

ISLAM IN THAILAND BEFORE THE BANGKOK PERIOD

by

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To understand the expansion of Islam into southern Thailand, it is necessary to view it from the perspective of the spread of Islam to southeastern Asia. Although there were contacts between Muslim and southeast Asian countries as early as the fourth century A.D., and Persian-Arabic trading colonies were established as early as the ninth century A.D., mass conversions to Islam, in a sociological sense, did not begin until the thirteenth century A.D.¹ In general, Persian and Arabic traders were not successful in transplanting their religious traditions. These colonies were, for the most part, transient or impermanent.² The intensification of Islamic proselytizing in southeast Asia had to await the implantation of Islam in the Gujerati area of northwest India and the increase of the Muslim population in the Malabar and Coromandel coasts, the development of Sufism, and the fall of Baghdad in A.D. 1258³. In the context of the global movement of Islam, the Mongol invasion and the subsequent fall of Baghdad led to an exodus of learned Muslim scholars and missionaries to south, southeast, and east Asia. This, coupled with the emergence of Sufism, the mystical variation of Islam, paved the way for a successful missionary enterprise. Sufism, as were Hinduism and Buddhism which preceded it, was eclectic enough to accommodate itself to indigenous mystical and spiritual patterns.⁴ And the Muslim traders from India, who were also enthusiastic about Sufism, aided in the establishment of Islam in the merchant princedoms of northern Sumatra, the Celebes, Java, and the ports of Malaysia.

Mass or 'political' conversions, when rulers or states adopted Islam, began during the latter part of the thirteenth century A.D. The northern port of Sumatra, an important trading outpost nearest to the Islamic centers of the Middle East and India, was the first town to become 'Islamized'. Many scholars have noted that Marco Polo recorded this fact in his journals of A.D. 1292. Pasai, a neighbouring coastal principality, was governed by a ruler who became a Muslim around A.D. 1300. And from Pasai Islam spread to Malacca, presumably by a marriage contracted by a Malaccan ruler and a Muslim Pasai princess.⁵ Later Pasai and Malacca both became missionary and theological centers for the further expansion of Islam throughout the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.

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1. G.R. Tibbets, "Early Muslim traders in Southeast Asia", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Society*, 30 (1), pp. 1-45. 1957; S.Q. Fatimi, *Islam Comes to Malaysia*, Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Institute, 1963, p. 69; Cesar Adib Majul, *International Association of Historians of Asia, Proceedings*, Second Biennial Conference, Taipei, 6-9 Oct. 1962, p. 343.

2. G.R. Tibbets, *loc. cit.*, p. 42.

3. Fatimi, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-99; Majul, *op. cit.*, pp. 394-397.

4. H.A.R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, New York City: Octagon Books, 1972, p. 23.

5. O.W. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970, p. 160; Majul, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

It is difficult to establish a definitive date for the introduction of Islam into what is present-day south Thailand. Although some early scholars have posited that Islam came to Patani, the principal Muslim center of south Thailand, at an earlier date than its entry into Malacca, no firm evidence has been established to corroborate this conclusion.⁶ Most specialists of the area assume that local inhabitants were converted to Islam during the thirteenth or fourteenth century A.D.⁷ But thanks largely to the scholastic endeavors of Teeuw and Wyatt on the history of Patani, we do have some local traditions concerning the 'process' of Islamization in this southern region. The sources of these local traditions are based upon a recently discovered Malay manuscript of the *Hikayat Patani*, and a Thai translation or abridgement of this Malay manuscript. The two sources relate a parallel legend of how the ruler of Patani became seriously ill and issued a proclamation to the effect that he would offer his daughter in marriage to anyone who could cure him. A Muslim from Pasai who was living near Patani offered to cure the ruler, on the promise that the ruler would convert to Islam. The ruler agreed, was treated by the Muslim and recovered. However the ruler went back on his word and refused to convert. After several relapses and several cures followed by broken promises, the ruler finally decided to become a Muslim.⁸ Thomas Fraser, in gathering ethnohistorical data in Rusembilan (a settlement near Patani) from Haji Wan Jussof, arrived at essentially the same basic outline of Islamic conversion in Patani.⁹

Several interesting features are derived from these local traditions which illuminate the structural and historical process of Islamization in Patani. The first significant aspect of this tradition is that individuals occupying high-status positions were the initial converts. This is in conformity with what social historians have hypothesized about the emergence of Islam throughout insular southeast Asia.¹⁰ In general it appears that Islam was adopted by ruling families based on personal considerations and political self-interest. This factor is reemphasized in that there is simply a nominal acceptance of Islam by the ruler rather than any kind of mystical or revelatory experience.

As for the King himself it is true that he became a Muslim inasmuch as he gave up worshipping idols and eating pork; but apart from that he did not alter a single one of his heathen habits.¹¹

6. Teeuw and David Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani - The Story of Patani*, vol. I, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1970, p. 4.

7. Thomas Ladd, "Bureaucratic attitudes and behavior as obstacles to political integration of Thai Muslims", *Southeast Asia: An International Quarterly*, 3 (1), 1974, p. 545; Thomas Fraser, *Rusembilan: A Malay Fishing Village*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960, p. 19.

8. Teeuw and Wyatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-152; David Wyatt, "A Thai version of Newbold's 'Hikayat Patani'", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 40, 1967, pp. 16-37.

9. Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

10. Majul, *op. cit.*, p. 377; J.C. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History*, vol. I, 1955, p. 144.

11. Teeuw and Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

Another interesting aspect of this legend involves the offering of a daughter in marriage by the local ruler. Other historians have also noted this regularity with respect to the spread of Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia, whereby a Muslim immigrant would marry into an indigenous ruler's family.¹² The case of Malacca is the classical example of this process noted above, but undoubtedly there were other cases. And finally, one other factor in the legend is that, although the ruler himself accepted Islam, the majority of the population in the hinterland did not do so.¹³ This would seem to indicate a continuous process of Islamization rather than any abrupt, millenarian type of conversion. This is consonant with the findings of other specialists with regard to Islamization throughout insular southeast Asia.¹⁴ Hence this Muslim folklore from Patani tends to confirm the conclusions of specialists studying Islamization in Malaysia or Indonesia. And it indirectly elucidates our understanding of the sociology of conversion in the Patani area, currently part of south Thailand. Apparently the expansion of Islam into this area was similar to the way it came to the Malayan-Indonesian world.

Thai sovereignty in the Islamic provinces

According to official Thai historiography, the area of Patani, including Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun, was incorporated into what was considered the Thai kingdom shortly after the coming of Islam. A Thai government pamphlet on 'Islam in Thailand' issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs states:

According to historical records, the 4 provinces have been an integral part of Thailand since the period of King Ramkhamhaeng... They were then called the Territories to the South (Hua Muang Pak Tai).¹⁵

This would put the date for this event within the thirteenth century, during the Sukhodaya period. This historiography may to some extent reflect exogenous sources; for, as Bastin and Wyatt show, there were early arguments in Western treatises that the entire Malay Peninsula belonged to Sukhodaya from the mid-thirteenth century until the Portuguese conquest of Malacca in A.D. 1511.¹⁶ On this issue most Western historians follow Coedès, who used epigraphic sources combined with Chinese and Pali documents to conclude that the greater part of the Malay Peninsula submitted to Ram Gamhen at least as early as A.D. 1294.¹⁷ But Bastin and Wyatt conclude that the Pali and Chinese sources are really incon-

12. Brain Harrison, *Southeast Asia: A Short History*, London, New York: Macmillan Co., 1966, pp. 201-202.

13. Teeuw and Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 152; Wyatt, 1967, *loc. cit.*, p. 21.

14. Majul, *op. cit.*, p. 397.

15. Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Islam in Thailand*, English ed., Bangkok: Thai Government, 1976, p. 9.

16. John Bastin and David Wyatt, "Mainland powers on the Malay Peninsula, A.D. 1000-1511", *International Conference on Asian History*, 5-10 August 1968, unpubl., Kuala Lumpur: Department of History, University of Malaya, p. 1.

17. George Coedès, *Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: East-West Center, 1968, p. 373; A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, "On kingship and society at Sukhodaya", in G. William Skinner and A. Thomas Kirsch (eds.), *Change and Persistence in Thai Society*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1975, p. 42; Lawrence P. Briggs, "The Khmer empire and the Malay Peninsula", *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 9, 1950, p. 301.

clusive about the Thai advance southward.¹⁸ Based upon evidence from local chronicles of Nagara Sri Dhammaraja (Nakhon Si Thammarat) it does appear that Nagara Sri Dhammaraja was in fact in some sort of dependent vassal relationship *vis-à-vis* Sukhodaya.¹⁹ Nagara Sri Dhammaraja had served as a maritime outlet for Sukhodaya, and apparently a Sukhodayan king even visited the area in the latter part of the thirteenth century.²⁰ And furthermore, Nagara Sri Dhammaraja had tributary vassal relations with many of the southern provinces including Patani. Thus Nagara Sri Dhammaraja conceivably could have been an intermediate appendage of the Sukhodaya kingdom which maintained some link with the southernmost provinces.

Thus, it appears that the official government account of the incorporation of the Muslim southern provinces is not definitely wrong, yet it is only partially correct. For it cannot be denied rigorously that Patani and the surrounding area did not have some relationship with the northern Sukhodaya kingdom. And yet to say that these provinces were an 'integral' part of the kingdom is definitely an overstatement of historical reality. The nub of this problem involves a precise conception of the structure of the vassalage network between the southern provinces and the northern kingdom. Most recently Tambiah deals with the problem in an illuminating analysis of what he terms "galactic polity".²¹ The model of the galactic polity, a variant of Weber's "patrimonial bureaucracy", is applied to the Sukhodayan and Ayudhyan kingdoms. In the galactic polity the king directly controls the manpower and resources in the central geographical location, while the provinces in the outlying districts are essentially autonomous replications of the center. Although this model is not new to southeast Asian specialists, having been utilized by Heine-Geldern (1942), Leach (1960), Gullick (1958), Geertz (1973), *et al.*, it is systematically sharpened in respect to the Thai data by Tambiah.²² He concludes that the galactic polities of Sukhodaya and Ayudhya were modelled on India or, more precisely, Buddhist cosmological ideals and legal conceptions. But he is quick to admit that these notions could have only taken root in Thailand because of preexisting indigenous social conditions.²³

With the use of Wales's description of the Sukhodaya kingdom, Tambiah employs the galactic model to illustrate the specific conditions of a typical, traditional southeast Asian polity. After Sukhodaya gained autonomy from the declining Khmer empire, it brought

18. Bastin and Wyatt, *loc. cit.*, pp. 21-23.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 25; David Wyatt, *The Crystal Sands: The Chronicles of Nagara Sri Dhammaraja*, Data Paper No. 98, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975, pp. 92-93; Nantawan Haemindra, "The problems of the Thai Muslims in the four southern provinces of Thailand (Part One)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 7(2), 1976, p. 198; Charnvit Kasetsiri, *The Rise of Ayudhya: A History of Siam in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Kuala Lumpur, London, New York, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. 24, 39.

20. Kasetsiri, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

21. Stanley Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1976, chaps. 7-8.

22. R. Heine-Geldern, "Conceptions of state and kingship in Southeast Asia", *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 2, 1942 pp. 15-20; Edmund R. Leach, "The frontiers of Burma", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 3, 1960 pp. 49-68; J.M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya*, London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology No. 17, London: Athlone Press, 1958; Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.

23. Tambiah, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

under its control three of its neighbouring *muangs* (provinces) which were all located within a distance of two days' march. In spite of this, these regions were largely independent satellites, ruled by sons of the king, and were considered as having the status of children *vis-à-vis* the capital province of Sukhodaya. And there were outlying regions beyond these four provinces which were independent kingdoms that had tributary relationships with Sukhodaya. As Tambiah concludes,

When King Ram Kamheng claimed as part of his kingdom various Lao polities of the north and northeast, *the old kingdom of Nagara Sri Dhammaraja in the south*, and the kingdom of Pegu to the west, he was at best claiming this indirect overlordship.²⁴

Thus, like the early Indonesian kingdoms classified by Geertz as "theater states"²⁵, Sukhodaya appeared to have an 'exemplary center' where political symbolism was well demarcated, but where an effective administrative structure was absent in respect of outlying areas. Political boundaries were constantly fluctuating in accordance with the exigencies at any particular time. In territorial terms, the political center was linked to peripheral regions by indefinite, tenuous ties.²⁶ Clearly, the four southernmost provinces were not an 'integral' part of the Sukhodaya kingdom, but rather loosely circumscribed tributary polities which were extremely localized. Nagara Sri Dhammaraja appears to have been a mediating node between some of these southern Malay states and the Sukhodayan central provinces. And, apparently after the death of Ram Gamhen and the succession of his son Lodaiya, the tie between the southern Malay states and the Sukhodayan political center was severed.²⁷

The Ayudhyan kingdom also exhibits the same structural features of the 'galactic polity'. Tambiah specified the territorial configuration for the Ayudhyan kingdom at two points of time: between 1460 and 1590, and between the seventeenth and eighteenth century. During the former period Nagara Sri Dhammaraja was a second-class province of Ayudhya which was ruled as an autonomous entity by a local hereditary ruler. In other words, as Wales remarks, its "status differed little from that which it had enjoyed since the time of Rama Gamhen".²⁸ And at that time the more southern Malay states were foreign, 'independent' polities on the perimeter of Ayudhya which triennially sent formal tribute, *bunga mas*, or gold and silver trees, to the Thai king. But during the latter part of the Ayudhyan period, after King Naresuan's reforms (A.D. 1590-1605), Nagara Sri Dhammaraja was upgraded to a first-class province which reflected a greater degree of centralization, and it extended Thai sovereignty. Yet, the status of the southernmost dependencies does not seem to have been transformed dramatically. *

During the Ayudhyan period, Patani, and its immediate environs, though independent,

24. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

25. Geertz, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

26. Donald E. Brown, *Principles of Social Structure: Southeast Asia*, London: Duckworth Press, 1976, pp. 100-108.

27. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, *loc. cit.*, p. 49.

28. H.G. Quaritch Wales, *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration*, New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1965, p. 106.

did maintain formal ties with the northern capital. The basis of the alliance appears to be related to a straightforward, calculated self-interest, in Patani that was in direct competition with Malacca as a commercial entrepôt until the seventeenth century.²⁹ Hence connections between Ayudhya and Patani fluctuated in response to local economic contingencies. But after the beginning of the seventeenth century and the decline of Portuguese trade, Patani became the principal port for Japanese and Thai traders. At that time political relations between Patani and the Ayudhyan center became much more substantive.³⁰

It was not until the beginning of the Bangkok period (A.D. 1782) that the Thai state began to become more deeply involved in the affairs of the southern vassalage network. Tambiah has aptly characterized the transformation of the Ayudhyan 'galactic polity' into a patrimonial bureaucratic state of Chakri design which he terms the 'radial polity'.³¹ The concept of the radial polity consists of a state with a primate city (Bangkok) which attempts to exert direct political control of the provinces through its governmental agents. In respect of the historical record of the southern Malay states, following the Ayudhyan period the Burmese occupied the whole of the south from Mergui as the political center. Eventually they captured the Thai centers of Nakhon Si Thammarat and Songkhla.³² But following the ascendancy of Rama I these areas were recaptured and designated as administrative centers in order to extend Thai hegemony over Patani and its environs. Songkhla was detached from Nakhon Si Thammarat and accorded a superior rank with jurisdiction over a somewhat rebellious Patani. This policy led to a divisive struggle between these two Thai centers which did not aid Bangkok in the implementation of the vassalage.³³ Shortly thereafter Patani was divided into seven districts called *muang* which were governed by Songkhla. Then in Chulalongkorn's reign the seven *muang* were grouped as *monthon* (circle) Patani, and were ruled under the supervision of a special royal commission.³⁴ During this period under Prince Damrong's administrative reforms (1892) all *muang* were divided into areas of direct or indirect rule. In the *muang* classified as being directly ruled, indigenous rulers were replaced by centrally appointed officials who were responsible to the Ministry of the Interior. But in areas of indirect rule as *monthon* Patani was, local rulers were not replaced but were subject to the jurisdiction of the central bureaucracy in Bangkok. In return for this administrative jurisdiction, the local sultans were appointed as titular heads of their respective areas and were given an annual salary and part of the rice tax. Most of the local rulers agreed to this scheme, were given Thai names, and were appointed to the Ministry of the Interior.³⁵ In the next major administrative changes following the coup d'état of 1932, all *monthon*, were abolished, each *muang* was given some degree of self-

29. Teeuw and Wyatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-9; Fraser, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

30. Teeuw and Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

31. Tambiah, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

32. Klaus Wenk, *The Restoration of Thailand Under Rama I, 1782-1809*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1968, p. 60.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 66; W.F. Vella, *Siam Under Rama III, 1824-1851*, Locust Valley, New York: J.J. Augustin, 1957, p. 61.

34. Tambiah, *op. cit.*, p. 197; Haemindra, *loc. cit.*, p. 202; M. Vickery, "Thai regional elites and the reforms of King Chulalongkorn", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 39(4), 1970, pp. 876-877.

35. Fraser, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

government within limits and was classified as *changwat*.³⁶ The *changwat* of Pattani, Satun, Yala, and Narathiwat were absorbed into the radial polity which extended outwards from the Bangkok metropolis.

One factor which must be stressed in attempting to account for the establishment of Thai sovereignty over these Muslim areas, is the degree to which Thai immigrants from the north were settling in the Malay Peninsula. There is some epigraphic evidence to suggest that Thai settlers were progressively moving down the Peninsula during the twelfth century.³⁷ Folklore accounts for Thai settlers in the southern Peninsula during the Sukhodaya period.³⁸ In the later Ayudhyan era there appeared to be a governmental policy aimed towards assimilation, and Thai settlers were introduced into these southern provinces.³⁹ As Vella remarks, by the time of Rama III the Thai segment of the population was increasing more rapidly than the resident Malay population.⁴⁰ Whether this development was the intended result of a project by Thai authorities appears to be a matter of interpretation, but the consequences of this southward migration did facilitate the incorporation process.

Islam in central Thailand

The genesis of Islam in central Thailand is distinctly different and separate from the spread of Islam to southern Thailand. The earliest evidence indicating a link between central Thailand and the Islamic world has been discovered only recently. In 1957, while excavating at Wat Rajaburana in ancient Ayudhya, archeologists from Silpakorn University uncovered two gold coins with Arabic script on both sides. Wat Rajaburana was built during the early Ayudhyan period, in the reign of King Sam Praya Boromaraja (A.D. 1418 - 1434). The script on one side of each gold coin was read as "Sultan Al-Adil", while that on the other side was read as "Zain-ul-Abiden-Malik".⁴¹ The provenance of the coins was Kashmir, and they had been minted during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abiden (A.D. 1420-1470), at Saraf Kadal, known as Tanki Sarai.⁴² Ostensibly Ayudhya was a stopping place for Muslim traders from Kashmir on the salt trade route to China in the fifteenth century.⁴³ Aside from this particular datum, there is nothing to indicate any Muslim contact with Ayudhya or central Thailand until the expansion of trade in the seventeenth century.

As in other parts of southeast Asia, trade was the important factor in the migration of Muslims to central Thailand. Although foreign trade was relatively unimportant in respect to the Thai economy as a whole, by the end of the sixteenth century an overseas

36. R. Landon, *Siam in Transition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939, p. 84.

37. Kasetsiri, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

38. Francis H. Giles, "The Koh Lak tradition", *Journal of the Siam Society*, 30, 1938, p. 15.

39. Wenk, *op. cit.*, p. 102; Teeuw and Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

40. Vella, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

41. Direk Kulsiriswasd, *The Historical and Literary Relations of Muslims in Siam*, Bangkok: Silpakorn University (in Thai), 1973, pp. 14-15.

42. R.K. Parmu, *A History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir 1320-1819*, Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1969, p. 155.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-5.

trade began to stimulate a demand for Thai exports.⁴⁴ A circular trading network involved the importation of Indian cloth for Thai consumption in exchange for non-monetary commodities. These commodities were sent on to the Japanese market and exchanged for silver and other products, which eventually were sent to India. Thai exports included mainly unprocessed natural products such as deerskins, other animal hides, aloe wood, rice, pepper, sugar, ivory and elephants.⁴⁵ This trade gathered momentum during the seventeenth century, leading to the eventual penetration of the European economic powers. But Muslim traders from various countries had been participating in the Thai foreign trade almost from the beginning.

During the seventeenth century the Thai economy was not a fully developed market economy but was rather an administered economy. Both Thai and European records indicate that the King of Ayudhya strictly and absolutely controlled both domestic and foreign trade.⁴⁶ King Mongkut, in writing on Thai trade history late in Chakri dynastic times, stated that the kings themselves had established royal monopolies in order to gain revenue for the royal treasury. Many commodities were monopolized by the king, while others were denied to traders until the king had as much as he wanted to buy. This royal control had also prevailed during the Ayudhyan period. Private traders had been allowed to trade in certain so-called 'vulgar' commodities, but most export goods had been subject to royal prerogative. Although this institutional framework was not conducive to the development of indigenous entrepreneurs, ironically it led to some opportunities for foreign traders. For example, at times various Thai kings would lend capital to foreign traders in order to stimulate trade in particular commodities and ultimately derive some of the profits for the royal coffers.⁴⁷ Because of this economic and political climate, many Muslims came and established themselves in the Ayudhyan capital to become successful traders.

Persian Muslims

One of the most influential ethnic trading communities in seventeenth-century Ayudhya was that of Iranian or Persian Muslims. Iranian navigation and commercial activities were evident well before the Islamic era.⁴⁸ But during the Islamic period this commercial activity became more intense, resulting in the establishment of Iranian outposts in various parts of southeast Asia. In the inscription of Ram Gamhen of 1292, a Persian word translated as

44. Teeuw and Wyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 13; W.H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb: A Study in Indian Economic History*, New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Company, 1923, p. 65.

45. James C. Ingram, *Economic Change in Thailand*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971, p. 21; Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, *The Ship of Sulaiman*, trans. John O'Kane, Persian Heritage Series No. 11, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, p. 151.

46. Ingram, *op. cit.*, pp. 21, 26, 27; Simon de La Loubere, *The Kingdom of Siam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 112; Nicholas Gervaise, *The Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam A.D. 1688*, Bangkok, 1928, p. 132; G.W. Hutchinson, *1688 Revolution in Siam: The Memoire of Father de Beze, S.J.*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1968, p. 11.

47. Gervaise, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-133; Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

48. Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese: Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula Before A.D. 1500*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1961, p. 283.

"bazaar" was used to designate a market in Sukhodaya.⁴⁹ This suggests that there may have been a trading relationship between Persia and Sukhodaya in this early period. There is some linguistic evidence to suggest that Iranians may have known about the city of Ayudhya from its foundation in the fourteenth century. In one important navigational tract dated in 1462, the city of Ayudhya is referred to as "Shar-i-Naw". The translation of Shar-i-Naw is usually rendered as "new town".⁵⁰ Thus it may be inferred that Iranians knew about Ayudhya at the time of its initial establishment in A.D. 1350.⁵¹

The first Persian Muslims mentioned in the Ayudhyan chronicles were two brothers, Shayk Ahmad and Muhammad Sa-id, who came during the reign of King Naresuan (A.D. 1590-1605). These Muslims were referred to by the Thais as "*khaek*" which was a general term covering Arab, Persian, Indian, and Malay immigrants and their descendants. Thus it is somewhat equivalent to the term "*pathee*" as used by the Burmese.⁵² For that reason some writers have mistakenly referred to these brothers as Arabs.⁵³ In fact they were Iranians who established a settlement in the area south of Wat Suan Luang near Klong Krajan. This area is known as "Tha-Ka-Ji" which was a Thai distortion of the Persian word "*aqā*" which meant "leader" or "chief", with the suffix "*ji*" added to denote respect.⁵⁴ In this area there are the remains of what is called Kudithong or "Golden Mosque" which is identified with the personage of Shayk Ahmad.⁵⁵

Shayk Ahmad, Muhammad Sa-id and their descendants laid the foundations of the Bunnag family, a politically prominent family in Thai society for over three centuries.⁵⁶ Although not much is known regarding the life of Muhammad Sa-id, Shayk Ahmad became an influential political leader during the early seventeenth century in Ayudhya. Following M.R. Kukrit Pramoj's account, Shayk Ahmad helped mastermind the coup staged by King Songtam against Pra Sin Si in A.D. 1620.⁵⁷ He was on good terms with Cha-mun Sri Sorarak, later known as King Prasot Thong or the "Bottled Spider". Cha-mun Sri Sorarak had also aided Songtam in his coup. For their efforts both Cha-mun Sri Sorarak and Shayk

49. A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, "Epigraphic and Historical Studies, No. 9: the inscription of King Rama Gamhen of Sukhodaya (A.D. 1292)", *Journal of the Siam Society*, 59 (2), July 1971, p. 213.

50. Ayyed Naquib Al-Attas, "Note on the opening of relations between China and Malacca, 1403-05", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Society*, 38, 1965, p. 261; George Hans Penth, "An account in the Hikayat Atjeh on relations between Siam and Atjeh", in *Felicitations Volumes of Southeast Asian Studies Offered to Prince Dhani Nivat*, Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1965.

51. It must be added that in John O'Kane's translation of Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim's account of a seventeenth-century Persian voyage to Thailand, the city of Ayudhya is called "Shar-i-Nav" which is translated as "City of the Boat". This also makes sense in that Ayudhya was completely surrounded by canals, and boats were the principal means of transportation. See Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

52. Moshe Yegar, *The Muslims of Burma*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1972, p. 7.

53. M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, "A history of Muslims in Thailand", in Thai, lecture delivered at Suan Kulab College, Bangkok: Aksornarn Press 1968, p. 3.

54. Kulsiriswasd, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 15; Pramoj, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

56. David Wyatt, "A Persian mission to Siam in the reign of King Narai", *Journal of the Siam Society*, 62(1), 1974, pp. 154-155; David Wyatt, "Family politics in nineteenth-century Thailand", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 9(2), Sept. 1968, pp. 208-228; Akin Rabibhadana, *The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1873*, Interim Report Series No. 12, Data Paper No. 74, Southeast Asia Program, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969, p. 213.

57. Pramoj, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

Ahmad were given high political posts. Ahmad received the title "Praya Rathanasethi". Later during the well-known attempts at political intrigue on the part of the Japanese *samurai* population in Ayudhya, Ahmad and Cha-mun helped in suppressing these activities. They were rewarded with yet higher positions. Ahmad was appointed as "Samuhanaiyok" and remained so until he was 87 years old. For a time he was appointed as the "Phraklang" or Minister of Foreign Trade which oversaw and regulated foreign trade and had some part in controlling the foreign population of Ayudhya. This position was divided between departments (*krom*) of the Central Port or harbor. A Left-Wing Port Department (Krom Tha Sai) headed by a person of Chinese descent dealt with the Chinese; and a Right-Wing Department (Krom Tha Kwa), headed by a *khaek*, was in charge of activities dealing with *khaek* and other foreigners.⁵⁸

For later accounts of the Iranian community we must turn to Western sources and Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim's perceptive journal. In terms of population size, Ibrahim mentions that about 30 traders were living in Ayudhya at the time of his visit in the latter part of the seventeenth century.⁵⁹ However, there must have been a considerable number of other Iranians, for other scholars have noted that there was a substantial number of Muslims from the Middle East.⁶⁰ Many of the Iranians were descendants of the aristocratic or upper classes of Iran; and the community included not only merchants but also a fair number of other educated people, such as architects, artisans, scholars, and poets.⁶¹ In other words the stream of Muslims from Iran consisted of people, many highly educated, with various occupational roles. Though trade provided the major impetus for immigration, other types of Iranians followed in the wake of the merchants. In effect, the Iranian immigrants comprised a fully developed ethnic 'community' in this early Ayudhyan kingdom.

The sociopolitical structure of this Iranian community, within the context of the Ayudhyan bureaucracy, has been commented on by La Loubere and Ibrahim, both visitors in the seventeenth century. The Iranians had their own quarter of the city, or Ban, headed by a political leader, or Nai, appointed by the king to manage the affairs of the community.⁶² As mentioned above, the Phraklang of the Krom Tha Kwa was in charge of all the foreign residents with the exception of the Chinese. And since the period of Shayk Ahmad's ascendancy to this position, the Phraklang was held by the leader of the Iranian community for most of the seventeenth century. Thus the Nai of the Ban, and Phraklang, were offices jointly held by the same individual. This gave the Iranian community a great deal of political leverage in dealings with the royal authorities. There were also other royal appointments held by members of the Iranian community. Some positions were adjunct to the Krom Tha Kwa, while others were high-ranking titles such as "Khan Upa" or prime minister.⁶³ Ibrahim

58. Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *History of the Bureaucratic Structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, in Thai, Bangkok: Thai Government, 1976, p. 19.

59. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

60. La Loubere, *op. cit.*, p. 112; Wales, *op. cit.*, p. 65; Larry Sternstein, "'Krung Kao': the old capital of Ayutthaya", *Journal of the Siam Society*, 53, 1965, p. 1078.

61. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, pp. 46, 57, 102-103.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 125; La Loubere, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

63. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 51; La Loubere, *op. cit.*, p. 112; Gervaise, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

indicates that this Muslim community was governed by its own religious and secular judges in accordance with customary practices.⁶⁴ This suggests that the Sharia, or Islamic law, may have been operative for this community. Although this was definitely the case for the early trading colonies within China,⁶⁵ we do not have the evidence to confirm the application of the Sharia during the Ayudhya period.

In terms of Islamic ideology, the Iranians were of the Shia sect, as Iran was the center of Shiism in the Muslim world. Important Shia rituals such as the Muharram to honor 'Ali', the son-in-law of the Prophet and his descendants, were performed regularly in Ayudhya. In fact it was in the context of such a ritual that the well-known King Narai instigated and successfully implemented a coup in A.D. 1656.⁶⁶ Though Thailand was a Buddhist country, the royal administration was generally tolerant and even supportive of the Muslim religious rites in this era. For example, several mosques were established at royal expense and the king contributed lavishly towards the Muharram and other Muslim rites.⁶⁷ There was, however, a split between official policy and practice regarding the proselytization of Islam in Thailand. According to an edict from the mid-seventeenth century, anyone allowing themselves or their kin to be converted to a foreign religion would be considered an enemy of the state. They could be imprisoned, have their property confiscated, or have other punitive measures taken towards them.⁶⁸ Yet, peculiarly enough, for some time during the Ayudhya period Thais who did convert to Islam were exempted from the *corvée*.⁶⁹ And as Ibrahim observed on his sojourn throughout the kingdom, there was some success in the spread of Shia doctrine among the Thais.⁷⁰

Hence, in most respects, the Iranian community had developed a fairly secure social and political niche in Ayudhya, and even had limited success in proselytizing Shiism. But this security would not persist into the eighteenth century, for with the entrance of the Western political and economic powers and their maneuverings, the Iranian community was set on a decline. This factor, in conjunction with internal dissension within the community as a consequence of incompetent leadership, weakened the political influence of the Iranians. Initially divisiveness and factionalism in the community may have been a result of the recruitment of a large number of Iranians from India to serve as a royal militia. These recruits were dissatisfied with the treatment given them by both the Thai royalty and the Iranian leadership.⁷¹ Regardless of the cause of the split in the ranks, it led to the candidacy of the Greek adventurer Constantine Phaulkon to the Phraklang. The exploits of this Phraklang are well known to Asian

64. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

65. Tibbets, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

66. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95; Ronald Smith, *Siam, or the History of the Thais 1569 A.D. to 1824 A.D.*, Bethesda, Maryland: Decatur Press, 1967, p. 57.

67. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 77; La Loubere, *op. cit.*, p. 112; Gervaise, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

68. Wales, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

69. La Loubere, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

70. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

specialists, and they will not be recounted here.⁷² But it can be concluded that Phaulkon, in pursuing his own interests and European goals, did his utmost to work against the political and economic interests of the Iranian community.⁷³ Therefore the expansion of Western political and economic interests, combined with internal schisms within the Iranian community, led to the diminution of Muslim influence in central Thailand. Following this, many of the Iranian traders departed from Thailand, and others were deprived of their preeminent political positions.⁷⁴ Although the descendants of some of these Iranian Muslims were influential with respect to the Thai political scene, this Iranian Muslim community no longer had a decisive role in Thai economic and political affairs after the seventeenth century.

Due to the influential socioeconomic position of the Iranian Muslims in Ayudhyan society during the seventeenth century, Persian culture inevitably had an effect on the Thai Buddhist sociocultural heritage. Whereas the Thai sociopolitical structure was embryonic during this period, the Persian Muslims had migrated from a centralized kingdom which had been flourishing for centuries. Thai royalty was especially eager to learn about Iranian political life and court etiquette. Since many of the Iranians seem to have been connected to the royal or aristocratic class, they were able to describe in considerable detail the customs and practices of Iranian royalty and ruling techniques. Some of these Persian cultural influences have been treated popularly by M.R. Kukrit, and in a more scholarly fashion by Direk Kusilsriswasd. Ibrahim noted many of the details of this cultural 'diffusion' in his journal of the seventeenth century.

Persian intellectual influence on Thai royal affairs came through the translation or compilation of some Persian literature by a *khaek* noble who served in the Ayudhyan court.⁷⁵ This work in Thai is known as the *Iran Rajadhamma* or *Nithan Sibsawng Liam* ("Tale of the Twelve Angels"). The work of literature deals with courts, customs, and ruling techniques of ancient Iranian and Moghul kings. Much of it is drawn from the famed *Shanama* ("Book of Kings") of the medieval Persian poet Firdawsi. It was compiled in A.D. 1752 during the reign of King Boromoraja. M.R. Kukrit remarks that the Thai king would regularly have this Persian court literature read to him.⁷⁶ It is not inconceivable that Iranian and Shia concepts of legitimacy and divine right have had an impact on the Thai Buddhist institution of kingship.

All research concurs regarding the direct effect of Iranian custom on the dress of Thai royalty. As Ibrahim notes, King Narai wore Iranian dress with the customary dagger.⁷⁷

72. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-69; Hall, *op. cit.*, pp. 342-352; John F. Cady, *Southeast Asia: Its Historical Development*, New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1964, pp. 270-277; W.A.R. Wood, *A History of Siam, from the Earliest Times to the Year A.D. 1781, with a Supplement Dealing with More Recent Events*, Bangkok: Siam Barnakich Press, 1933, pp. 198-213.

73. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Gervaise, *op. cit.*, pp. 28, 95, 132; Maurice Collis, *Siamese White*, London: Faber and Faber, 1965, pp. 62-63.

74. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 111; La Loubere, *op. cit.*, p. 112; Gervaise, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

75. Kulsiriswasd, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-45.

76. Pramoj, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

77. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

Evidently dietary patterns and culinary etiquette were copied from the Persian Muslims by the Thai royalty.⁷⁸ As evident from some Ayudhyan pagodas, artistic and architectural styles were borrowed from Persian forms. Some of the porcelain used in the pagodas was imported from Iran.⁷⁹

Indian Muslims

Muslim merchants from India also migrated to central Thailand during the Ayudhya period. As mentioned above there was a healthy trading relationship between India and Thailand. Evidently an important diplomatic connection was established between King Narai and the Moghul emperors; for at the National Museum in Bangkok there is a lacquer cabinet (the 'Louis/Aurangzeb Cabinet') which allegedly depicts Aurangzeb Alamgir, the famed Moghul emperor (A.D. 1658-1707), next to Louis XIV of France. Indian Muslim dominated the economic scene in Mergui (Tenasserim) which was part of Thai territory.⁸⁰ Ibrahim, in his journal, notes some of the Indian Muslims at Mergui were followers of the Shafii school of Islamic law, while others were Hanafi.⁸¹ Although good historical data do not exist regarding the Indian Muslims for this period, it appears that their numerical strength was limited.

Indonesian Muslims

A contingent of Indonesian Muslims also settled in central Thailand in the Ayudhya period. The conquest of the port of Macassar by the Dutch naval commander Cornelius Speelman in 1667 led to the migration of various political refugees.⁸² King Narai offered political asylum to an exiled prince of Macassar and his cohorts. Ibrahim describes this community on his visit in 1686.⁸³ Although no precise population data are referred to, these Macassar Muslims did reside in their own neighborhood or Ban of Ayudhya.⁸⁴ Like other Muslims of Indonesia and Malaysia they followed the prescriptions of the Shafii school of Islamic law and were Sunni. But Ibrahim also mentions non-Islamic magical practices and customary ritual dances that were important cultural features of this group. In A.D. 1686, a coup d'état was sponsored and attempted by some members of the Macassarese community in Ayudhya against King Narai. Though Western sources and Ibrahim's account offer conflicting interpretations this historical episode, all sources agree that the Macassar community was decimated following the failure of the revolt.⁸⁵

Cham Muslims

Another group of Muslims who were settled in Ayudhya before the eighteenth century were from Cambodia. The Cambodian Muslims have a long history extending back to the

78. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

79. Pramoj, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

80. Collis, *op. cit.*, pp. 36, 40.

81. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

82. Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 300; Cady, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

83. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-136.

84. La Loubere, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

85. Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 138; Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 207; Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

Champa kingdom in what is present-day Viet Nam. The Champa kingdom flourished as a Hindu-Buddhist state from the second century A.D. until its defeat at the hands of the Annamese (southern Vietnamese) in A.D. 1471.⁸⁶ Although no precise date can be given for the appearance of Islam in Champa, it is clear that there were Arab and Persian settlements as early as the second half of the eighth century.⁸⁷ Middle Eastern traders had been traveling to China since the seventh century, so it is likely that Champa was an important intermediate node on this route between the two countries. Documents translated by M. Ravaise indicate that there was an urban center in Champa where some of these Muslims came to settle. They selected a "Seih es Suq", the "syndic of the marketplace", to represent them in the eyes of the local authorities. A "Sheik ul Islam", or Mufti, looked after their spiritual and religious needs, and a "Qadi" (Islamic judge) administered the Sharia.⁸⁸ The evidence suggests that this community of Muslims included merchants and artisans living in Champa in a self-contained social environment similar to the Persian Muslims of Ayudhya. But there is no historical evidence to suggest that Islam was adopted by the indigenous Cham population outside of these Arab-Persian communities.

It was not until after the collapse of Champa that Islam was accepted as a popular religion by the Chams. After the Annamese victory in A.D. 1491, Cham refugees fled to Malacca, Java and Cambodia. Afterwards Islam slowly took root among the Cham refugees, mainly through the influence of Malayan-Indonesian culture. Chams are the only sizable Malayo-Polynesian speaking group north of Malaya.⁸⁹ Consequently, the Chams had extremely close cultural ties with the Malaysian world. After the Cham refugees settled in Cambodia, many Malay Muslims went there and were successful in propagating Islam. Most of these refugees settled at Kampong Thom and Kampong Cham near the Mekong River, about 120 kilometers from present-day Phnom Penh.⁹⁰

It is not known how some of these Cham Muslims came to settle in Ayudhya. But from the evidence that exists it appears that they were primarily involved as military volunteers. The Cham volunteer corp was organized into a *krom* designated Krom Asa-Cham. The term *krom* usually is translated as "department" or "palace", "court" or "chamber".⁹¹ Krom Asa-Cham was subdivided into a left wing and a right wing, both under the command of Phraya Jawang, or Chang-Wang. The soldiers and officials of Krom Asa-Cham were classified to suit their respective positions within the Sakdi Na socio-political system as instituted by King Boromotrailokanat (Trailok) in the Laws of Civil and Military Hierarchy of A.D. 1454. The Sakdi Na system was a broadly devised scheme to supplement the maintenance of authority over and control of manpower in the Thai state. It was a structure of ranks or statuses with prescriptive dimensions which applied to every conceivable level in the society from common men and slaves to the senior princes of the realm. A key feature of the status arrangement was the quantification of status designations which

86. G. Maspero, *Kingdom of Champa*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949, pp. 1-54.

88. Fatimi, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

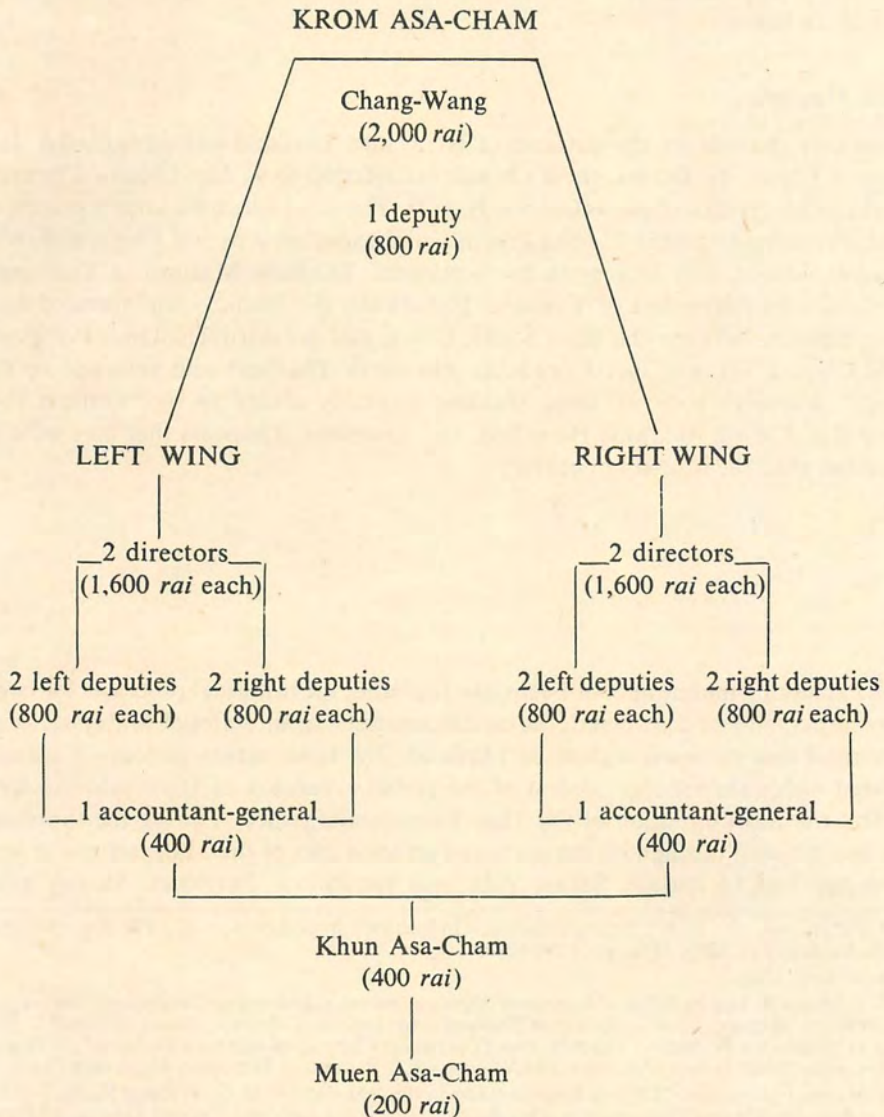
89. Maspero, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

89. Robbins Burling, *Hill Farms and Padi Fields: Life in Mainland Southeast Asia*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965, p. 121.

90. Donald P. Whitaker *et al.*, *Area Handbook for the Khmer Republic (Cambodia)*, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973, p. 73.

91. Tambiah, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

corresponded to royal land grants. Statuses ranged from 100,000 for the Upparat (the highest government official), 10,000 for a minister, to 10-25 for a *phrai* (commoner), to 5 for a *that* (slave).⁹² The officials of Krom Asa-Cham were classified into the ranks shown in the following chart, listed with their allocated areas of land in units of *rai* (equivalent to 0.16 hectare).



92. Rabibhadana, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

In religious terms, though there was an early Shiite influence among the Chams, in general they subscribed to the form of Islam found in Malaysia.⁹³ That is, they were Sunni and followers of the Shafii legalistic school of thought. Historically the Chams of Cambodia were always inclined towards orthodoxy. This is in distinct contrast to the Chams who remained in the area of Viet Nam. These Vietnamese Chams refer to themselves as Muslims, but their ideology and practices diverged radically from normative Islamic doctrines.⁹⁴ The Chams in Ayudhya came from Cambodia and hence were probably more steadfast in respect to orthodox Islam.

Chinese Muslims

Another channel for the entrance of Islam into Thailand was through the 'Islamicized' portion of China. In Burma, these Chinese are referred to as Min Chia or Chinese Lisu, but most authorities refer to them as Chinese Haw.⁹⁵ The areas where the largest groups of Chinese Muslims were residing were Yunnan Province in the southwest part of China, and the Provinces of Shensi, Kamsu, and Sinking in the northwest. The Haw Muslims in Thailand originate from the southwestern part of Yunnan. Historically this ethnic group operated an expansive trading network between the Shan States, China, and northern Thailand. For example, they carried Chinese silk and metal products into north Thailand and returned to China with cotton.⁹⁶ Although some of these Muslims gradually settled in the northern Provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, and Lamphun, it appears that they were a transient population until the nineteenth century.

In explaining the entrance of Islam into Thailand, the historical processes for two divergent cultural areas must be considered: the insular southeast Asian states of Malaysia, and the mainland central and northern regions of Thailand. The Islamization of south Thailand must be evaluated within the broader context of the global expansion of Islam into insular southeast Asia and the transformation of the Thai 'bureaucratic polity'. During the thirteenth century Islam was diffused throughout the ports and principalities of the Malayan world including the present-day area of Pattani, Satun, Yala, and Narathiwat Provinces. Shortly after this the

93. Fatimi, *op. cit.*, p. 47; Anton Cabaton, "Indochina", in B. Lewis *et al.*, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, London, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971, pp. 1209-1210.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 1210.

95. Edmund R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954, p. 59; William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1957, p. 81; Frederick W. Mote, "The rural Haw (Yunnanese Chinese) of northern Thailand", in Peter Kunstadter (ed.), *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities, and Nations*, vol. 2, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 490.

96. Michael Moerman, "Chiang Kham's trade in the 'old days'", in G. William Skinner and A. Thomas Kirsch (eds.), *Change and Persistence in Thai Society*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1975, pp. 154-155; Suthep Soonthornpasuch, "Islamic identity in Chiang Mai City: a historical and structural comparison of two communities", unpubl. diss. (anthrop.), University of California, Berkeley, 1977, pp. 49-50.

Sukhodayan and Ayudhyan kingdoms became involved in the internal affairs of these Provinces, albeit in a limited way. Hanks, in a characterization of the Thai state previous to the Chakri era, likens the Thai political structure to a chain store, operating where it had affiliates.⁹⁷ Thus before the Bangkok period, the 'galactic polities' of Sukhodaya and Ayudhya were only loosely tied to their southern tributary Malay states. But as the Chakri kings established themselves in Bangkok and their kingdom expanded into a 'radial polity', political authority was exercised in a more direct way throughout the Islamic provinces. This process, coupled with the immigration of Thais from the north, cinched the full-scale incorporation of the southern domains.

Very different historical conditions apply to the Muslims of central Thailand. Although there were attempts at the proselytization of Islam on the part of Muslim migrants and visitors to central Thailand, they had very little success.⁹⁸ In contrast to the situation in Malaya and Indonesia, the establishment of Islam in central Thailand was due solely to immigration and intermarriage. The Iranian, Indian, Indonesian, and Cham Muslims settled in Ayudhya and at times intermarried with Thais to create the original nucleus of the Muslim population in the central Thai region.

The principal reasons for the relatively insignificant success in converting the majority of Thais to Islam in the central zone are similar to those proposed for Burma by Yegar.⁹⁹ First, geographically and commercially these areas, unlike insular southeast Asia, were not part of the major trading arc between southeast Asia and the Middle East. But perhaps more importantly, Buddhism had been adopted as the popular religion by a massive population in central Thailand, and it was not just the religious form adopted by a few virtuosos and a small elite.¹⁰⁰ This was in contrast to what was the prevailing cultural milieu in insular southeast Asia where Buddhism had become simply a 'high-status' religion. And Buddhism also had become institutionalized as the state religion during the Ayudhya period.¹⁰¹ Hence, Buddhism had apparently filled an ideological void in central Thailand as Islam had in Malaysia, Indonesia and the southern Philippines.

97. Lucien Hanks, "The Thai social order as entourage and circles", in G. William Skinner and A. Thomas Kirsch (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 209.

98. Gervaise, *op. cit.*, p. 95; Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

99. Yegar, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-28.

100. Charles F. Keyes, *The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1977, p. 82.

101. Wales, *cp. cit.*, p. 131.