¹²⁹ The Southern Thailand Islamic Co-operative Network. [Online]. [accessed 29 April 2013] Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/เครือข่ายสหกรณ์อิสลาม-ภาคใต้/the-southern-thailand-islamic-co-operative-network/113166452198093>

MGP used a similar strategy: SBPAC secretaries, local politicians, governors and municipal heads from the three southern provinces are often found giving speeches or receiving awards at their events. However, this cooperation did not signify strong political power, as the MGP was not a major stakeholder in the Deep South. Rather, their relationships demonstrated the way that the White Channel sought state support to organise its events across many provinces. The local authorities could benefit from showing their benevolence in supporting Islamic affairs and gaining popularity from specific groups of Muslims who took part. In the White Event titled 'Salam Chao Thai' organised at PSU Hadyai Convention Hall on 23 January 2016, SBPAC secretary Phanu Uthairat, wearing a white Arab *thawb* (Ar. gown), used the event to publicly announce for the first time that the controversial project to build a large *Bhuddha Monthon* (Th. Buddhist Park) in Pattani was cancelled. The 100-rai Buddhist park project proposed by the Pattani Provincial Authority was opposed by Muslim religious leaders and activists, since building a large-scale Buddha statue in the Muslim majority area might stir up violent sentiments (*The Nation* 2016).

Undoubtedly, Assalam was much more keen and skilful than MGP in making connections with, and making use of, political figures. However, the two movements shared certain features that allowed them to have more interaction with politicians and authority figures. Three main advantages for both groups came from this strategy: 1) they could make themselves known to the authorities, so allaying concerns about whether they were radical or posed a threat to state security, 2) they could demonstrate their strength, which the authorities could use to access wider Muslim communities, and 3) they benefitted from use of state facilities and budget.

Here, I attempt to answer three questions: how genuine and sustainable is their relationship? What do they achieve in opening space for Islamic reformism?, and How do these connections make them become accommodated?

Through his close relationship with Seni, then President of Parliament Wan Nor, an educator who had become Thailand's most successful Malay Muslim politician by far, agreed to become president of the ex-Yala Islamic College Council in 1997 (Yala Islamic University, 19) and continues to hold this position with

respect to YIC's successor institution, Fatoni University. Assalam's relations with the state have been developed through the formalisation of their organisations, primarily and initially based on the Islamic university. Assalam made use of its special relationships with bureaucrats and politicians in order to establish new social organisations and organise public events. Most of their projects revealed this kind of relationship through the budget and infrastructures sponsored by the authorities. The logos of SBPAC and Pattani PAO have been frequently placed on event posters at YIC and later Fatoni University, along with invitations to offer opening and closing remarks, as well as front-row seats provided for distinguished official guests, gift presentations, group photos, and words of gratitude from event moderators and speakers.

While informal networks benefited many Islamist movements in relatively closed political systems, the Islamic activism literature also suggested that formal forms of organisation have often well worked for movements operating in more open polities – an argument illustrated by both Assalam and MGP.

Assalam leaders pointed out that one of the main objectives of its formalisation policy and strategy was to secure themselves, legalising their organisations so to avoid the suspicion that often surrounds clandestine movements.¹³⁰ Of Assalam's decision to formalise the movement in the more open, but unreliable political environment of Thai polity, Muhamad Nasir explained: 'Being transparent, visible and official outdoors is more secure than risking being suppressed in the dark.'¹³¹ The registration of the Muslim for Peace Foundation in 2012 was also aimed at achieving greater legal protection.¹³²

Assalam established the YIU in 1998, at a time when the political environment in the Deep South and at the national level seemed relatively open. However, it lacked the confidence to formalise other social organisations within its network until the early 2010s, by which time the political situation had greatly deteriorated. This Assalam's development trend contradicted the stock social

¹³⁰ Interviews with Saleh Talek, 13 November 2014; Muhamadnasir Habaye, Director of Assalam Institute, 23 December 2014; Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014.

¹³¹ Interview Muhamad Nasir Habaye, Director of Assalam Institute, 23 December 2014.

¹³² Interview with Hanif Yongstar. , 25 April 2015.

movement theoretical explanation that a more open environment leads to greater formalisation of social movements. In the process of Assalam's development of its formal educational institution, Fatoni University, it developed greater interactions and closer relationships with political allies and the state authorities. When the political environment became undemocratic in the hands of junta governments after the military coups of 2006 and 2014, Assalam's political strength was already sufficiently strong for it to continue the formalisation process. For example, Assalam struck a delicate balance between maintaining a close relationship with Thaksin's political networks and preserving good relations with the Democrat Party leadership, which was backed by what McCargo (2005) called 'network monarchy' and the military. Events and ceremonies of Assalam and Fatoni University were regularly joined by politicians and heads of local bureaucratic and military agencies from both sides of this divide, such as presidents of Provincial Administrative Organisations (PAO), the SBPAC secretary, provincial governors, and the commanders of the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) Region 4 and the Fourth Army.

With the 'network monarchy', Assalam had developed a good relationship with, and gained trust from, privy councillor and ex-prime minister General Surayud Chulanont, who joined Assalam events on many occasions. 10 March 2004, Yala Islamic University had an official opening ceremony of after eight years of its establishment.¹³³ The ceremony was presided over by the current King Maha Vajiralongkorn, then the Crown Prince. After his visit, intelligence and security officers, who had previously monitored around the university thanks to their suspicions over Assalam's connections with regional terrorist organisations and local insurgents, all disappeared.¹³⁴

The trust and bargaining power Ismail Lutfi and his university's had in relations with the army was demonstrated by the military's handling of a raid in a village in Thung Yang Daeng district, Pattani on 25 March 2015, in which four teenagers accused of being RKK insurgents were killed, with weapons found next

¹³³ Available from: <http://www.ftu.ac.th/main/th/about-us/history.html> (Accessed 24 June 2016).

¹³⁴ [Interviews with Saleh Talek, 13 November 2014; Muhamadnasir Habaye, Director of Assalam Institute, 23 December 2014.](#)

to their bodies. Two of them were students of Fatoni University. On 27 March, FTU issued a statement to insist that its students were innocent and had no connection with insurgents, and called on the Thai authority to appoint a committee to investigate the incident.¹³⁵ Typically, controversial cases in which allegedly innocent victims were killed by the military were ignored and by the Army, which invariably dismissed criticism from human rights groups. But the Army's response in the Thung Yang Daeng case was very different, and indeed unprecedented. An investigation committee appointed by Pattani governor Weerapong Kaewsuan following an order from Fourth Army Region Commander Lt Gen Prakarn Cholayuth announced its conclusions on 7 April 2015, less than two weeks after the incident. The committee was composed of military and police officers, as well as community and religious leaders. Declaring that the four victims were indeed innocent, Lt. General Prakarn offered public apologies to Dr Lutfi and Fatoni University. In response to the committee's investigation, Lutfi gave a speech, bursting in tears when expressing his gratitude to the commander and stating that the apology was very precious. However, Lutfi said a very strong, powerful message that 'We were building good citizens for a stronger nation, you came and tore them down. We have been left devastated.' (*Bangkok Post*, 2015).

The responses of both the Fourth Army and Lufti in this case were clear evidence that Assalam had gained considerable acceptance from the Thai authorities. However, this power consolidation was undoubtedly viewed by the separatist and traditional religious leaders as opportunistic.¹³⁶ Assalam leaders claimed that they built their movement on the basis of socio-economic dimensions with the emphasis of education, and disengagement from politics, which exempted them from charges of opportunism.¹³⁷ Although Assalam had always avoided creating or directly endorsing any political party, its claims to be uninvolved in politics were not exactly true. The direct involvement of Seni, Worawidh, and Dr Wae Mahadi's in parliamentary politics was clear evidence to the contrary, not to mention Assalam's indirect use of political power through cultivating complex political networks with local and national politicians. Assalam organisational

¹³⁵ Available from: <https://www.deepsouthwatch.org/dsj/th/6994> (Accessed 20 June 2016)

¹³⁶ Informal talk with Ramadan Panjor, editor of Deep South Watch, 20 December 2013.

¹³⁷ Interview with Saleh Talek, 13 November 2014.

strategy means that political accommodation is always tainted by pragmatism and opportunism.

Meanwhile MGP which engaged in extensive political activism with little fear of regime repression. Its protests against the US war on terror as well as other protests at embassies, such as those of Denmark, Israel, and Myanmar, always well coordinated with, and were facilitated by, the police. Sheikh Rida was once invited by a security agency to explain his campaign, calling upon Muslims not to wear yellow shirts like other Thais. While wearing a yellow shirt was ostensibly a symbol of respect and loyalty to King Bhumibol, Sheikh Rida viewed it as a sign of *shirk* (Ar. polytheism) and explained his objections were a matter of freedom of religion. Nothing untoward happened to him following this episode, which made him more aware that his teachings that might be sensitive, but at the same time made Rida more confident about adopting religious stances that might run counter to mainstream views.¹³⁸ In the general election of 2014, the Phue Santi Party led by Sheikh Rida declared three policies: 1) to end the use of martial law and emergency decree in southern province 2) to impose shari'ah courts not only in southern provinces, but across the country, and 3) promoting Muslim rights concerning religious practice. Again, nothing happened to his movement. A senior officer in the Thai National Security Council explained that MGP as well as the other Salafi groups were all watched by security officers and intelligence units, but would not face any problems if their activities 'did not cross the line'.¹³⁹

In consolidating and expanding their organisations, Assalam was better at cooperating with external alliances and elites, while MGP seemed more outstanding and self-reliant in achieving professionalism and gaining support from the masses. In my interviews with cadres of both movements, many informants from Assalam reflected the same opinion that its compromise and alliance-making with external elements was one of the key factors behind the movement's growth.¹⁴⁰ Examples of Assalam's use of facilities was benefited by external

¹³⁸ Interview with Rida 22 April 2015.

¹³⁹ Interview with anonymous. The Office of National Security Council.

¹⁴⁰ Interviews with Muhammad Nasir Habaye, 23 December 2014; Shakirin Sumalee 26 March 2015; Abdullah Seng 25 February 2015; Abdul Kareem Asma-ae 25 December 2014; Uthman Ratniyom 2 December 2014; Rushdi Sidik 10 April 2015.

network and alliances are such with the Prince of Songkla University's College of Islamic Studies (CIS) and the Pattani PAO, which granted the movement funding and venues for meetings and events.

MGP cadres, on the other hand, shared the same sense of pride that the success of their movement with continual support from the public resulted from their persistence in making clear what 'white' really meant.¹⁴¹ But although MGP and the White Channel developed a wide range of affiliations, there was a gradual tendency for both staff and allies to break away over time.

Wide international contacts and alliances were another key aspect of Assalam's development of network-based organisations. Assalam had stronger connections of international Islamic organisations and intellectuals than MGP. Thavi observed that Lutfi's network was better able than the Thai state to invite prominent figures from the Middle East to attend international conference or events.¹⁴² In the preparation of the Madinah al-Salam project, former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad was appointed as a project advisory board. Mahathir and other renowned international political leaders were awarded honorary degrees from Fatoni University. This became one of the tools used to strengthen the movement's political network.

On 21 April 2017, Wan Nor, the president of Fatoni University Council, chaired a 'Meeting of Muslim Leaders and Intellectuals in Bangkok and Metropolitan Area' hosted by the Madinah Al Salam Waqaf Project and Fatoni University. Wan Nor declared that King Salman of Saudi Arabia had agreed to donate \$20 million (700 million baht) to the Madinah Al-Salam Project.¹⁴³ The roundtable panel at the Foundation Islamic Centre Hall assembled former SBPAC secretary Thavee Sordsong, Former Democrat MP Samart Maluleem, Imran Mululeem, Imam of FIC Mosque Shafi-e Naphakorn, and Pattani PAO President Said Al-Yufree. The main panelists sitting next to Wan Nor were Lutfi and the Saudi

¹⁴¹ Interviews with Hanif Yongstar 25 April 2015; Bunleng Hassanee 31 March 2015; Anis Toleb, 22 April 2015; Iddris Rojchanamee, 25 March 2015.

¹⁴² Interview with Thavee Sordsong, Former SBPAC Secretary, 18 March 2015.

¹⁴³ "Saudi's King Salman donates 700 million baht for building Fatoni University's Pattani Islamic Centre" (กษัตริย์ซาอุดีฯ มอบ 700 ล้านบาท สร้างศูนย์อิสลามปัตตานี). Available from: <http://news.muslimthai.com/news/28682> [Accessed 24 April 2017].

Ambassador (MToday TV, 2017). The presence of these figures was further evidence demonstrating how Assalam created alliances. Assalam's attempts to balance competing powers was not only manifested in domestic politics (between Democrat Party and Pheu Thai Party), but also between the competing powers in the Muslim world. Prior to King Salman's grant, the King of Qatar was one of the largest donors to Fatoni University.

To conclude, these strategies function as evidence of accommodation both in strategic and organisational dimensions. To locate their organisations into the Thai domestic context, Assalam and MGP promoted interactions with key allies that were followed by more efforts at organisational and strategic adaptation. Such adaptations not only showed the benevolent, idealistic, and religious aspects of accommodation, but also the dimensions of political pragmatism and opportunism. This organisational accommodation, however, could not take place without significant changes both movements' ideological positions.

Ideological Strategies

Ideology is an essential source of activism. This section considers how the movements applied ideological strategies to fit themselves into the contexts as well as in pursuit of reforming society. In making sense of Assalam and MGP's ideological adaptation and accommodation, I examine how their ideologies have been framed and how the movements cultivated those Islamic reformist ideas in both Thai and Malay-Muslim contexts.

In the language of business, Assalam and MGP's leaders used their organisations as vehicles to deliver Islamic reformist messages (as their product) to target audiences in Thailand. In the first two sections, I illustrated that their vehicles were fuelled with mobilised resources. The vehicles carried their salesmen (cadres) to convey their products to target audience. We have also seen: how the company (as a movement) and vehicles (as affiliated organisations) have been developed to become more suitable for different conditions and to access target audiences, how the salespersons were taught to know about the product and were recruited, how they were trained to have skills in product presentation and

packaging, and given the skills to convince, sell, and deliver the product to target audiences.

In the same metaphorical context, this ideological section deals with the product's brand, what it looks like, how it was produced, where its raw materials came from, how local raw materials were mixed into it, and how experiences of the producers from different surroundings shaped their skills and the way they developed the products.

Ideological origins, framings, and shifts

Ideology is an essential source of activism. How the movements' ideologies have been triggered, framed, and transformed significantly illustrates the patterns of the movements' accommodation.

The ideological origins and framings of both movements related to the triggering factors and sources of ideologies. In terms of ideological triggering, the movements were influenced by different constraints in the Thai domestic context and the larger context of Muslim world in relations to encroachment of western powers. The main sources of ideologies were Islamic reformism and renewal movements in the past and present. The renewal exhibited an Salafi orientation, while reformism or revivalism indicated the contextually engaged interpretation.

The term "framing" has been used by authors of social movement theory to explain the process of meaning construction (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988), in which social movement actors produce interpretive conceptions to understand situations in the world "out there" and disseminate them to a target audience and public in order to engender collective action. Movements construct frames by identifying a problem essentially need to be rectified, offering solutions to improve the condition, and giving sets of reasons to convince and motivate participation and support (Snow and Benford: 1988). In the analysis of a problem, movements also find targets to blame as causes of the problem. Many Islamist movements attribute primary responsibility for Muslim decline to western political and cultural invasion (Wicktorowicz 2004: 16).

These theoretical perspectives reflect grievance-based explanations. Although a grievance-based perspective is insufficient to explain the holistic picture of Assalam and MGP's activism, it is still useful to look at the origins of the movements. Examining through this perspective, we can see that both movements were triggered by the sufferings of their 'brothers in Islam', but with different causes.

In an examination of both movements' ideological origins and framings, I have found that three main alignments of mentalities that instigated the movement leaders to perform Islamic activism were their reactions towards the Thai state's repression, anti-western sentiments, and distress about the poor condition of the Muslim ummah. Assalam leaders only harboured a grievance against the Thai state during the outset of forming their student groups, but the other two motivations were shared by both movements. However, MGP originally primarily framed their ideologies in terms of the plight of the Muslim ummah's. Despite their self-criticism emphasising internal factors that had caused the decline of the Muslim ummah, external threats still mattered to some extent in their perception, including the expansion of western powers and dominance over Muslim nations, and the historical governance of the Thai state over Malay Muslims.

The forceful integration of Islamic education into the Thai modern curriculum culminating in the Thai authorities' killing of Haji Sulong was the main factor that fomented hostile sentiment of Malay Islamic scholars and students towards the Thai state. The western domination of the Muslim world, especially the Israeli occupation of Palestine, was another grievance that circulated among Islamic activists worldwide. As graduates of Middle Eastern universities and admirers of Middle Eastern Islamic reformist ideologues, empathising with their brothers in that region was unavoidable. Sheikh Rida described the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a trigger point of his activism.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 31 March 2015; a public lecture on "The situation of the Muslim World" at Yala Islamic University 29 November 2012.

I decided to change myself from living like a normal youth to dedicating my life to the Muslim ummah after seeing pictures of Palestinian Muslims slaughtered in Israel's invasion of Lebanon (during 1982–85).¹⁴⁵

This incident prompted him to transform himself from an ordinary fun-loving teenager to a determined youth, who later became an Islamic scholar-cum-activist. As for Assalam, although the problems in the Middle East were not as important as Malay Muslims' problems during the early phase of their movement, the sufferings of global Muslim brothers have subsequently become an important agenda for which they actively campaigned.¹⁴⁶ The Chularajmontri's Council for Humanitarian Networking of Sheikhul Islam Office formed up in November 2014 was collectively initiated by Muslim scholars and activists in Thailand.¹⁴⁷ Sheikh Rida and Assalam's scholars were initially involved, although Sheikh Rida's group left the network in 2015 due to his disagreements over its management.

The backwardness of Muslim *ummah* was a rather vague discourse, but became one of the reformist themes invoked to encourage the development of Muslim activism. Taking Islamic reformist views that identified external and internal causes of Muslim decline, Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida have critically discerned internal local Muslim problems rather than blindly blamed external factors, such as western powers and the Thai state. For instance, in Lutfi's proposal of the concept 'Al-Quran: the guidance to mankind', as well as his encouragement of *halaqah* al-Quran (Ar. Quranic study circle), he articulately criticised the problem of Malay Muslims' passive and uncritical study of the texts through *kitab jawi*. Lutfi also criticised Malay Muslims' study of al-Quran, since it focused on recitation (*qari*), rather than understanding and application of the texts. He proposed the *halaqah* as a method for accessing and interacting with the original message from God through the *tafsir*.¹⁴⁸ In addition, his answer to my question about the challenge of performing activism within the Thai state did not blame the

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 31 March 2015.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Saleh Talek, 13 November 2014.

¹⁴⁷ "Establishing the Council for Humanitarian Networking of Sheikhul Islam Office" (in Thai), Available from: www.deepsouthwatch.org/dsj/thy/6482 accessed on 25 April 2017.

¹⁴⁸ Observation, Lutfi's speech "Al-Quran as a guidance," in the seminar on "*Al-Quran and Wasatiyyah (moderation)*" at Dai-ichi Hotel, Hat Yai, Songkhla, 11 November 2014. Organised by the Assalam Institute Coordinating Centre (Songkhla branch) in cooperated with the Foundation for Education and Social Development.

limitations imposed by the Thai state, but highlighted his movement's weaknesses to use the considerable opportunities available within the Thai polity.¹⁴⁹ Sheikh Rida, while unhappy at western powers' oppression of the Muslim world, viewed westernisation as a normal phenomenon. The issue he emphasised was how Muslims can solve their internal problems of illiteracy and culturally passivity, and empower themselves by going back to Islamic core values. One of the core messages he delivered to his students was to be proud of being a good Muslim who reflects morality and stands constructively against the 'immoralities' of secularism.¹⁵⁰ Concerning the problem that politicians took advantage of Muslims, Rida blamed the Muslim community and religious leaders for 'selling the honour' of Muslims in exchange for trivial incentives.¹⁵¹

Apart from the structural influences experienced by the movements' leaders, we cannot disregard the influence of the global Islamic reformist ideologues and movements, as well as the intellectual legacies inherited by the previous generations of Thai Salafis detailed in Chapter 4. These traditions influenced scholars from both movements at the outset to focus on the purification of Islamic religious practices by stressing the following of the authentic texts, such as how to pray or perform other forms of worship (*ibadah*), how to organise a funeral, as well as other forms of religious rituals. This earlier policy of the Salafis was the central issue in the *khana mai-khana kao* conflict and caused a sectarian conflict that remains alive until the present.

On the other hand, the adoption of a reformist orientation has shaped both movements to pay less attention to those trivial ritual issues, but instead to emphasise the spiritual and social problems of the Muslim *ummah*. This shift in their ideational focuses affected their interpretation of Islamic texts in relation to contextual accommodation.

Sheikh Rida argued that his experiences in different countries were instrumental in shaping his personality, performance, and vision of activism. For example, he benefitted considerably from spending merely a year in Morocco as he

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Ismail Lutfi Japakiya, 20 February 2015.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 31 March 2015.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

had a chance to learn about different Muslim ideologies and groups. In Egypt he was raised and associated only in the realm of Salafi, but in Morocco he identified three ideological alignments that he learnt from: the conservative Maliki traditionalists, twesternised secular Muslims, and the Ikhwani.¹⁵² The Ikhwani in Morocco were twofold: the Muslim Brotherhood, which was engaged in the regime under its affiliated Party of Justice and Development (PJD), and the anti-regime largest Islamist group, the Jama'ah al Adl wal Ihsaan or the Justice and Spirituality Movement (Spiegel 2015). The Muslim Brotherhood were the 'real' Ikhwan, which in 2011 became the first Islamist head of government in the MENA region while the latter merely adopted the Ikhwani way of activism. Apart from the plurality of Muslim orientations, one of the valuable lessons that Rida learned in Morocco was observing the political manoeuvres of Islamist groups in relation to the regime.

Ismail Lutfi and his colleagues earned degrees from Saudi universities, which have been dominated by Salafi-Wahhabi schools, but they were not necessarily moulded by these narrow, rigid traditions. As discussed earlier, Saudi higher education between the 1970s and the 1990s was significantly influenced by the reformist or *ikhwani* tradition. Under the influence of Saudi *Sahwi*, young Salafi scholars emerged in 1990s as a new challenging strand of thinking, against the prevailing traditionalist Salafi. This group of scholars, such as Sheikhs Salman al-Awdah, Nasir Umar, Safar Al-Hawali, and Aid Qarni were framed as *Tanwiris* or 'muted modernists' (Al-Rasheed 2015). Not only were Assalam leaders were influenced by this Salafi ideological relaxation, but also to a great extent was Sheikh Rida.

Sheikh Rida grew increasingly dissatisfied with the narrowness of the rigid Salafi tradition, especially the dominant strand that consolidated its power through Saudi petrodollars and expanded its influence throughout the Muslim world. The more he engaged with social realities, the more he tended to follow an alternative strand. Although *Sahwi* scholars made similar efforts to blend the strength of the *ikhwan* in activism and Salafi excellence in Islamic education, they suffered from internal disagreements. For instance, Salman Al-Awdah and Aid Qarni agreed that

¹⁵² Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

Islamic scholars should work closely with the king or ruling powers to a greater extent than Nasir Umar and Safar Al-Hawali accepted (See Al-Rasheed, 2006, 2015; International Crisis Group, 2004c). Sheikh Rida broadly emulated Nasir Umar and Safar Al-Hawali's thinking, supporting a pragmatic approach, but nevertheless declining to associate with oppressive, authoritarian rulers and with other groups that supported *bid'ah* (Ar. religious innovations) or violated Islamic principles.¹⁵³ This ideational strand was best exhibited by his movement's relationship with other groups, and accounts for the apparent contradictions between Rida's more relaxed interpretations and MFP's strictness when working with other organisations. Asked whether he remained a Salafi, his answer made clear that he has significantly moved away from his initial rigid interpretation:

I originated in Egyptian Salafism, which comprises both the hard-line, rigid and the relatively flexible groups. The influential figures did not write, while the dominant Salafi authors failed to identify how Salafi methodology could be practical in every field (environment). [...] Their apolitical position did not give a realistic answer to the problems of Muslims and contradicted the teaching of Islam, from which politics is inextricable from religion. The Salafi in Alexandria, who agreed with starting a political project, did not give me a clear plan and answer. Then I started to look from other approaches. I found one of the answers was that the Salafi approach is not an absolute standard to say what Islam is.¹⁵⁴

The Alexandria group to whom Rida refers was led by Yasir Burhami, whose political ideas later contributed to the 2011 establishment of the Salafi-oriented Al-Nour Party. Al-Nour's subsequent support for President Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi disappointed Sheikh Rida, and justified his ideological shift away from a purist Salafi stance.

Assalam's shift from Salafism to reformism was not as clear-cut as that of Sheikh Rida: the movement gradually combined these competing traditions within its practice and methods from the outset. The confluence of two major ideologies

¹⁵³ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 31 March 2015.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 31 March 2015.

within both movements has offered them wider options for strategic development and ideological adaptation.

Domestication of ideologies

A framing process encourages mobilisation (McAdam, McCarty, and Zald 1996: 8). Both Thai Islamic movements were not merely triggered by structural repression and influenced by ideological dynamics: they have also developed their core values and ideological strategies of their own accord, to frame their activism and gain larger support. This exhibited David Snow's original definition of framing processes as 'conscious strategic efforts by group of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action' (Snow and Benford 1988; cited in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996: 339).

Continuing from the previous section presenting the networked-based structure in which the movements used for locating their organisation, this section deals with the content. I examine two points: how the movement leaders produced, articulated, and disseminated ideological messages to their members and the wider target audience in pursuit of promoting Islamic reformism; and how cadres and sympathisers were convinced to follow and support the ideas, as well as participate in the movements.

In examining how the movements spread their messages, I classify their agendas into two levels according to different types of members and target audiences. The first level is limited to the ideas that were adopted and understood by the movements' leaders and cadres as their ideological commitment to fulfil. These ideas functioned as ideological cores that brought those 'active' members together in the movement, as well as persuading potential participants to join the same ideological thread. The second level of ideas comprises agendas that were strategically produced and articulated by the movement to both their members and the wider public.

Ideological cores

Speaking in social movement theoretical language, the term 'ideological core' represents a frame that the movement actors construct interpretative conceptions to understand situations in 'the world out there' and propose responses to a target audience in order to elicit participation and support. The following ideological cores, which I identified through discourse analysis based on interviews and other primary sources, illustrate how leaders and cadres of Assalam and MGP understand and conceptualise their collective aims for their movements' activism. The themes of 'ideological cores' were framed and analysed by the process in which I let the data derived from different informants speak by itself, rather than impose my pre-judgement. Therefore, they represent the voices of the informants themselves.

Da'wah: taking 'true' Islam to the people

Viewing from the movements' point of view, most leaders and cadres define their activism as equal to *da'wah*. In this regard, the most repeated term referred by MGP key informants was under the same concept of 'spread the word of God' (In Thai – *pei prae kham damrat khong phrachao*), while Assalam referred to 'taking Islam to people' (in Patani Malay – *bawak Islae kepada rakyat*; in Thai – *nam Islam pai hai khon/chaoban*). All political pragmatic strategies were in pursuit of this strain of aim.

Prior to the presence of Islamic reformist activism, especially that of Lutfi's movement, the word *da'wah* had been narrowly understood by many Malay Muslims as a reference to the main activity of the Jama'at Tablighi movement (Scupin 1998: 254). *Da'wah* projects have been understood interchangeably with the word reform. In other words, the aim of propagating Islamic message to the society is to reform the society by using Islamic values and moralities. In this respect, many Islamic reformists, including Assalam and MGP understand Islam as a comprehensive way of life and attempt to apply Islam in social, economic, and political dimension. Referring to their activism, most MGP's Thai-speaking cadres used the phrase '*tham ngarn sardsana phue Allah*' (Th. literally means conducting religious works for Allah) and claimed themselves as '*khon tham ngarn sardsana*'

(Th. religious worker). Assalam's Malay-speaking leaders and cadres referred themselves to as "*kerja Islae*" (Patani Ml. Islamic work), and use the Arabic term *da'i* (Ar. preacher).

Another ideological image of the Assalam was provided by a late-comer to the movement who had extensive experience with other Muslim groups. This young cadre had worked at one of the Islamic integrated school under the Assalam network since 2010 and became one of the movement's key activists working on Islamic education development. Before joining Assalam, he participated in a separatist group, joined the Tablighi Jamaat, attended Fityatulhaq Summer Camp (one of Sheikh Rida's affiliates), followed the Salafi website mureed.com, and joined the Islamic study circles of YMAT. He eventually chose Assalam because it had moderate, realistic, and inclusive methods of working, as well as a comprehensive perspective on Islam.¹⁵⁵ His decision-making reflected a wide-ranging view of the different ideological choices open to him:

I was recruited and took an oath of allegiance to one of the separatist movements since I studied at an Islamic private school in Yala. At that time, I was in level 4 of Ibtidai [Islamic introductory level] and Matthayom 5 [grade 5] of the secondary level. I was taught that Wahhabis were our rivals. I had hostile feeling against Yee Air [Dr. Lutfi] and felt irritated when riding pass the Bra-o. When I studied in university, I was in charge of propagating an ideology of resistance to the new young generation. I liked to read books and once came across Islamic reformist ones. I began to be confused about whether revolution or reform was a right method. While I was moving my lips telling resistance stories to the subordinates, my mind was hesitant and sceptical. My friend suggested me to see Yee Air [Ismail Lutfi]. When I first met him, together with the reformist books I had read, my negative mind-set towards Wahhabi turned to be positive.

However, it was not easy to leave the separatist movement. A few years between the period that I had quit the separatists and joined Assalam, I had also joined the Da'wah Tabligh for a year, then shifted to Salafi sources, such as surfing www.mureed.com and attended Fityatulhaq

¹⁵⁵ Interview with ASSA committee member, 25 February 2015.

Camp. I found myself having a good understanding of Islam and being on the right path, but relatively arrogant, rigid, and isolated from people around me. When I studied with the YMAT's halaqah 'Nadwatul Fityah', I discovered that it was quite similar to the way of Fityatulhaq but more compromising and gentle. After different trials, I eventually met Bae Suh [the late chemist Yusuf Nima, a key modernist reformer of the Assalam], and followed him. I was impressed by his personality and his method of activism, which reflected many things I had read from the reformist books.¹⁵⁶

In February 2014, there was an interesting coincidence of youth events organised in the same week at different venues by Salafi-reformist youths and ethno-nationalists students. Both had an ideological declaration as a highlight of the events. At Narathiwat Provincial Hall, on 13 February 2014, the Narathiwat Youth Network incorporated by Assalam and MGP's youth wing organised an event called 'Yaowachon sai cheuck deawkan' (Th. Youth of the same rope) at which they called for the revitalisation of Islamic identity.¹⁵⁷ Meanwhile at Saengchan Yard, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani, the Federation of Patani Students and Youth (PerMAS), held an exhibition and discussions entitled 'Satu Patani' with the theme 'Quest for Patani self-determination' (*Prachathai* 2014). While the ethno-nationalists critically raised the issue of the Thai state's human right violations directed at local Malays through military operations, the reformist youths merely discussed spiritual and religious issues without critically engaged with the socio-political conditions and realities of Malay Muslims' lives.

Exalting the truth and God's words

The core ideological principle of exalting the truth and God's words is only embraced the MGP. During the early period of Sheikh Rida's teaching in Thailand, which was highly influenced by the Salafi orientation, one of his favourite phrases

¹⁵⁶ Interview with anonymous, 25 February 2015.

¹⁵⁷ Observation from Youtube live broadcast: Islamnara. [Online]. [Accessed 13 February 2014] <https://www.youtube.com/user/Islamnara> ;

Assalam Institute, Narathiwat's Facebook page. [Online]. [Accessed 13 February 2014] Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/menaravittayanusornschool/>

was ‘exalting and preserving the truth’¹⁵⁸ It was interchangeably used with the phrase ‘glorifying the words of God’. Iddris, who later became one of the founders of Fityatulhaq, pointed out:

The main ideological message we interpreted from Sheikh Rida’s teachings and took it to be our aim of activism is to make the youth understand and be proud of the Islamic way of life. Sheikh always encourages us to devote ourselves to preserve as well as propagate the words of Allah.¹⁵⁹

In parallel with this principle, Sheikh Rida and his student were also outstanding in fulfilling the role of *khayra umma* (Ar. role model/best nation), which the Quran suggests to perform *al-amr bi al-ma’rouf wa al-nahi an al-munkar* – (Ar. promoting good/right and prohibiting evil/wrong). This point of belief at times caused conflicts with others. Some Assalam figures stated that some of the children and students who attended the early years of Fityatulhaq Youth Camp benefited from a deep Islamic inspiration to self-rectify and reform the society, but also became rather assertive in ‘reminding’ people not to do anything wrong or immoral.

Contributing piety to society

In connection with propagating the Islamic message and exalting the words of God, MGP’s most salient ideological core is translating religious piety into social contributions. This core value was not only an ideology, but was also used as their ideological main strategy, which established a strong base of activism for MGP cadres. Almost every key informant from MGP cadres informed me about Sheikh Rida’s encouraging his followers to take knowledge from him to reform society. He always urged his students, directly and indirectly, to ‘fill the gaps in the society.’ ‘To fill the gaps’ was the phrase I heard most often from them when asking ‘What is your ideology in working with the MGP?’ Sheikh Rida himself also responded in my interviews as follows:

¹⁵⁸ Interview Iddris Rojchanamee, founder and former head of Fityatulhaq, 13 December 2014; Bunleng Hassanee, Fityatulhaq senior member 14 December 2014.

¹⁵⁹ Interview Iddris Rojchanamee, founder and formal head of Fityatulhaq, 13 December 2014.

The main challenging issue for me to fulfil is: How can I make people make efforts to serve religion, regardless of whether they are *awwaam* [Ar. layman/ordinary people] or educated people?¹⁶⁰

With respect to this ideological core, MGP has prioritised the preservation of Muslims' rights, which has been left unaddressed in many aspects domestically and globally. In this they perform the 'missing role' of Islamic authorities, who have failed to protect the Muslim *ummah*. This idea has been evidence in MGP activities since its inception. This thread has expanded from the support of global Muslims' rights being violated by oppressors to the protection and preservation of Muslims' right to practice Islam in the Thai kingdom.

Islamic state or Islamic society?

Generally, the notion of an Islamic state is the ultimate goal of most Islamists, moderate Islamists have learned from contemporary Islamic political movements that such a goal is difficult to achieve even in a Muslim majority nation, let alone in a country where Muslims constitute a small minority. An interesting question is whether Islamic state is still an ultimate aim for Islamisr activists. The failure of Islamic revolutionary groups in many countries, including the Taliban, caused many Islamists to support an alternative notion, that of an Islamic society.

Whether or not Assalam and MGP secretly aspire to an Islamic state, their current approaches reflect pragmatic, rather than idealistic, notions. According to my observations, as well as views expressed by many interviewees, young immature youths – who only learn Islam from books or study circles without any experience in performing activism – tend to have more idealistic notions than those more familiar with social realities.¹⁶¹ Most youths who read Islamic reformist books written by Muadudi, Sayyid Qutb, and Hasan Al-Banna ideally dreamed of an Islamic state, especially those with limited discussion circles. However, typically when they became more mature in Islamic activism and were more associated with the Thai state and other social realities, their ideological aims were adjusted to be

¹⁶⁰ Interview Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

¹⁶¹ Interviews with Abdul Raning Suetair, 13 February 2015; Ibrahim Narongraksakhet, 13 February 2015; Abdullah Seng, 25 February 2015; Shakirin Sumalee, 26 March 2015.

more realistic. Their goal of an Islamic state was replaced by that of an Islamic society.

A non-Malay speaking cadre from Nakorn Srithammarat in the Upper South who was one of the young modernist generation joining the Assalam during its first approach to PSU campus revealed about his ideology in working with Assalam that *'...to raise people for establishing complete Islam [in Thai – sathapana Islam tee somboon, original language] on earth, which is not necessarily an Islamic state. It means comprehensive Islam that covers all dimensions.'*¹⁶²

In my interviews with senior leaders from both movements, they gave similar answers: they aimed to create an Islamic Muslim minority society within a non-Muslim society that was friendly to an Islamic way of live. This was a pragmatic more feasible vision of reforming society in accordance with an Islamic way of living. Ismail Lutfi gave a pragmatic answer to my question about his views about an Islamic state.

I make my effort within the limits of my potential. I have never pressured myself to do anything I do not have potential or ability to do. An Islamic state is far beyond my potential. Alhamdulillah (thanks God) for not granting me that potential, so I do not have to worry why I cannot do that. On the day of judgement, Allah will measure from our efforts within our potential, He won't ask us or measure our deeds from what we are unable to do. So, the most important and critical question is whether we have made our best efforts to create good things from the opportunities that Allah gives us. Thinking in this way, I am happy and less worried.¹⁶³

Names do matter

The ideological principles of Assalam and MGP were also reflected in the names of the movement and their affiliates. The way that the movements named their organisations conveyed their ideological aims, which had contextual relations over different periods of evolution. At the formation period of Assalam, the JPIP was a student organisation connected with Patani as its motherland and Islam as its core,

¹⁶² Interview with Shakirin Sumalee, Secretary of the Assalam Smart School Association (ASSA), 26 March 2015.

¹⁶³ Interview with Ismail Lutfi Chapakiya, 18 December 2014.

as well as offering an alternative that challenged Malay ethno-nationalism. MAJDA represented its aim of *da'wah* or preaching mission. In Thailand, Seni's Neutral Group demonstrated the holding of a middle ground position among other Malay ethno-nationalist groups.

The word 'Fatoni', which replaced the earlier name of Yala Islamic University in 2013, was an Arab version of Patani. This dual reflection of loyalty to the motherland expressed in an Arabised name partly signified Fatoni University's aim to epitomise the Islamic educational legacy of Makkah and Patani by echoing the names of two renowned *Ulama Patani* – Sheikh Davud Al-Fatoni and Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fatoni. But it was also strategically aimed to connect itself with local Malays, and to represent Malays in their contacts with the Arab world: the new name was partly crafted to attract support from the Middle East.

The University senior leaders prioritised the significance of Malay language – of which they had an excellent command – and were sincerely attached to Patani's history and people, but seemed to be less interested in cultural dimensions. They were criticised for appearing to belittle Malays while adoring Arabs. In the FTU campus and at other events or sermons, only a few staff and participants dressed in colourful Malay shirts, while the rest wore white *thawb* or *tobe* (Ar. Arab gown) or Malay-style shirts in plain colours. Excessively colourful garments looked religiously impolite from their perspective. At wedding ceremonies or other formal gatherings, men preferred to dress up in *thawb* than *baju kurong* (Malay traditional dress). In fact, their perceived preference for the Arab over the Malay was not intrinsically an influence of Arab culture, but based Salafi, reformist traditions.

The naming of MGP affiliations also demonstrated its attempts to establish ideal Islamic values amidst secular social realities. It also illustrated the gradual expansion of the movement's roles from Salafi-centric at the outset to wider social-related. When the first group of Sheikh Rida's disciples asked him to name the group, he proposed the name 'Fityatulhaq' (Ar. Youth of the truth), which was drawn from the Arabic *anasheed* (Ar. Islamic song). This name reflected his expectations concerning how ideal Muslim youths should be raised to serve Islam. Their ideology is best manifested through the lyric of the *anasheed* Fityatulhaq,

which urged young people to rectify themselves and be steadfast in religious affairs in order that they could solve the crises of *ummah*.

Sheikh Rida's vision is to train youth as a central mechanism to change society, in which the masses are enlisted to support projects driven by youth. In March 2017, the White Channel promoted programmes on the Youth Camp using the slogan, '*khai sang khon*' (Th. camp creates a man). This implies creating social institutions is not the ultimate mechanism Rida relies upon. Producing academic written works and nurturing new generations of youth were the ways that he believed would most help perpetuate his legacy and continue to reform society.

The name 'White Channel' demonstrates the Salafi orientation of 'clean' moral media, in contrast with the majority of TV channels that produce 'immorally contaminated' contents. This TV station's name originated from the phrase *al-mahajjah al-bayda* (Ar. the white pathway):¹⁶⁴ the prophet said in the hadith, 'Indeed I have left you upon the clear white path [...].'¹⁶⁵ Sheikh Rida claimed that his channel was committed to be 'white' not only in terms of the content, but also in terms of its method of production. For example, staff were not allowed to smoke or do anything immoral in the workplace. When the Azaan (Ar. call for prayer) was heard, everyone had to congregate in the Channel's prayer hall to pray. On most walls of the offices, there were notices with Islamic messages to remind and encourage the staff. During the channel's annual seminar at a resort in Kanchanaburi in January 2017, Sheikh Rida advised his staff to produce a good moral media by taking a lesson from bees, which consume only good things to provide aromatic clear honey.¹⁶⁶

During Sheikh Rida's isolation from his first academic base, the Al-Islah Association, the group that hosted his weekly teachings was named the As-Sunnah Group, which shows their praising of the prophetic practice. Subsequent affiliations illustrated his ambitious claims to be providing socio-religious services to Muslim

¹⁶⁴ "What is White Channel", [Online]. Available from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mGwuqZaAz4Q> Accessed 17 January 2017.

¹⁶⁵ Hadith Saheeh Narated by Ahmad (4/126), Ibn Maajah (no. 5, 43), as Sunnah (no. 48-49) of Ibn Abee 'Aasim and al- Haakim (1/96).

¹⁶⁶ Facebook Page: White Channel สถานี้ความดี 24 ชั่วโมง, [Online]. Available from:

<https://www.facebook.com/tv.whitechannel/> Accessed 17 January 2017.

communities in Thailand, such as the Committee for Following Moon Sightings of Thailand, the website and radio broadcast 'Islam in Thailand', and the Society of Muslim Consumers Protection (Himayah).

Propagation of ideas

The Socio-religious agendas that both movements highlighted as target issues to reform can be another form of evidence to understand their methods and the content of ideological transmission and accomodation. The reformist message that the movements aimed to transmit to the public could be seen from their publications and media sources, as well as from my observations at their public lectures and events. Both movements produced campaigned messages systematically by having Lutfi and Sheikh Rida as a predominant source of each movement's agendas, in consultation with their Islamic scholarly bodies. However, the sequence of presenting ideas and their ways of delivering messages and transmitting them to the public were all different.

Sequence of ideational presentation

Although Assalam and MGP were both strongly based upon Salafi traditions, especially at the outset of their activism, the sequence of their presentation of issues throughout their history of providing Islamic teaching programmes demonstrated how Salafi and reformist/modernist traditions manifested in their ideational propagation. The two following tables, which are based on my abbreviated content analysis of Lutfi's Majlis al-Ilmi Pattani sermons (1992–2007) and Sheikh Rida's sermons (1999–2017), reflects the fact that Assalam and MGP had both Salafi and reformist traditions in their teaching. The Salafi tradition can be seen from the emphasis of Quran and Hadith as the main sources of authenticity, which appeared the most frequent teaching topic.¹⁶⁷ The *aqidah* and the focus in the *tawhid* was also another key aspect of Salafi. The rest of the topics show their reformist perspectives: both Lutfi and Shiekh Rida aimed to improve the condition of Muslims through Islamic teachings on topics such as politics, social, family, and

¹⁶⁷ Lutfi's Majlis al-Ilmi, was divided into two sessions. The first session was allocated for *Tafisr Al-Quran*, but it is not brought into my table of analysis as he wrote it in a different document.

roles of women in society. The number of topics regarding global Muslim situations is also high.

In terms of sequence of presenting the idea to the public, the content presentation of Lutfi were quite comprehensive, covering Islamic beliefs and practices, as well as social issues; whereas Sheikh Rida placed more emphasis on social issues after the formation period. The first ten years of Lutfi's sermons showed an enormous emphasis on topics related to Islamic beliefs, but this obviously decreased during the second and third periods. These analyses of media and textual sources shows consistency with the interview data from informants in both movements' informant, many of who referred to the teachings of their leaders as 'comprehensive Islam'.

Table 1 Content analysis of Majlisul Ilmi Pattani's weekly booklets (Mingguan Tazkirah)

No.	Categories of issues	Frequency of issues (topics/times by transitional periods)			Total numbers of topics
		Establishment period The movement's recruitment of cadres and setting up of informal & semi-formal Islamic teaching programs	Formation period (1) From YIC establishment to 9/11	Formation period (2) Under the contexts of US global war on terror, Deep South insurgency, and Assalam's formation of networked organisations	
		1992-1997 (6 yrs)	1998-2001 (4 yrs)	2003-2007 (5 yrs)	
1	Islamic belief & the oneness of God (<i>Aqidah & Tawhid</i>)	199	21	81	301
2	Global & local Muslims updates/news	162	33	87	282
3	Social issues	189	29	37	255
4	Islamic rituals (<i>Ibadah</i>)	142	8	21	171
5	Politics	102	10	7	119
6	Women	49	13	27	89
7	Islamic morality & Muslim way of life	61	6	10	77
8	Peace & radicalism	14	1	35	50
9	Family	19	6	22	47
10	Importance of Al-Quran	24	1	5	30
11	Da'wah	12	0	16	28
12	Brotherhood, social solidarity, & disunity	4	2	17	23
13	Mercy (<i>Al-Rahmah</i>)	5	0	16	21
14	Islamic jurisprudence (<i>Fiqh</i>)	9	1	11	21
15	Youth	0	0	7	7
Total numbers of topics		991	131	392	1514

Table 2 Content analysis of Sheikh Rida's sermons

No.	Categories of issues	Frequency of issues (topics/times by transitional periods)			Total numbers of topics
		Beginning period The movement's setting up of teaching programs, ideological cultivation among youths, and setting up of informal groups	Neo-MGP: Establishments of social & media organisations	Formalisation period Since Hijab Nong Chok protest, MPF registration & White Channel establishment	
		1999-2007 (11 yrs)	2008-2011 (4 yrs)	2012-2017 (6 yrs)	
1	Tafseer Al-Quran	179	175	196	550
2	Hadith	161	194	85	440
3	Seasonal rituals	60	27	41	128
4	Social and family	18	62	43	123
5	Islamic jurisprudence (<i>Fiqh</i>)	6	54	47	107
6	Politics	16	39	46	101
7	Analyses of global Muslims' situations	6	38	35	79
8	Islamic belief & the oneness of God (<i>Aqidah & Tawhid</i>)	22	29	18	69
9	Youth	2	11	22	35
10	Women	6	4	7	17
11	Superstition	1	3	8	12
12	Human right & rights of Muslims	3	4	2	9
Total numbers of topics		480	640	550	1670

Agenda-setting process

In general, Asslam and MGP used similar agenda framing methods. First, their supreme leaders – Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida – had an overriding role in producing and shaping the movements’ messages. Second, despite the dominance of the leadership, both men also used consultation mechanisms to discuss how to frame messages. The two movements also used some different ways of framing and producing their agendas before presenting them to the target audience. For the most part Lutfi conceived Assalam’s agenda and consulted on it with senior members in an advisory meeting before introducing new ideas to affiliates or

issuing them to a wider public. His ideas were always unanimously agreed, with very little dissent by the advisory group members.¹⁶⁸

Most of ideas I have proposed have been easily agreed among my colleagues who study together. However, we make it through the consultation process. We have had serious discussions a few times. Some disagreements occurred but not that caused any serious problem. Alhamdulillah (Ar. thank God-All praises belong to Allah), Allah gives them high *siqah* (Ar. belief, trust) in me. Such an obedience is another concern, that it is not easy to find a new leader who is highly accepted and can control unity. Thus, all of proposed ideas have been adopted. This shows our unity. It is also a concern that if I were not here, we might face unity and stability challenges.

The agenda items were also issued to Assalam's affiliates and alliance networks in order to promote each agenda during the same campaign period. For instance, the idea of Islamic moderation or Wasatiyyah was frequently mentioned by Lutfi in his teachings in 2013–14 and became a discourse among Muslim intellectuals from 2014 onwards. This idea was spread through his co-operation with the PSU's College of Islamic Studies and the Office of Sheikhul Islam, including Muslim intellectuals in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Middle East, through a series of seminars and meetings in Bangkok and Pattani. On 20 August 2004, the Wasatiyyah Institute for Peace and Development of Sheikhul Islam Office of Thailand was established with the support by the Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf (Ar. endowment) (*Thairat Online* 2014; Deep South Watch 2014), a key Fatoni University donor. On 26 January 2017, the Thai Foreign Ministry cooperated with the Wasatiyyah Institute for Peace and Development of Sheikhul Islam Office of Thailand and the Centre for Muslim World Policies of Chulalongkorn University to organized a seminar on 'Moderation in the Multicultural Southern Border Provinces of Thailand' in Pattani.

During the confusing conditions of the Deep South's local insurgency and regional terrorism alerts in 2001–03, during which Lutfi was suspected by the security officers and analysts of having connections with both Malay-Muslim

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Ismail Lutfi Japakiya, 20 February 2015.

separatists and the Southeast Asian jihadist network Jema'ah Islamiya (JI), he wrote a book entitled *Islam: The Religion of Peace* (Ismail Lutfi 2001). The book was first written in Arabic and was later translated into Malay, Thai, and English. The Thai edition contained an acknowledgement by the Chularajamontri and the heads of the Islamic Councils in the Deep South. The book did not simply promote peace and the renunciation of violence in Islam, but rather to function as an indirect rejection of the violent acts of those local and regional Muslim fighters, and to establish Lutfi's image of an Islamic peace promoter. To avoid any threats from either the Thai state or the separatists, Lutfi had to strike a balance between disclaiming violence and, at the same time, not antagonizing the separatists.¹⁶⁹ Lutfi and the other Assalam leaders were very reticent about the insurgents. Lutfi never offered any direct criticism or condemnation of those who carried out acts of violence. This strategy was also demonstrated in his Majlis al-Ilmi sermons. For example, on 4 June 2005, under the topic '*Kedua2 Muslim yang berbunuh-bunuhan adalah dalam neraka*' (Ml. Muslims killing each other are in the hellfire.) (*Mingguan Tazkirah 2005* No. 247: 2), Lutfi declared his stance towards the insurgency by merely condemning the killings without mentioning anything about the killers.

The typical processes of Lutfi in producing campaigning ideas were: informally releasing the ideas to the audiences of the Majlis al-Ilmi sermons verbally, and in Jawi leaflets (which has done since since 1992); elevating the ideas by organizing seminars and public lectures together with a more academic document; and ending up by publishing a book, most of which were sent to the Chularajamontri, heads of Islamic Councils, related authorities – such as SBPAC secretary and governors of the Southern border provinces – or other significant Islamic religious leaders. The messages were effective as political manoeuvres to establish his academic standing, introduce his ideas to Islamic elites and Thai authorities, and build relationships with them. However, it is not clear whether those ideological campaigns were successful in making people understand the content. To what extent the ideas were understood or truly adopted by those stakeholders is a different story. There is little evidence that his messages reached

¹⁶⁹ Interviews with Saleh Talek, 13 November 2014; Muhamadnasir Habaye, Director of Assalam Institute, 23 December 2014; Worawidh Baru, 9 December 2014.

the wider Malay Muslim grassroots. The main audience that always paid attention to the launch of new campaign agendas consisted of networks of Assalam members and sympathisers.

Whereas Assalam was successful in using its campaign agendas for domestically and internationally building political networks and convincing well-known figures and major donors to support its projects, MGP was more successful in accessing individual Muslims, including general audience outside the *khana mai*. In other words, it was the ideological strength – not the organisational and political savvy like the Assalam's – that make MGP gained wider public recognition. MGP's agendas were less thematically organised, but were more diverse and somewhat randomly presented to its members and the wider public. However, those agendas were more purposive in urging Muslims' self-rectification of their beliefs and practices and entailed more tangible success in changing the understanding of their cadres and the wider public. The indicators can be clearly seen from its cadres' determined, zealous activism and the constant and massive financial support from general audiences for its projects.

MGP's campaign agendas were predominantly presented through the White Channel. Apart from reflecting MGP's activities and campaign projects, especially regarding Muslim rights protection issues; the campaign agendas aiming at improving Muslims' conditions in accordance with Islamic norms derived from the channel's *Shari'ah* board. The *Shari'ah* board, which included Islamic scholars of the White Channel had weekly meetings to plan, and approve the content to be broadcast and to organise associated events. They thought up the contents by considering topical social issues on the basis of Islamic perspectives and gave broad ideas to the production teams to create suitable media content. Before broadcasting, content had to be approved by the board to ensure it was moral and 'halal' for the audience to consume. Any '*halal*' movie, for example, had to conform to certain criterion set by Sheikh Rida. According to his *fatwa* (Ar. Islamic reasoning), the production of media shown on his channel had to meet following conditions: no musical sound made from instruments, no women (except elderly, unattractive ones) and no immoral or harmful contents. The producer revealed his difficulties under this limit that:

Our Shari'ah board, especially Sheikh Rida, is very strict. They have never allowed the content they see immoral or un-Islamic to be shown on screen. It is hard and challenging for a media worker to produce something morally Islamic and realistic at the same time.¹⁷⁰

To compete with the soap opera dramas presented on other conventional TV channels, and especially to vy for Muslim audiences, White Channel also produced its own series of TV dramas, call '*lakhorn sorn khon*' (Th. Drama teaching people), scheduled to be shown during prime time slots starting from 8.30 pm. In 2012, MGP mobilised 5 million baht through White Channel broadcasts, combined with a million baht from White Channel's investment fund, for the production of constructive media in response to the anti- Islamic film *The Innocence of Muslims* (Imran 2015b, 2015). The film *Ameen* was later produced by hiring leading Thai actors led by Ray McDonald, along with some White Drama actors.

White Channel's *Shari'ah* board made big claims for *Ameen*, hailing it as 'the first halal movie in the world' thanks to its strict production process complying with their framed criteria. Apart from the general rules mentioned above, a more specific limitation was the prohibition for anyone to act as the Prophet. The 'halal' criteria not cover only the production process, but also the screenings. The presentations of the *Ameen* in 2015, were not at cinemas since they typically presented 'haram' movies.¹⁷¹ MGP turned university conference halls, shopping malls, and government agencies into its own cinemas, in which it separated men and women audience members. Some audience members embraced Islam immediately after watching the film (Matichon TV 2015). Mainstream and alternative media – such as Channel 3 TV, Thai PBS, Matichon TV, Manager Online, Isra News, and Prachathai – covered *Ameen* as a new, interesting phenomenon in Thai media that aimed to create understanding between different religions (Abhinan 2015; Imran 2015b; Channel 3 2015a, 2015b; Lekha 2015; Matichon TV 2015; Thai PBS Clip 2015; Thapanee 2015). In 2017, the film '*U-Turn: The Point of Repentance*' hailed by MGP as 'the second halal movie in the world' was produced and screened under the same 'Islamic' criteria. The main story was about the life of

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Bunleng Hassanee, White Channel's film producer. 14 December 2014.

¹⁷¹ Interviews with Sumet Momin 1 April 2015; Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

a Muslim teenager caught up in the mainstream Thai social problem of fighting between student gangs (*U-Turn: Chud klab chai* 2017). Media coverage of this film was slightly greater than for *Ameen*, especially among digital TV channels.

Figure 3 MGP and White Channel's Poster showing Ameen actors and sites for presentation¹⁷²



White Channel's claims to have created halal films, were criticised by some Thai Salafi scholars. Among these were scholars from Yateem TV and Sheikh Rida's previous students, the Assabiqoon group, who criticised the films on the TV Muslim Channel.¹⁷³ Ameen Lorna and Shareef Wongsangiam, who were the leaders of Assabiqoon, broke away from Sheikh Rida in 2013. Their TV programme 'Sewana panha khachai' was broadcast live on TV Muslim Channel of Thailand starting in 2012. This programme provided the main channel for criticism of Sheikh Rida's ideas and projects. In late 2013, the programme broadcast schedule was moved from Thursday night to Wednesday 20.30–22.30, competing with Sheikh Rida's 'Assirat al-Mustaqeem' programme.

White Channel's media adaptations and innovations provided clear evidence of MGP's accommodations in pursuit of mainstream audiences. This kind

¹⁷² Sites of presentation shown in the poster were in Bangkok, Songkhla, Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat in March and May 2015.

¹⁷³ Saeed Pradubiyart, 2016. ภาพยนตร์และละคร ของไวท์ชานแนล ฮะรอมอย่างไร? [*In Thai – In what way are White Channel's film and drama haram?*]. [Online]. [Accessed 25 June 2016]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VR13Jl2G2s>

of adjustment needed an open-minded religious perspective, a flexible interpretation of new contexts and a source of legitimacy in the use of *fatwas* regarding contemporary issues. The clearest example of this accommodation can be seen from what Bunleng's observation that

I don't know how we have come to this point that the degree I have got [BA in Drama, Thammasat University], which was considered haram in the past, became halal today. When I was a student, I remember Sheikh Rida held the perspective that TV is haram, but now he is a director of TV Channel.¹⁷⁴

However, MGP's media ventures were problematic in some respects, which undermined their success in creating accommodation. For example, while Sheikh Rida demarcated the criteria of 'halal' media for the use of his media organisation, he articulated this as a standard for Muslim society. When other media channels, especially from the ones that claimed themselves to be Salafi, organised events or produced media that did not comply with such criteria, he usually criticised them openly through his channels. The issues that provoked most frequent controversy concerned music, segregation of men and women, and showing of women in media. Of the four Muslim TV channels, White Channel and TV Muslim Thailand were most strict in not showing women on their channels. For example, on the White Channel news programme, women exposing their hair or faces were blurred. When women appeared in films or drama shows, they were shown from behind. Only old women (referred to in Al-Quran as *al-qawaidu min an-nisa*) were allowed to be shown on screen. The other two channels, including Yateem TV and TMTV did not comply with this ruling and were always criticised as illegitimate Salafi. Sheikh Rida explained that his criticisms were made against limited targets: only those who claim themselves to be Salafi and criticised other perspectives.¹⁷⁵ Assalam media and events featured women both on screen and on stage but were not openly criticised by Sheikh Rida.

In terms of the role of women in their organisational development and ideological framings, it is clear that men took an overwhelming leading roles over

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Bunleng Hassanee, 14 December 2014.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Rida Ahmad Samadi, 22 April 2015.

women in almost every aspect. This is not surprising for the Salafi-reformist movements. What was interesting is that to what extent women had a role. As for Assalam, the role of women was demarcated by male leaders: they were supposed to focus their activities in the areas of family, youth, and women (CMCP [leaflet], no date; Salihah 2014: 17).¹⁷⁶ Most female leaders and activists were satisfied with this limited role, as they perceived that being queen of the family was an important role requiring great efforts, and their contributions would help improve society and support men to perform other jobs. Within this limited area of activism, they worked in a 'safe zone' and did not have conflict issues with external elements, either from security issues or the *kaum tua-kaum muda* conflict. Despite the leadership of men, women had full rights to design and propose their ideas through the structure of the Assalam Institute.

MGP's women groups, which operated through Banatul Huda, worked in similar a way, but did not have a formalised structure or an extensive network. Their work was based on more strict policies regarding women, as Shiekh Rida held more rigid Salafi stance than Lutfi. For example, while Assalam women did not have any problems in travelling without *mahram* (Ar. an unmarried kin with whom marriage is prohibited), the MGP was very strict about not organising activities in distant locations, unless participants arranged to have *mahram* with them.

Regarding roles of women in society, an interesting point about Assalam was highlighted by McCargo (2008: 26) regarding Lutfi's surprising stance on Muslim women, when he expressed his hope that in future female Muslim graduates of YIU might become provincial governors. Lutfi's position on women assuming leadership roles was strict at the beginning but was later became more moderate. In his Majlis al-Ilmi sermons on 1 July 1995, Lutfi reflected on the jawi weekly booklet "Mingguan Tazkirah" (Weekly admonition) on the Hadith stating that women cannot be in the position of a ruler or *qadi* (Ar. a judge). In 2014, Salihah (2014: 26–27), one of the leading women activists of Assalam, elaborated

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Muhammad Nasir Habaye, 23 December 2014; Focus group, Women Affairs Department, Assalam Institute, 26 February 2015.

on the role of women in government and politics that Muslim women had a right to be a leader of a society on many levels, except the ruler of a state.

Conclusion

Continuing from the previous chapter and again drawing upon social movement literature regarding the three sets of factors in analysing the development of social movements (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996), this chapter has dealt with the mobilising structures and ideological framings of Assalam and MGP. Mobilising structures connote the mechanisms through which people participate in collective action. The broad argument of this chapter is that organisational developments enabled these Islamist movements to open more space for performing Islamic reformist agenda in the two contexts and at the same time shaped them to be more accommodative.

Throughout the first two sections, this chapter sought to answer an important question: How have the Salafi-reformist movements developed their network-based movements? To that end it presented the links between mobilising structure, informal network, and development of formal organisations. With an emphasis on internal organisational strengths, the chapter also drew attention to the significance of political opportunities that both movements utilised in pursuit of opening wider space for their Islamic activism. Alongside their journeys to open up space, they gradually developed cooperation and made alliances with different actors across Muslim society and the Thai polity. More interactions with these actors drew them not only into deeper accommodation with the state, but also into increased contention with other elements of society.

The formalisation of the organisations was a dramatic transition point that allowed both movements to have more interactions with wider elements in the society and thus made them become more accommodated with the Malay-Muslim community (in the case of the Deep South) and the Thai state.

Throughout this chapter, we have seen the theme of Islamic education as a core strength of both movements. It was used by both movements in three ways. Firstly, both movements mobilised resources on the basis of their leaders'

knowledgeability and their educational institutions. Secondly, in the movements' efforts to propagate Islamic reformist agenda, Islamic education functioned as a source of ideological framing and legitimacy among movement members, as well as a producer of Islamic reformist ideas directed to target audience. Thirdly, Islamic knowledgeability, upon which both movements established their presence and authority, allowed them to have interactions with key actors within the contexts of the Thai state and the Malay Muslim society. On this basis, Islamic education factored in the accommodation and the contestation between the movements and those actors.

In the ideological realm, both movements' leaders have framed and legitimised their Islamic reformist ideas by their own scholarship influenced by Salafi ideologies and pedagogy prevailing in the Middle East. They have disseminated such ideas to communities by using their established network-based organisations and religious programme initiatives. The framing of ideologies at the level of local Islam has been developed both inceptively from the essence of the Salafi Islamic scholarship and responsively to contemporary situations occurring in the local and global levels. In the face of social realities, in pursuit of sustaining their network-based organisations, and thanks to their adoption of pragmatic approaches; both movements evidently changed their ideological positions from Salafi scripturalism and puritanism to reformist and modernist context-centric perspectives.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study has examined the adaptation of two Salafi-reformist movements, namely Assalam and the Muslim Group for Peace (MGP), in the context of Thailand's socio-political make-up, which includes a Buddhist majority and centralised state, and a traditionalist Malay Muslim minority. Processes of adaptation and accommodation are challenging because these movements have orthodox socio-religious ideas which can lead to alienation from the mainstream, and so accommodation through pragmatic approaches becomes an essential option for both movements to successfully domesticate their Islamic reformist ideals for a wider target audience and to consolidate their movements.

This study illustrated how these movements emerged in relation to the socio-political realities of the two above-mentioned contexts. On the first level, even though the Thai state offers freedom of religion which is guaranteed by the constitution and can be negotiated through political and judicial systems, it is hostile to cultural and religious entities that have the potential to challenge the supremacy of the national identity known as 'Thainess'. On the second level, the authority of formalised Islamic administrative organisations and the majority of Islamic educational institutions are in the hands of the traditionalist Malay Muslim elites. This Malay Muslim majority (that is, within the Muslim minority of Thailand) are generally part of the *khana kao*, which follows the Shafi'e school of Islamic jurisprudence and long-held local religious-cultural practices. The Salafi and reformist groups, which are best known locally as *khana mai*, are trivial numerically in terms of adherents. Even so, Assalam and MGP have managed to access the middle class, make political connections with some elites, and tend to gain greater support from the grassroots. In their efforts to engage with the Thai authorities and Muslim elites, the trajectory of their relationships with the Thai state so far appears to be cooperative, albeit with a level of distrust. In their relationships with the traditionalists, although they have made more contacts and have been able to lessen levels of suspicion and conflict, contestation is still a distinctive characteristic of their relationship.

In terms of their origins and evolution, Assalam was united in the mid-1980s in the Deep South by different Islamic-oriented groups of Malay Muslim intellectuals and students who had set up groups separately in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Thailand beginning in 1975. MGP was initially an ad-hoc assembly of Thai-speaking Salafi scholars and made its debut in the anti-war protest in front of the US Embassy in Bangkok in 2001. The Deep South in the 1970s and 1980s is the repressive context wherein Assalam operated, whereas Bangkok at the beginning of the twenty-first century provided a relatively open political environment for MGP.

Notwithstanding their differences in time and place of origins, both movements share certain significant characteristics in their evolution and nature of activism. The first salient characteristic is the dependence of the movements on their supreme leaders. Both movements have revolved around spiritual and charismatic religious leaders: Assalam's Dr. Ismail Lutfi Japakiya and MGP's Sheikh Rida Ahmad Samadi. These two leaders – as religious scholars-cum-activists – are noteworthy for their religious knowledge and charisma. These sources of leadership allow the two leaders to have authoritative power and profound influence over each movement. Changes observed in these two movements have been influenced by both leaders' ideational shifts. Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida themselves have been influenced – to different degrees – by the two competing dynamics of Islamic revitalisation: the Salafi and the reformist trends. Salafis exhibit purist, literalist and orthodox methodologies, whilst the reformists are more flexible in engaging interpretation of original Islamic sources in changing social contexts. The extent to which both leaders embrace these orientations affects the behaviour and degree to which their movements engage in processes of accommodation. Both Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida have shown a high degree of reformist orientation, which entails an intense adaptation of their ideas and strategies in the face of socio-political realities.

Both movements exhibit the similar trajectories of organisational development. They have evolved from the religious informal groups organising Islamic teaching and *da'wah* programmes to the socially-engaged movements affiliated by networks of organisations, such as formal educational institutions,

media organisations, Islamic cooperatives, youth groups, and social foundations. Of these organisations, Assalam's Yala Islamic College (YIC) founded in 1997 and MGP's White Channel established in 2012 has had the greatest impact on the evolution of both movements. Since the inception of these two institutions, as well as the subsequent gradual formalisation of other social entities and offshoots, both movements have engaged and interacted more with other elements of society, especially the government sectors and the wider Muslim public. In short, speaking from an organisational perspective, they have transformed from informal groups to formal movements. They have also expanded their roles in providing educational services to social services – all aimed at revitalising Islamic identities.

The leaders of Assalam and MGP gradually changed their respective stances towards the Thai state, moving from unsympathetic to cooperative. At the beginning, both movements' founding generations had somewhat negative perceptions of the Thai state and its politics. In the case of Ismail Lutfi and his colleagues, it is not surprising that they were sceptical about the reliability and stability of political opportunities within the Thai state, owing to their reading of its repressive treatments it had meted out towards southern Malay Muslims in the late 1940s and 1950s. In the case of Sheikh Rida, although he began his activism in Thailand in a relatively open atmosphere, his previous experience with the Egyptian regime shaped his distrust of and biases against state rulers, authorities, and politicians in general. Nevertheless, their subsequent experiences gained from setting up more formal organisations and running other social activities beyond religious teaching programmes have pushed them to make more contact with the state as well as different interest groups. Hence, they have learned new lessons about the political realities within Thailand. Their judgement about Thailand's political structure – not only political limitations, but also the opportunities it offers – has enabled them to see the prospect of cooperating with the state, as well as making use of its infrastructure.

Key findings: Accommodation through Pragmatism

My primary research question focused on the politics of accommodation, examining first how the movements have accommodated Thai political society and

then questioning the extent to which the movements are accommodated by the Thai state. Simply put, the study 1) scrutinises the behaviours and strategies involved in the movements' adaptation and interaction with the environments they encountered; and 2) evaluates the success of their religious and political accommodation.

Pragmatic approaches

Examples of Islamist groups worldwide demonstrate that pragmatism is a key element that makes some groups achieve greater influence than others. Likewise, for Assalam and MGP, whose main efforts have been in consolidating their movements as well as broader Islamic reformist agendas, pragmatism has been a necessary choice. They could not avoid compromising aspects of their Islamic ideals and Salafi practices in the face of political realities. Throughout this thesis, we have seen that both movements have undertaken pragmatic approaches through their organisational strategies and ideological components.

Organisational strategies have been implemented by both movements upon the creation of a 'network-based movement', which encompasses two major steps. Initially, they set up various informal groups aimed at Islamic learning and teaching. Encouraged by Salafi and reformist texts, they later formed other sets of informal groups to translate their self-piety into social reform. In other words, we can see the pattern of *tarbiyah* (religious training and education) evolving into socially engaged organisations. To serve various social reform purposes, different groups were gradually set up in an ad-hoc and practical sense and lacking a proper form of organisation. Surprisingly, many determined cadres started their career-cum-activism in movement organisations with low levels of skill and knowledge, but they have enabled the organisations to survive and achieve professionalism through the creation of media organisations, cooperatives, and different social foundations.

In the second phase, when they have gained more technical skills and experience, many groups tended to transform into formal organisations. This formalisation was also a dramatic transition point for Assalam and MGP. It took place primarily because of the instincts of the leaders, who believed that the

political conditions were relatively open and thus offered reliable legal and political protection for them to establish formal organisations. Second, they reasoned that overt organisations representing different commitments as part of their wider Islamic activism would help them to gain wider public support and would make their activism more effective.

In terms of ideological components, despite the fact that both movements were initially impelled by negative causes regarding the poor conditions of Muslims, they have positively framed and adjusted their ideologies to fit into changing contexts. The Salafi and Islamic reformist ideas they adopted from a global level have been adjusted by their interpretation of domestic and local contexts. This study has shown that their religious stances and worldviews on contemporary issues have moved from a narrow rigidity of scriptural literalist interpretations influenced by the hard-line Salafi orientation to a more open perspective shaped by the Islamic reformist orientation, that is, from textual centrism to contextual engagement. Put differently, they have loosened their purist fundamentalist stance and adopted notions of religious pluralism. This pragmatic approach has led them to become accommodative not only behaviourally, but also ideationally.

Guided by the literature on social movements and Islamic activism, this thesis explained the Salafi-reformist movements' accommodation into Thailand's socio-political contexts through an empirical analysis of their historical background and evolution, as well as organisational and ideological adaptation. The investigation focused on factors related to the development of social movements including the structure of political constraints and opportunities, mobilisation and organisational strategies, and ideological framing processes and strategies (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996).

Structure of political constraints and opportunities

As chronicled in the historical background chapter, the birth and growth of Assalam and MGP was influenced by different structural constraints and opportunities in Thailand and the broader Muslim world. In a nutshell, both movements are products of their environments. I have argued that structural

constraints were a crucial trigger for both movements' ideologies and activism. Their strategies and behaviours were essentially limited, pressured, and shaped by the dynamics in the political constraint and opportunity structures they were embedded in.

Assalam and MGP were influenced by structural dynamics through three phases. Firstly, in the inception phase, their first thoughts of activism were impelled by the sufferings of Muslims in different contexts. Assalam was initially spurred to action due to the domestic context, where Malay Muslims suffered harsh treatment at the hands of the Thai state, while MGP resented western powers over the increasing Muslim casualties in the United States' so-called 'war on terror' in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as broader frustration over the Palestinian issue. Secondly, in the phase of Islamic ideological framing, they were both influenced by the dynamics of Salafism and Islamic reformism popular between the 1970s and 1990s around the Islamic world. These ideological dynamics also had strategic and behavioural impacts on their activism. Salafism shaped their literalist positions in religious practice as well as their awareness of what was considered legitimate methods of activism, while reformism offered alternative *ijtihad* and *fatwas* that underlined the importance of contextual interpretation and adoption of modernity. The Islamic modernist position later became a crucial ideological asset that shaped their progressive thinking and pragmatic adaptations in the third phase. Throughout the third phase, which started from their encounter with the new environment in Thailand after their leaders had returned from abroad, pragmatic approaches were evident both in terms of their ideas and strategies they adopted. Constraints emanating from social realities and political opportunities caused substantial, albeit gradual, ideological shifts. Parallel with these shifts was an adoption of modern innovative methods – such as radio broadcasts, websites, TV channels, news agencies, events and films using state-of-the-art audio visual production techniques, which were by then unfamiliar to many Salafi and *khana kao/kaum muda* traditions.

In recent times Assalam has been viewed as a distinct cult from the majority of traditionalist Malay Muslims and has continued attempts to propagate the global Salafi and Islamic reformist ideas to those in mainstream, although its founders had

originally emanated from the domestic conditions and shared the same grievance with the senior Malay Muslim elites. The pioneers of Assalam originated in the context of Malay Muslims' grievances towards the Thai state's repressive and assimilationist policies between the 1940s and the 1950s. Against this backdrop, they were initially inclined towards ethno-nationalist separatist ideologies which sprang up beginning in the late 1950s. These domestic repressive dynamics forced them to formulate activism through education with an aim of improving the condition of Malay Muslims. Nevertheless, educational experiences in Middle Eastern and South Asian countries between the 1960s and early 1980s influenced these leaders in their adoption of Salafism and Islamic reformist ideals. The sources of these ideas were classic and contemporary Islamic texts, university curriculum, and contacts with Islamic activists.

In the 1980s and 1990s the Thai state seemed committed to democratisation and implemented administrative and security policies that showed sensitivity to Malay Muslims grievances. Ismail Lutfi and his colleagues had graduated from Islamic institutions abroad and decided to define their activism as one of a struggle for identity in their motherland. Their decision to face the Thai state from within their homeland, rather than station themselves abroad like other separatist movements, was largely determined by the prospect of political openness expressed by the Thai government. Fostered by Wan Nor Matha and Seni Madakakul, the two successful Malay Muslim educationist-cum-politicians, Yala Islamic College was established in 1997. From this pragmatic decision, the accommodation of Assalam began and developed in parallel with their measured hope of political opportunities. Within this structure, we have seen their greater integration into Thai society through the pragmatic use of various political instruments.

MGP, by contrast, emerged within the global Salafi-reformist context in the Middle East, particularly Egypt and Saudi Arabia. With the centrality and influential leadership of Sheikh Rida over MGP, its evolution primarily changed based on his experiences. On this basis, MGP in the first two phases was highly influenced by three contextual dynamics: Salafi-reformist methodologies, the repressive exertion of authoritarian Arab regimes against Islamist oppositions and grievances over the

suffering of the Muslim *ummah* from violence in Muslim countries to controversial cases against Islam.

Although Sheikh Rida learned from Salafi groups in Egypt, he increased his experiences of Islamic activism amidst the contestation between Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1990s. The former was generally apolitical and quietist towards the Mubarak regime, whereas the latter had been suppressed by the regime and sat on an oppositionist and critical stance towards the government. Sheikh Rida developed discontent with Salafism's unsympathetic position and intangible solutions towards problems facing the *ummah*, as well as the tendency for Arab authoritarian regimes to suppress Islamic scholars and activists who 'crossed the line' of acquiescence. Having Salafi origins while sympathising with other reformist socio-political perspectives, Sheikh Rida's ideological orientation was in line with that of typical Islamic reformists. The literature on Islamism has shown that most contemporary Islamic reformist thinkers and movements underlined Muslim negligence of Islamic teachings and the external threats from western encroachment as the main causes of the distress of the Muslim *ummah*. Similarly, most of the MGP's teachings and activities during the period of inception frequently emphasised the return to authentic sources of Islam inherited by *al-salaf al-salih* (the pious predecessors) to preserve Islam, revive the *ummah*, and struggle against westernisation. As evident in his sermons, these three dynamics made Sheikh Rida become assertive about the preservation of 'pristine' Islam, as well as antagonistic to rulers and authorities, and very emotional about the suffering of Muslims.

In the third phase Sheikh Rida became much more accommodative thanks to the more permissive political environment in Thailand. His return to Thailand in the late 1990s coincided with the 1997 'People's Constitution' and the openness of political systems and proliferation of social movements. His movements had more frequent interactions with the state and other Muslims outside the *khana mai*. The MGP's persistence in using peaceful protest as one of its main methods of activism since inception signifies Sheikh Rida's perspective on using the opportunities offered in a democratic system and open political environment. His greater experience and understanding of Thai society and politics influenced Sheikh Rida

to become less rigid in his Salafi stance and adopt a more flexible reformist approach, which enabled him as well as his movement to better integrate themselves into the wider plural society and to deal with social realities.

To sum up, the conflicting features of political closure and openness within the Thai state have resulted in both movements' accommodative move, albeit with a subtle degree of scepticism remaining. However, it seems that changes in the Thai political environment alongside its democratisation and decentralisation processes during the late 1980s and 1990s allowed both movements' leaders to identify positive prospects and to seize political opportunities. The fact that both formalised their movements in the same period, despite setting up in different places, serves as proof of this structural influence.

Mobilisation and organisational strategies

As shown in Chapter 5, particular organisational strategies have enabled Assalam and MGP to consolidate their movements and disseminate their ideologies more effectively. Those strategies are considered pragmatic owing to both movements' use of their limited potential and opportunities in accordance with the different conditions they faced at different times. Assalam and MGP shared apparent strategies of mobilisation and organisational management, which I call 'network-based movements'.

Both movements deployed their core strengths in Islamic education, which derived from their respective leaders' knowledge and credentials, to recruit members, mobilise capital resources, draw public recognition, and gain support from different governments. The Islamic teaching programmes by Dr. Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida became integral parts of both movements' religious legitimacy and served as the main ideological sources for their cadres and followers. Their messages have been internally circulated among members and externally transmitted to the public in different forms, such as public lectures, printing and audio-visual media, and *halaqahs*. These teaching and learning programmes functioned as an ideational conveyer but were insufficient to mobilise resources for activism. Therefore, different types of organisations were formed within the movements with the hope of mobilising resources and sustaining new members.

Both movements have developed various types of affiliations which aligned with their different internal and external conditions throughout their evolution. At the outset, in which they had limited numbers within the *khana mai/kaum muda* mass base, they created informal groups to organise Islamic teaching-learning programmes to impart reformist messages while at the same time to cultivate ideologies among potential recruits. These informal groups of cadres were embedded and mixed in the individual network of followers. In the case of Assalam, its initial informal groups – JPIP (est. 1977) and MAJDA (est. 1980) were clandestine due to the repressive political environment. When their cadres and followers increased, both Assalam and MGP enlarged their movements by creating more working groups to access a wider mass base and expand their role to be more socially engaged. The basic idea of setting up various organisations is to assign the right job to the right organisation.

The most crucial step that enabled both movements to become more secure and consolidated is the formalisation of organisations. This step gradually took place after they had gained more experience from organisational development in parallel with encountering challenges from political structures and social realities. As for Assalam, the ‘toughest lesson’ that encouraged their leaders to open up their movement was the ambiguous security situation between 2002 and 2005, during which the combined US counterterror policy in Southeast Asia and the Deep South insurgency in Thailand saw security agencies suspect that they too were associated with the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). After that period, when the Thai state realised that the Assalam and MGP movements were non-violent, they began to consolidate through creation of formalised organisations and associations. Based on this formalised network-based movement, Assalam has consistently cooperated with the Thai state by increasing their connections with Thai bureaucratic and political elements. In the case of MGP the idea was to establish political and media instruments after encountering set-backs in their campaign and protest efforts in 2011–12 over the Wat Nong Chok School hijab ban. Since then a formalisation process has begun, such as the registration of MGP as the ‘Muslim for Peace Foundation’ in 2012 and the establishment of White Channel TV in 2012 and the Party for Peace in 2013. In addition, both movements also strengthened the status

of other informal groups by registering them as a foundation, an association, a professional organisation, a cooperative, and a company.

Under the supervision of senior leaders and Islamic scholars, key cadres that drove the movements' activities and reform were young modernists. New recruitment focused on youth. Of the general audience that attended their teaching and learning programmes, those who were identified as having morality, manners, and comprehension of the movements' ideological message of Islamic *da'wah* activism tended to be recruited to the movement as cadres. At the outset, Assalam's cadres were comprised of students in Islamic studies. Many of them later became *ustaz* teaching in Islamic private schools. Since the mid-1980s, some *ustaz* gained access to university campuses in the Deep South and recruited students from different subjects including the sciences. These modernist cadres later played a pivotal role in creating formal and professional organisations. On the other hand, MGP's initial cadres were mostly students from universities in Bangkok (beginning in the early 2000s). Only a few of these had educational backgrounds from formal Islamic education institutions. Many of them joined MGP's affiliations either as paid staff or volunteers after learning about Islam from Sheikh Rida's programmes, while others were first attracted to activism and attended lessons only later.

Apart from the openness of the Thai political environment, which functioned as a structural opportunity that allowed both movements to formalise their organisations in the same period, another significant factor is the modernist element, something which functioned as an organisational strength. Assalam's mature and modernist cadres played key roles in developing social and economic organisations to serve communities and restructure networks of affiliations into formal movement organisations. MGP's young modernist cadres with a determined ideology were versatile and able to become professionals in any and all jobs required for the movement's activism to be successful. For example, those who worked for radio programmes, TV channels, Islamic cooperatives, and Muslim rights protection projects did not have professional knowledge and skills when the movement had first begun.

In terms of capital resource mobilisation, charity has been a main income stream that Assalam and MGP have used to support their activism. Despite striving

to be self-reliant by creating Islamic cooperatives and business mechanisms, both movements nonetheless also relied on diverse sources of income. Assalam has received a large amount of funding from private and governmental sectors in the Middle East, for example, for the construction and administration of Fatoni University ever since its establishment, while MGP relied on domestic donations from their mass base and the audience of the White Channel.

Ideological framing processes and strategies

Changes in strategies and behaviours reflect changes in ideas and thoughts. As already discussed, the ideologies of Assalam and MGP were influenced by constraints in different contexts and were largely shaped by the Thai political environment. Based on arguments about structural influence, both movements' ideological accommodation also depended on their pragmatic ideological strategies. Ideological pragmatism can be seen in their ideological framing and domestication, discussed below.

In terms of ideological framing, both movements have constructed their Islamic reformist ideas and thoughts for activism from the hybridisation of Salafism and reformism, especially *ikhwanism*, as well as in combination with their interpretation and re-interpretation of domestic socio-political realities. Ideological change has shown that while structural factors have a strong impact on the movements' evolution, the ideational strength of both movements' supreme leaders also show the power of their religious legitimacy in proposing new socio-religious ideas to the public. The agential factors embodied in the leadership of Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida are also equally crucial in making both movements accommodative.

Typical issues stressed by mainstream Salafis remain integral parts of both movements' rhetoric and activities. The significant issues here comprise of exalting *tawhid* (the oneness of God), strictly following the Quran and Sunnah as critical norms, eradicating and avoiding *bid'ah* (innovation of religious ritual), and conducting activism via moral and *halal* methods. The degree of flexibility and rigidity in taking these stances varies depending upon the authenticity of hadith and the reliability of relevant *fatwa* in particular issues in relation to the adoption

of reformist perspectives and the necessity of situations that require *shari'ah* compromises. Adjustments of both movements' ideologies have largely depended on the decision of their supreme leaders. Their choosing of *fatwa* (rulings) from renowned *ulama* tended to be the ones that are context-specific and less rigidly literalist.

According to the rigid Salafi perspective, which is influential in Saudi Arabia, this relaxation of idealistic stances can be judged as illegitimate. However, it is not a baseless interpretation in an Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Rather, it is based on other alternative reliable methods of *ijtihad* (interpretation by Islamic jurists) mostly adopted by Salafi-reformist scholars, such as the Sahwis and Sururi in Saudi Arabia, who contend that Islam is a blueprint for social and political engagement with the contemporary world. Along the spectrum of Islamic ideological orientations, the alignment that the Assalam and MGP movements have taken can be considered a moderate one, considering the evidence of the evolution of their ideas and practices over time.

In terms of the domestication of ideology, although both movements adopted the Salafi-reformist ideology from contemporary scholars and movements in the Islamic world, the adjustment and implementation of those ideas have been critical and independent alongside the scrutiny of local Thai realities. Despite being strongly criticised by other Thai Salafi scholars, Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida have been widely recognised among *khana mai/kaum muda* communities, especially in the Upper South and the Deep South. Both leaders have issued campaign policies to be implemented by their cadres and disseminated to their followers and the wider public through their affiliations, media channels and social events. Many policies were combined and adapted between a prescription of Islamic texts and an analysis of the real problems facing Muslims in Thailand. This new style of practical Islamic messaging became a key strength that attracted a wider mass base from the grassroots, young people, intellectuals, and middle-class Muslims. For instance, MGP's ideological messages and Islamic teaching in relation to social problems has been innovatively presented through movies, films, and *anasheed* (Islamic song). All were produced within the limitations prescribed in Islamic rules

and it was always stressed that these were *halal* and made under the supervision of White Channel's Shari'ah board.

The most pragmatic ideological adjustment that framed the whole body of both movements' activism is that they both demarcated their activism within the framework of a Muslim minority in a *dar al-salam* (abode of peace), as opposed to *dar al harb* (abode of war). This is an important distinction. As with other typical Islamists and Salafis, the application of *shari'ah* law has always been a stated goal for both movements. However, within this framework of a Muslim minority in Thailand, the leaders of Assalam and MGP determined that the *shari'ah* should be adjusted to appear more friendly, for instance by showing flexibility when encountering state law in Thailand, and to promote activities that are beneficial to the whole of society, not only to Muslims. Creating an ideal or pure Islamic state is unrealistic according to their leaders' perspectives.

Successful accommodation?

As mentioned in Chapter 2, accommodation as a concept for describing the Salafi-reformist movements does not connote a comprehensive solution. Rather, it can be an aim, a strategy, behaviour, or an evolving process. The term accommodation does not only mean the behaviours and strategies that the movements performed in their interactions with other elements in Thai society, but also includes the patterns of adaptation as Assalam and MGP attempt to fit their movements into local and national contexts while transmitting Islamic reformist messages to the society. Accommodation also entails how the movements attempt to compromise with the state, and vice versa, while appealing to specific target audiences as well as the wider public. The success (or otherwise) of accommodation largely depends on the idealistic thoughts and aims held by the movements and the patterns and results of their attempts to locate, implement, or transmit those ideals into local Thai contexts.

While most studies of Islamist change scrutinise behavioural and ideological dimensions, I have incorporated an organisational dimension, as suggested by Ashour (2009a), to make a comprehensive analysis of accommodation. Hence, the evaluation of the extent to which the Assalam and MGP

have successfully domesticated their ideas and movements into Thailand's polity and Malay Muslim society involves three levels of analysis: behavioural, ideological, and organisational. These three levels of analysis were applied to accommodation, and were examined together with the observation of responses from the Thai state and Malay Muslim society. Internally, Assalam seems to be successful at all three levels, whereas MGP has achieved the behavioural and ideological dimensions it has exhibited some failures in its organisational elements. With respect to the external level, the data collected in this thesis is insufficient to offer a complete judgement of accommodation. My observations in Thailand over many years suggest that there has been a significant degree of distrust in the relationship between movements such as Assalam and MGP and the Thai state, as well as a strong sense of contestation in their interactions with traditionalist Muslim elites.

In terms of strategic and behavioural dimensions, Assalam and MGP have shown major adaptations to their strategies, which were highly influenced by the adoption of reformist-modernist perspectives. This modernist orientation allowed them to use innovative methods that are familiar with and attractive to a wider target audience and society. It is significant that both movements favoured social pluralism. However, in the case of MGP, while it has been willing to compromise and appeal to the wider public, as well as the Thai authorities and the *khana kao* elites, Sheikh Rida appeared to be intolerant of and critical toward the rigidity of the purist Salafis. This can be considered a failure to maintain an accommodative behaviour, not with respect to the wider contexts, but to his ex-internal network.

I also identified innovations in preaching methods, including the propagating of unfamiliar agendas to society, and the demanding of Muslim rights. For instance, MGP have excelled in media production of news, television programmes, songs, movies, and films – all produced to a high, professional standard. This required a substantial compromise between an assertion to maintaining *halal* methods and using modern innovative tools to create content that is attractive to audiences. Assalam has been skilful in creating alliances with politicians, authorities and elites to develop its modern educational institutions and social outreach organisations. One of the observable indicators is the

development of its relationship with the state. At the beginning of a new round of insurgency in 2004, as well as the murky influence of JI in Southeast Asia, Lutfi's movement was suspected by security agencies; however, today he is recognised as an Islamic peace builder, often approached by the army and SBPAC when they seek to access the Muslim masses and in tackling separatism. Many of Assalam and Fatoni University's projects have been well recognised and supported by local government agencies and army units. The privy councillor and ex-prime minister General Surayud Chulanont's frequent presence at Assalam events is another indicator of political recognition by the Thai state. Fatoni University Council is also chaired by Wan Nor Matha, another prominent political figure. Multi-directional alliance making, especially the balancing between Thaksin's network and the network monarchy, is perhaps the best demonstration of its political strategy.

The Assalam and MGP movements demonstrated their tolerance in the face of challenging issues by responding through media and political instruments rather than violence. For instance, in parallel with organising a peaceful protest against the anti-Islamic film *The Innocence of Muslims*, the MGP produced *Ameen*, a movie to provide counter information to the wider Thai public. However, the use of new media, the composing of songs, and the production of moral movies for the preaching of Islam raises questions of *halal/haram* (lawfulness) and has been criticised and challenged by some purist Salafi scholars. Assalam has promoted the concept of *Ummah Wahidah* (one nation) initiated by Ismail Lutfi as means of compromise and reconciliation between different groups of people within Muslim society and with other religions. For example, Lutfi was appointed as a co-chairman of Thailand's Inter-Religious Council. However, these strategies have been launched with careful interpretation of Islamic texts by the movements' leaders and have continued to raise questions about religious legitimacy in the eyes of some Salafi scholars who were in the same network. Although Assalam and MGP have successfully expanded their movement and have received greater public recognition, their growing popular base has also created tensions with *khana kao/kaum muda* elites.

In terms of the ideological dimension, both Assalam and MGP exhibited substantial change and adaptation of their ideas, which again ranged between the

Salafi and reformist positions, as well as between idealistic and pragmatic thinking. As for the Salafi-reformist spectrum, both movements stressed the importance of Islamic purity as well as the renewal of Islamic original practices. However, in recent years and especially after the organisational development period both movements softened their rigid Salafi interpretations and adopted alternative *fatwa* that contradicted mainstream purist Salafi attitudes. The aim was to make religion easier for people to practice in daily life and within the context of a plural society. However, according to their purist opponents, this was illegitimate flexibility employed merely in pursuit of accessing a wider mass base.

As regards the idealistic-pragmatist spectrum, the most significant commonalities between Assalam and MGP is their framework for activism called 'civil Muslim minority' versus an idealistic notion of establishing an Islamic state (*dawlah al-Islamiyyah*) as well as their advocacy of *shari'ah* implementation. The first notion reflects an evolutionary (as opposed to revolutionary) approach. It is the means to creating an Islamic society within a pluralistic political society. While many mainstream Salafis and reformists, especially the young generations dream of an idealised Islamic state, experienced Assalam and MGP leaders and cadres have presented a pragmatic and realistic perspective of being good citizens and negotiating their rights to practice Islam through peaceful and democratic means. Aside from their efforts to preserve their own Muslim minority rights, they have also made their activism contribute to the common good, which is part of their notion of performing *da'wah* and behaving as *khaira ummah* (best nation) as necessary to showing mercy to all mankind (*rahmatan lil alameen*). The rhetoric given in interviews, party documents and in their activities presented through Assalam and MGP's media, as well as the cooperation and projects they initiated in relation to the Thai state, have somewhat confirmed the dual dimensions of ideational and behavioural accommodation.

The advocacy of *shari'ah* implementation, which might be perceived as a threat in many parts of Thailand, can be considered as accommodative when it is proposed through legislative and parliamentary procedures or has been peacefully advocated for in the media, through civil society and academic sectors. Ismail Lutfi and FTU scholars of *shari'ah* actively supported the proposal of a Shari'ah Bill

through the Ministry of Justice. Sheikh Rida also articulated the same position, but proposed implementation in the whole country, not only in the Deep South. This stance was declared as one of the policies presented by his Party for Peace, at the inception of the party, and during the abortive general election of 2014.

In terms of organisational dimensions, this thesis scrutinises the success of Assalam and MGP's accommodation by focusing on two main patterns: the extent to which organisational mechanisms enabled the movements to become accommodated, and the movements' success in controlling and convincing their individual members and affiliations to agree and behave in line with their leaderships' accommodative ideologies and strategies.

Considering the use of organisational tools to achieve accommodation, the network-based movements have helped both the leaders and their members reach out to the Thai state, the Malay Muslim elites and the grassroots quite effectively. For example, regular donations to White Channel's monthly expenses for a satellite transponder, the construction of a permanent headquarters (an office building), and other ad hoc charity projects have demonstrated that a large number of donors and supporters are from the grassroots and non-*khana mai* audiences. Domestic donations to Assalam were primarily from its *kaum muda* mass base, and many of them were from the middle classes. Assalam's effective use of organisational strategies appears in its formalisation of the movement by registering or transforming different groupings of activists within the movement into associations and professional networks of different categories such as Islamic education, Islamic cooperatives, women's wings, student wings, graduate alumni, and those focused on social work and Islamic relief. FTU's Assalam Institute also set up 11 branches in the Deep South, the Upper South, and Bangkok to link the university with social activities. These formal groupings functioned to keep their alumni and members inside the network of activism and as part of their broad community outreach mechanisms.

The authoritative power of the supreme leaders of Assalam and MGP is one of the key factors that determines the level of obedience of subordinate members and affiliated groups. Both Dr. Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida have predominant power over each movement. Ismail Lutfi has efficiently controlled all components

of Assalam – notwithstanding some disagreements over his decisions, such as those concerning some trivial administrative issues – and there has been no serious challenge to his leadership. This is because in a repressive environment, the recruitment of members was done exclusively and very carefully, so most of the recruits were reliable enough to respect seniors and to be submissive to the movements' ideology and code of conduct. Moreover, Assalam also benefited from its alliance-building with other elements, including other groups of purist Salafis, Malay Muslim elites and administrative institutions, and some elements from Thai intellectuals and authorities.

The MGP by contrast has always been more self-reliant. It has consolidated through the determination of a group of versatile youth, despite their lack of experience and their relatively poor economic status. Many of the MGP alliances broke down due to disagreements with Sheikh Rida over administrative or ideological issues, but the MGP always managed to continue operating and expand. Sheikh Rida has proven to be adept at inspiring people morally, and has been good at convincing people to dedicate themselves to *tham ngarn sadsana* (to undertake Islamic activism), although he has been less successful in maintaining authority over subordinates and preserving broader alliances. The reasons for this failure are his inclusive and flexible methods of recruitment, lack of mature organisational culture and a code of conduct which can compel people to be loyal to the movement, but also his assertive and strong-willed personality – especially in support of what is perceived as right and moral, versus wrong and evil. In parallel with the repeated network splits that took place, the MGP continually recruited new cadres and alliances and had continual achievements in their projects and at mobilising people. This is especially true of the massive financial support they receive from White Channel's audience. Relying on clear 'morally correct' methods, backed by determined and versatile cadres, and with support from a mass base, MGP has been successful overall despite organisational setbacks and uncertain alliances.

One of the major failures for Sheikh Rida and the MGP was its inability to maintain their Salafi network of scholars, students, as well as a core group of the followers. Conflict between Sheikh Rida and his rigid Salafi students has created

internal Salafi divisions in the *khana mai* community. While the MGP has become accommodative to the wider public by softening its stance on contemporary social and religious issues, it risks further alienating the rigid purist-centric members.

Contributions

The literature on Islamic fundamentalism and orthodoxy has developed greatly since 1990s, from the somewhat simplistic focus on violent radical dimensions to more critical and diverse perspectives. Yet this discipline still requires systematic research to offer a greater understanding, both conceptually and empirically. This thesis aims to be part of such a development.

At the early stage of this research I struggled with various terminologies, definitions, and typologies regarding Islamic religious-based actors and ideas, of which 'Islamism' is amongst the most popular terms. Islamism was insufficient conceptually to comprehensively cover the dynamic actors in different regions, but also in terms of how best to connect the Thai domestic context with the mainstream Islamist literature without losing the uniqueness of local elements. In other words, it is challenging for this study to impose a mainstream terminology on the unique Islamist movements that exist in Thailand, and to explain those local elements in a comprehensible way to readers in the wider discipline. Working with these conflicting aims, an intensive study of concepts related to Islamist movements has been done in parallel with an assessment of the empirical findings derived from the study. A review of the literature on Islamism, Islamic activism and Islamic social movement theory, and Thai Muslim politics more generally has been combined with data gathered through semi-structured interviews and participant observation in order to offer insights into the nature of the Islamic faith-based movements in Thailand.

Empirical contributions

This thesis has provided three major empirical contributions based on two case studies that speak to broader issues of Islamism and Salafism. First, while recent studies have focused on the roles and ideologies of Dr. Ismail Lutfi (Liow 2009a, Aryud 2014) and Sheikh Rida (Amporn 2016) at individual and structural levels,

this thesis is the only study that examines their political dynamics by looking at this from the organisational unit of analysis perspective, thus combining analysis of individual, ideological, and structural influences on accommodation. Although the key findings of this thesis reinforce the centrality of Ismail Lutfi and Sheikh Rida's leadership, as found in other studies, it also suggests that organisational dynamics were instrumental in their activism and ideological achievement.

Second, this thesis has identified the initial ideological link and break between Lutfi's group and the Malay ethno-nationalists, whereas many studies have viewed him and his group as being isolated from the broader political and cultural contexts of Malay Muslims. I have shown that the origins and evolution of Assalam is not a separate phenomenon from the general history of struggle for the Malay Muslims living in the Thai state. While Assalam has been viewed as a Salafi group tied with universal Islam and a transnational *ummah*, I have observed and discussed their sense of Malayness and sympathy towards their local Malay Muslim brothers in many points of this thesis.

Third, this thesis is the first study that has distinguished between purist and reformist elements within *khana mai*. It has also illustrated ideational influences of these competing Islamic ideological terrains manifested in Assalam and the MGP. This thesis has also offered a new construction of Islamist terminology, which combines Salafi and reformist. Although Lutfi graduated from an Islamic university, which is known as being under the influence of the Wahabi creed, simply describing Lutfi as Salafi or Wahabi is misleading. Empirical observations and literature on Islamism have shown that there is a spectrum of internal Salafi differences worldwide, as well as in Saudi Arabia, where the Salafi-Wahabi trend is dominant. Distinctions here lay in different interpretations of context and the degree of rigidity and literalism they apply when accessing core texts. The difference is clearly down to the influence of reformist ideals.

Conceptual contributions

Upon the literature of Islamic activism, Islamism, and Thai Muslim politics, I have developed significantly three conceptual frameworks that adequately addresses Assalam and the MGP's ideological, organisational, and behavioural dimensions.

The three concepts are: network-based movement, Salafi-reformism, and accommodation. Two of these terms, Salafi-reformism (Ramadan 2004) and accommodation (Scupin 1998; McCargo 2008), were indeed introduced earlier by some influential authors, but none has engaged in sufficient conceptual explanation. These two terms have scarcely been used by subsequent studies in the related literature. By using and advancing these two concepts as analytical tools, this research claims to offer conceptual contributions to the literature of Islamism, Islamic activism and Thai Muslim politics.

As for 'network-based movement', which I merely employ to highlight the network form of organisation as a salient feature of the chosen case studies, I do not claim this as a conceptual novelty. I have developed it based upon the literatures of social movement theory and Islamic activism, which are rich enough to cover or capture the network aspects of social movements or social movement organizations.

From an organisational dimension, this thesis has highlighted that the term 'movement' is not sufficient to comprehend an association; that is composed of networks of various organisations. On top of that, the internal links within and between these movements are complicated, interdependent, and too ambiguous to identify a membership boundary or claim that all elements are cohesive within a unitary movement. The the notion of network-based movement best captures the idea of an association that consists of various groups of affiliations working within the same set of ideologies, including external groups of supportive alliances that are associated with the movement but not necessarily having a direct affiliation with the movement. Non-member sympathisers, followers, or supporters also make contributions to the movements and need to be accounted for in this type of movement. By having this overarching demarcation of a movement, this thesis can claim to have contributed to a more solid analytical framework for grasping the complicated nature of 'movements'. This approach enables me to explain why two small groups of Islamic scholars and students of *khana mai/kaum muda* with a limited number of members (approximately 3,000) have successfully presented their ideas to a large number of *khana kao/kaum tua*, or the mass base.

In an ideological dimension, this research was initially compelled by its preliminary empirical findings to seek a more specific category of Islamist movements other than the mainstream terminologies currently on offer and which were too broad, vague and generally problematic in that they were unable to capture the nature of Assalam and the MGP. Having been influenced by both Salafism and Islamic reformism – the two competing ideological alignments connoting conservative purist and progressive reformist orientations – these movements are termed in this thesis ‘Salafi-reformist’ movements. This term, despite being scarcely used in the Islamist literature, entails a clear manifestation of the ideological nuances and dynamics within Islamist politics. The precise aspects that are covered in the term ‘Salafi-reformist’ is presented through a conceptual discussion (Chapter 2) together with empirical evidence (Chapters 4 and 5), allowing this thesis to offer a new conceptual terminology needed to study Islamic faith-based movements as an alternative to an array of related prevailing concepts, such as Islamic fundamentalism, Islamism, Islamic reformism and revivalism, Salafism, and Wahhabism.

In discussions of the behavioural dimension of these movements, which refers mainly to the change of Islamist movements, the literature can be broadly classified into two contradicting trends involving radicalisation and de-radicalisation. The definitions and analytical tools emanating from these concepts are insufficient to describe the changes within Assalam and the MGP because the points of origin, means, and ends of these movements are rather unique. In the related literature, studies of Islamist movements in Egypt (Wickham 2013) and Indonesia (Machmudi 2008) use the term accommodation to frame the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Indonesian Jamaah Tarbiyah and PKS’s transition in relation to specific political realities. In the literature of Muslim politics in Thailand, the evolution and adaptation of *khana mai/kaum muda* reformist groups in the past (Scupin 1998) and present (McCargo 2008) have been described via the notion of ‘accommodation’. Nonetheless, despite offering useful explanations of the Salafi-reformist groups in Thailand through such terminology, no study has offered a solid conceptual framework for future research.

In reference to 'moderation theory' (Schwedler 2006), which is another related concept emanating from the same conceptual terrain as the above studies, the empirical evidence chronicled throughout this thesis has also strengthened the hypothesis of inclusion and moderation in term of the adaptation of the Islamist movement with respect to the political conditions. This concept suggests that the more open and inclusive a structure is, the more likely that Islamist actors will moderate their behaviours and ideologies (Schwedler 2006: 13-18). This also reflects the explanation offered by the notion of 'opportunity structure' in social movement theory. In some respects, my discussion of Assalam and MGP's accommodation can be read as a test case for Schwedler's inclusion-moderation hypothesis, which measures an increase in moderation as a result of political inclusion.

Limitations, Implications, and Future Trends

This thesis has answered the question of how and to what extent Assalam and the MGP have successfully adapted to Thailand's socio-political contexts by comprehensively examining different dimensions of these movements. To reiterate, the answer to the 'how' part of the question comprises three levels of analysis: socio-political structures, organisational strategies, and ideological strategies. The attempt to evaluate these movements' accommodation successes by addressing the 'to what extent' part of the question necessitated that I scrutinised ideological, behavioural/strategic, and organisational dimensions. Despite such rigorous analytical methods to address the dual-purpose research question, there are still three relevant points beyond this thesis' scope that can be pursued by future research.

First, this primary research question does not cover the full scope of accommodation. As mentioned from the outset of this research, accommodation connotes an aim, a strategy/behaviour, or a process. This thesis has fulfilled the first two aspects, but has not exhaustively covered the *process* part. Accommodation is a process of interaction that encompasses a two-way effort, but this thesis is a largely one-way study of the respective efforts of the two movements. The reactions of other relevant actors, as important stakeholders,

have not been adequately investigated. Only a few interviews of related figures from the Thai state and Malay Muslim elites were conducted. These sources offered subtle data to understand the phenomenon, but are still insufficient to represent the whole population of stakeholders. Hence, future research that looks into perspectives of those stakeholders existing in the same political arena is needed to fill in this missing dimension.

Second, in offering an explanation for the political accommodation of Salafi-reformist movements, this research has used three conceptual frameworks and has relied extensively on social movement theory, which highlights a movement's behaviours and ideas in relations to wider social, political, and economic conditions. Alternatively, it can be explained in terms of structure-agency debates that would also provide additional insights. For instance, I have explained how socio-political environments and leaders' experiences and knowledge contributed to a movement's origins and evolution, but stopped short of making a decisive conclusion as to which factor really had the greatest impact on the movement's accommodation. However, insights from the structure-agency debate which focuses on the factors that lead to changes in behaviour of an actor is more suitable to answering a question of 'why' as opposed to 'how'. This 'why' question is suited to other studies but would still provide useful insights into the study of Assalam and MGP.

Third, with respect to the second point, this thesis limits the scope of the study by asking 'how and to what extent', but leaves the gap for a question 'why'. Ideally, to achieve a full understanding of the phenomenon of a movement's accommodation, we need to incorporate questions about the causes of change. For example, despite sharing similar ideologies that combine purist (rigid literalist) and reformist (progressive) elements, why are movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood largely on the oppositionist position, while Assalam and MGP in Thailand seem to be accommodative? Sharing the same conditions with the Malay ethno-nationalist separatist movements in Southern Thailand, why did Assalam not take the same stance as their counterparts with regards to the use of armed resistance against the Thai state?

Apart from the connection with structure-agency factors, these questions also address the reversed version of Hafez's (2003) theoretical explanation by asking 'why Muslims don't rebel'. Based on such a reversed question, this proposed future research will not only supplement the analysis of this thesis, but may also provide alternative explanations for the problem seen in the Thai polity in relation to Malay Muslim politics and identity struggles. While dominant explanations underline the dark side of Thai politics towards Malay Muslims, this thesis argues that Thailand's political structures exhibit contradicting attributes of political closure and openness. Future research here can contribute to the literature on Muslim politics in Thailand not only regarding how Bangkok's conservative centralised polity imposes political constraints and limited choices for accommodation, but also how political opportunities and inclusion restrain chances for rebellion.

Even though this thesis has not paid full attention to the Muslim insurgency in the Deep South, its main research questions stemmed from the same problems addressed in that literature, that is, the centralised Thai state and Muslim identity. Part of my conclusions in relation to this problem is a better understanding of how aspects of openness in the Thai polity, which is equipped by rich elements of religious liberty and freedom, has enabled Islamist movements to undertake Islamic activism by exerting civil rights and using peaceful means. Islamist actors have many political opportunities if they opt for political accommodation, rather than narrowly focusing on repression and choose confrontationist approaches.

This conclusion can be also translated into a policy implication for the Thai government. The problem of violence in the Deep South of Thailand is undoubtedly referred to as 'a problem of Malay Muslims', not a problem of Islam. In this sense, religious and cultural components are inseparable. The openness of the Thai polity to the Muslim population has been confined to religious freedom. Islam is important, but not a central element in the conflict. Hence, Bangkok's emphasis on religious freedom alone is inadequate to render an effective solution. The distress of Malay Muslims in the Deep South is not solely from the religious dimension, but concerns cultural and political issues as well. Therefore, a more open policy that

focuses on Malay Muslim ethnic and cultural identity, without ignoring Islamic morality and political solutions, is a necessary step for the government to take.

Based on a systematic analysis encompassing comprehensive dimensions of the movements, it is possible to anticipate future patterns likely to occur within Assalam and the MGP. In order to do this, essential variables that need to be taken into account include the quality of future leaders, the sustainability of organisations, and the changing political environment in Thailand. To retain the accommodative path, both movements have to deal with two challenges. The first challenge is their ability to keep a balanced level of pragmatism. They have to compromise between their idealistic stances and the needs of pluralistic society as well as political realities. An imbalanced swing either towards narrow religious rigidity or full plurality will affect their success in accommodation. This challenge relates to the risk in losing either religious legitimacy or wider public recognition, both of which are crucial for their survival. The other issue is the ability of Assalam and the MGP to maintain their toleration. As shown in this thesis, one of the factors shaping their successful accommodation is the relatively open, inclusive political structure in Thailand. If the structure becomes more repressive, a legitimate question to ask is whether the movements will choose to continue accommodating or follow other Islamist counterparts in countries that are more radical. Considering Assalam's experience at the outset, and when compared to other separatist movements, their Salafi-reformist orientation is likely strong enough to keep them on a moderate line. Likewise, the ideologies the MGP leaders and cadres also suggest that violence is not likely.

In terms of the prospects for organisational development in Assalam and the MGP, we can consider the previous trajectory of other Islamic modernist movements worldwide and the potential political environment in Thailand. Considering the more advanced evolution of Islamic modernist movements in the Muslim world that adopt integrationist approaches, it is anticipated that there will be an increasing tendency to become more active in mainstream political processes. However, the failure of Muslim political parties witnessed throughout Thai political history indicates that it is not easy for an Islamist political party to vie for space in parliamentary politics. Thus, becoming stronger social movement

organisations that use extra-parliamentary politics and indirect influence over political and bureaucratic systems are more feasible courses of action for these groups to follow.

In terms of internal organisation solidarity, unless the movements maintain mechanisms to deal with internal ideational conflict, authoritative/revered leaders and modes of conflict resolution, they are most likely to see future splits. Like most other elements in Muslim society that struggle to discuss contradictory issues, the failure of the MGP to maintain their previous alliances is a good indicator of this trajectory.

Concluding Remarks

Given the rising interest in Islamist movements and their various forms of interactions with state and society, this thesis has endeavoured to examine and identify the dynamics, nuances and complexities inherent in Islamist movements using evidence from Thailand. Another level of complexity to aid the literature on Islamism has been discovered by refining terminologies and concepts that have been developed previously in relation to comparative movements in other parts of the world.

According to my constructivist position, believing that human ideas are socially situated and constructed by an ever-changing learning process based on new encounters and experiences, Islamist ideologies and movements are certainly not static, but rather interactive and responsive to their environments. Thus, this always requires new, systematic research to understand them in different times and places. Regarding Islamist actors, acquiring more detailed and accurate terminologies will allow researchers, analysts and journalists to understand them better. As for Islamist accommodation, understanding the dynamics of the movements with respect to the political opportunities available within the state is another key point to take into account. In the accommodating process, there is clear evidence for the potential of political openness and opportunity to influence an actor to act accommodatively and to create peaceful co-existence with the state and society. An understanding of such key issues should contribute positively to the

relationship between different faith-based groups, or other socio-political groups in a given population, as well as the state more broadly. Staking a claim to originality in its conceptions and empirical findings, this thesis will hopefully function as a useful academic reference point in the area of Islamist politics and pluralism in Thailand.

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Information on Interviewees

Assalam: leaders, members, and allies

Name	Interview Date	Note	Duration
Dr. Ismail Lutfi Japakiya	1st 5/12/2014	Assalam Leader, Rector, Fatoni University	1 hr
	2nd 18/12/2014		1 hr
	3rd 10/2/2015		1hr
Shafie Baru	1st 23/12/2014	Deputy Rector for Administrative Affairs, Fatoni University	1.30 hrs
	2nd 25/12/2014		1 hr
Dr. Ahmad Umar Chapakia	1st 18/12/2014	Deputy Rector, Fatoni University	1 hr
	2nd 29/1/2015		2 hrs
	3rd 3/2/2015		30 mins
Dr. Ismail Ali	1st 17/2/2015	Former Director, College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University	1.30 hrs
Dr. Worawidh Baru	1st 9/12/2014	Chairman of the Thailand Islamic Co-operatives Network (TICON),	2 hrs
	2nd 15/12/2014	Former Senator,	1 hr
	3rd 17/12/2014	Former Vice President for Student Development, Prince of Songkla University	1 hr
Saleh Talek	1st 13/11/2014	Deputy Rector for Special Affairs and Investment, Fatoni University	2 hrs
	2nd 10/12/2014		30 mins
	3rd 15/12/2014		1 hr
	4th 29/03/2015		30 min
Muhammad Nasir Habaye	1st 18/12/2014	Director of Assalam Institute, Fatoni University	2 hrs
	2nd 23/12/2014		1 hr
	3rd 25/12/2014		1 hr
Muhammad Faisal	1st 27/12/2014		2 hrs
Abdulkarim Asma-ae	1st 25/12/2014		40 mins
	2nd 7/01/2015		1 hr
Ibrahim Narongraksakhet	13/2/2015	Head of Assalam Smart School Association (ASSA)	1 hr
Muhammad Sanmarn	17/02/2015	Head of Assalam Coordinating Center, Narathiwat	1 hr

Name	Interview Date	Note	Duration
Kosee Useng	25/02/2015	Head of Assalam Coordinating Center, Songkhla Founder of As-Siddique Co-operative, Songkhla	30 min
Shafaree Maimard	05/04/2015	Head of Assalam Coordinating Center, Phattalung	1.30 hrs
Luqman Abiyala	10/09/2015	Head of Assalam Coordinating Center, Andaman provinces	1 hr
Shakirin Sumalee	26/03/2015	ASSA Coordinator	2 hrs
Sofi Karo	04/10/2015	Advisor of Assalam Graduates and Students Association (AGSA)	1 hr
Muhammad Afeefee Assolihee	30/3/2015	Head of Student wing (BAS)+ASSA Coordinator	40 min
Assalam women leaders CMCP	26/02/2015	Focus group	3 hrs
Anas Saeng-Aree	25/02/2015	Senior member	30 min
Abdullah Seng	25/02/2015	Young activist	1 hr
Ismail Karumor	22/03/2015	Ordinary member, graduate of Al-Azhar University	30 min
Ismail Rani	18/02/2015	Second generation activist, founder of Ibnu Affan Co-operative	1 hr
Luqman Nani	13/04/2015	Businessman	30 min
Rushdee Siddiq	04/10/2015	Preacher, Second generation activist	1 hr
Abd.Somad Upama	04/12/2015	Head of Islamic School in Phang-nga	15 min
Pak Ash-Aree	04/09/2015	Senior member Phuket	1.30 hr
Davud (Ajarn Oh)	28/04/2015	Dr Lutfi Secretary	15 min
MD Anantachai Thaiprathan	23/02/2015	Ally: Founder of Thai-Islamic Medical Association (TIMA), Former Head of Young Muslim Association of Thailand (YMAT)	1.30 hrs
Abdulraning Suetair	13/02/2015	Ally: Lecturer of Middle East Studies, CIS, PSU	30 min
Uthman Radniyom	02/12/2015	Ally: Administrative staff, CIS, PSU	1.30 hrs
Abdulrashid Chema	18/02/2015	Ally: Chairman of the Southern Thailand Islamic Cooperative Network	1 hr

The Muslim Group for Peace: leaders, members, and allies

Name	Interview Date	Note	Duration
Sheikh Rida Ahmad Samadi	31/03/2015	MGP Leader	6 hrs
	22/04/2015	Director of White Channel	4 hrs
Hanif Yongstar	22/04/2015	Secretary of MGP Foundation	1.30 hrs
	25/04/2015	and Party For Peace	30 mins
MGP Andaman Coordinating Center	04/09/2015	Group interview	
Anis Toleb	22/04/2015	Head of Consumer Protection Society (Himayah)	30 mins
Banatul Huda (women's group)		Email interview	
Ratthasart Rojchanamee	14/03/2014	Founder and former president of Fityatulhaq	1 hr
Hamzah Al karimi	02/04/2015	People of the Tree	30 min
Sumet Momin	01/04/2015	Manager, White Channel	45 min
Mureed Timasen	23/04/2015	Islamic scholar	1 hr
Hamisee Akkheerat	31/03/2015	Director of Ameen Movie	20 mins
Bunleng Hassanee	31/03/2015	Head of Media production, White Channel	
Bang Hatta	02/04/2015	Coordinating officer: member relations department, White Channel	40 mins
Farid Chun-ngarm	31/03/2015	Fityatulhaq Member	20 mins
Sarawut Samadi	22/04/2015	MGP administrative officer	1 hr

External stakeholders

Name	Interview Date	Note	Duration
Dato Aziz Benhawan	30/03/2015	Religious leader, politician and Head of SBP Advisory Council	1 hr
Thavi Sordsong	18/03/2015	Former Secretary General of the SBPAC	50 mins
Najmuddin Uma	03/03/2015	Wadah group politician, ex-MP	1 hr
Danai Musa	20/04/2015	NSC's Department of Strategies on Security and Diverse Cultural Groups, Director	1 hr
Phichai Rattanaphol	11/04/2015	Ex-NSC deputy secretary-general (Phone interview)	45 mins
Gen. Ekkachai Sriwilas	04/01/2015	Academic Director, King Prachadipok Institute Member, National Reform Council	40 mins