Islam at the Margins:
The Muslims of Indochina

Edited by
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Preface

I think it would be no exaggeration to suggest that Southeast Asian nations are booming, not only because of their rapid economic development but also because of their long experiences of maintaining harmony and tolerance between the diverse ethnic and religious components of their populations. The Southeast Asian Muslims, for example, once regarded as being peripheral to the world of Islam, are now becoming recognized as model Muslim leaders with exceptional abilities to manage difficult tasks such as their own country's economic development, the Islamic financial system, democratization and even aeronautics. The era when we only refer to the Middle East when we speak of Islam and the Muslims has passed. Now it has to be recognized that it is crucially important to understand the Muslims of Southeast Asia in order to fully understand current world events and future global trends.

The joint research project on "Social Order and Relations in Muslim Populated Southeast Asia" has been conceptualized and conducted on the basis of such understanding. The project was first initiated as a research project at the Japan Center for Area Studies (JCAS), National Museum of Ethnology, Japan in April 2005 covering a period of three years. The project was succeeded by the Center for Integrated Area Studies (CIAS), Kyoto University when JCAS was reorganized into CIAS in April 2006. Together with the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) and the Graduate School of Asian and African Studies (ASAFAS) in Kyoto University, the CIAS constitutes an indispensable pillar of Area Studies in Japan.

As one of the core institutions in Japan to conduct research on Muslim populated Southeast Asia, we have been organizing several international workshops and symposia on various aspects of the subject. The International Symposium on "Bangsa and Umma: A Comparative Study of People-Grouping Concepts in the Islamic Areas of Southeast Asia" in May 2007, co-organized by CIAS was one such event.

However, we have to admit that one weakness in our research orientation is that we have been focusing mainly on the Malay-Indonesian world at the expense of other areas where significant numbers of Muslims exist such as in the countries of Indochina. This imbalance is not because we deliberately want to disregard the region or its Muslim population but rather due to the limitation of our own knowledge on the subject and unfamiliarity with scholars working on the theme of Islam in that region. It is on account of our desire to correct this imbalance that an international workshop on the theme of "Islam at the Margins: The Muslims of Indochina" was conceptualized and organized. The workshop was held on May 20, 2007 at Kyoto University and was attended by scholars of Islamic and Southeast Asian studies from various corners of the world, including Indochina. I am sure that this workshop has had the effect of motivating many of those who participated in it to begin to want to pursue serious and systematic research in all of Muslim populated Southeast Asia, rather than just in the Malay and Indonesian world.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who attended the workshop and participated in the discussions. We are indebted to the researchers and staff members of CIAS and all those who assisted in organizing the workshop. Special thanks

are due to Prof. Omar Farouk who brought up the idea of organizing the workshop on the Muslims in Indochina and also took the initiative to compile and edit this report, as well as Dr. Masako Ishii, who worked very hard to plan and organize the workshop to its successful completion. Dr. Ishii handled all the logistical arrangements of the workshop with remarkable promptness and efficiency. I also would like to acknowledge the role of Dr. Farha Naomi Omar Farouk in helping edit this publication. It also goes without saying that without the cooperation and assistance of the above mentioned people and many others whose names I have not mentioned, this workshop and the publication of its proceedings would not have been possible.

Hiroyuki YAMAMOTO

Introduction

This volume is basically a documentation of the proceedings of a workshop which was held in Kyoto, Japan on 20 May, 2007 organized by the Center for Integrated Area Studies, Kyoto University. The workshop itself was extremely important for a couple of reasons not least of which because of the theme that it sought to address, namely, Islam at the margins, focusing on the Muslims of Indochina. Hitherto, the prevailing tendency in scholarship on Islam and the Muslim world has been to continue to regard the Middle East, the birthplace of Islam, as the central point of reference for Muslims worldwide throughout time and space. For historical, geographical, cultural and even political reasons, Arab countries, in particular, continue to be viewed as constituting the core or center of Islam. The role of other Muslims outside the traditional Arab historical-cultural belt, in geographical regions such as Southeast Asia, has somehow not been fully understood or appreciated or even recognized, for that matter. The ethno-cultural mosaic, linguistic diversity and complex contextual realities that characterize the Muslim world of Southeast Asia have really yet to be seriously and systematically examined. This is even more true in situations where the Muslims live as minorities and where Islam exists on the margins of a variety of cultures, communities and countries. Very little, for example, is known of the Muslims of Indochina even in respect of their basic demographic data. The varieties and strands of Islam adopted by the Muslims of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, their local and transnational networks, cultural and spiritual orientations and peculiarities and ethnic and political ambitions and dilemmas have not really been duly investigated and documented. The nature of their presumed marginality within the Islamic space has also yet to be identified, explored and analyzed and their place in their respective national polities located and explained. There is obviously a glaring gap in our knowledge and understanding of the Muslims who are, often, generally and even mistakenly assumed to be on the fringes of Islam and the Muslim world. This is the obvious relevance of the workshop.

The fact that the workshop was held back to back with another symposium which sought to explore the concepts of '*bangsa*' and '*umma*' in the Islamic areas of Southeast Asia was also of great symbolic importance because although the focus of that meeting was more on the Malay archipelago, its discussions could not possibly be complete without also looking at the situation in Mainland Southeast Asia including Indochina. By any reasonable yardstick surely the Muslims of Mainland Southeast Asia including Indochina constitute an integral part of the Muslim '*umma*', whether that defined by the geographical region of Southeast Asia or by the global fraternity of the faithfuls. They often see themselves as such and have also always been recognized accordingly by their co-religionists in the region and beyond. Likewise, although, the Muslims are themselves a diverse group in Indochina, as they are elsewhere, it is the Chams who constitute the backbone of the Muslim population especially in Cambodia and Vietnam. The Chams certainly are, as they have always been since ancient times a "*bangsa*" in their own right. It would not therefore, be an overstatement, to suggest that the complete history of Southeast Asia could not possibly be written without acknowledging the proper place of '*bangsa Cham*' within it.

A third factor why this workshop was special was simply the people that it brought together. The paper presenters came from different backgrounds in respect of their, ethnicity, nationality, vocation and education. Dr. NAKAMURA was one of the first few Japanese to have done extensive work on the Chams in Vietnam. She graduated from an American

university and was at the time of the workshop working for an American organization in Thailand. She has now taken up an academic post in Malaysia. Dr. Ba Trung PHU, a Vietnamese national is a Bani Islam Cham. He is a curator at the Museum of History in Ho Chi Minh City and has done a great amount of archeological excavations on ancient Cham sites. STOKHOF, a polyglot who also speaks Vietnamese, is a doctoral candidate in the Netherlands who has lived many long years in various parts of Southeast Asia including Vietnam. He is now an executive with a multinational corporation with business interests in Vietnam. MOHAMAD ZAIN Bin Musa, is a Malaysian academic who is of Cambodian Cham descent who was born in Phnom Penh and educated in France and Malaysia. Professor NISHIO is one of the few Malay-speaking Japanese who has done extensive fieldwork all over the Malay world of Southeast Asia since the 1980s. OMAR FAROUK is a Malaysian living in Japan and conducting an on-going research on the Muslims in Indochina for over a decade already. Dr. YAMAMOTO also has extensive ties with the Malay world especially Malaysia. Dr. ISHII, who was the coordinator of the workshop has also done extensive research in the Philippines. Professor Anthony Milner, not only graced the workshop with his presence but also contributed significantly in the discussions with his well-framed ideas and thoughts. The other participants who were present at the workshop, too many to mention individually, were also scholars who have been active in the field in Southeast Asia for a long time. Their presence and active participation in the workshop no doubt greatly enhanced its value.

Last but not least, the workshop and hence this volume, are special because of the issues that have been addressed in the various papers to try to explain the amazing complexity of the real Muslim world of Southeast Asia on the ground and the remarkable ingenuity of local Southeast Asian Muslim communities to adapt and to adjust themselves to the demands of their immediate environments to ensure their survival, presence and continued relevance. Essentially the papers that are compiled in this volume were those that were presented at the workshop. They have, however, subsequently been revised and updated before being edited. But even then, they should perhaps better be regarded as papers written for a work-in-progress publication rather than that of a definitive book.

Dr. NAKAMURA's absorbing paper is an attempt to understand the ethnicity of the Cham communities in Ninh Thuan Province by examining the dual structural principle in Cham cosmology called *Awar* and *Ahier*. Dr. Ba Trung PHU's paper, with helpful illustrations, seeks to describe the role of the Bani Islam Chams and their heterodox version of indigenized Islam in Vietnam from a sociological perspective. STOKHOF's very interesting paper, on the other hand, examines the Baweans of Ho Chi Minh City and their place within the wider polity, MOHAMAD ZAIN's paper tries to evaluate the religious reforms that were going on in the Cham community in Cambodia through the dynamic leadership of Imam Musa, a modernist Muslim leader. My own paper looks at how the re-organization of Islam has been attempted in Cambodia and to a lesser extent Laos, in the recent decade or so. Finally, Professor NISHIO's paper represents a preliminary attempt to examine the links between the Malay world and Indochina from the viewpoint of commercial activities., Essentially, the main motivation of all the papers was simply to try to provide hitherto little known data on the Muslims of Indochina and to introduce new perspectives with which their role can be analyzed with a view to stimulating interest on a subject which has apparently been neglected far too long.

OMAR FAROUK

The Cham Muslims in Ninh Thuan Province, Vietnam[1]

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Abstract

This paper discusses the Cham communities in Ninh Thuan Province, Vietnam. The Cham people are one of 54 state recognized ethnic groups living in Vietnam. Their current population is approximately 130,000. They speak a language which belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian language family. In the past, they had a country called, Champa, along the central coast of Vietnam, which was once prosperous through its involvement in maritime trade. While the largest concentration of the Cham people in Vietnam is found in a part of the former territory of Champa, particularly Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces, there is another group of Cham people living in the Mekong Delta, mostly in An Giang province near the border with Cambodia. There are differences in ethnic self-identification between these two groups of Chams living in the different localities. In general, the Chams living in the former territory of Champa equate being Cham as being descendants of Champa while the Chams of the Mekong Delta view being Cham as being Muslim. This paper is an attempt to understand the ethnicity of the Cham communities in Ninh Thuan Province through their religious system, particularly a dual structural principle in Cham cosmology called *Awar* and *Ahier*. In this paper, I argue that the concepts of *Ahier* and *Awar*, hold the key to understanding the way their ethnicity has been constructed and reveals an interesting aspect of their world view. In the course of the discussion, their indigenized form of Islam called Bani religion, which is peculiar to the Cham community will be introduced.

Introduction

This paper discusses the Cham communities in Ninh Thuan province, Vietnam. The Chams are one of 54 state recognized ethnic groups living in Vietnam. Their current population is approximately 130,000. They speak a language which belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian language family. In the past, they had a country called, Champa, along the central coast of Vietnam, which was once prosperous through its involvement in maritime trade. While the largest concentration of the Chams in Vietnam is found in a part of the former territory of Champa, that is Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces, there is another group of Cham people living in the Mekong Delta, mostly in An Giang province near the border with Cambodia. There are differences in ethnic self-identification between these two groups of Chams living in the different localities. In general, the Chams living in the former territory of Champa equate being Cham as being descendants of Champa while the Chams of the Mekong Delta view being Cham as being Muslim.

This paper is based on the field research I conducted in Cham villages around Phan Rang city of Ninh Thuan province, Vietnam in 1995-1996. It is an attempt to understand the ethnicity of the Cham communities in Ninh Thuan Province through their religious system, particularly a dual structural principle in Cham cosmology called *Awar* and *Ahier*. In

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[1] This paper is a revised version of my contribution to the book on My Son which is soon to be published in early 2008.

this paper, I present the argument that the concepts of *Ahier*, and *Awar*, hold the key to understanding the way their ethnicity has been constructed and reveals an interesting aspect of their world view. In the course of the discussion, their indigenized form of Islam called Bani religion, which is peculiar to the Cham community will be introduced.

Muslim people in Vietnam

The earliest records of existence of Muslim communities in South Central Vietnam are around the 8th century. Two Arabic inscriptions found in the former territories of Champa indicate that a Muslim community existed in modern Southern Vietnam in the latter half of the 10th century to the 11th century. It seems that the Muslim merchant communities existed in Champa as early as the 10th century along the coast line of central Vietnam. They were merchants from the Middle East trading along the silk road of the sea to China. Significant numbers of Chams, whom were indigenous populations of Champa, converted to Islam in the latter half of the 15th century (P-Y Manguin, 1985). During the 19th century, during the French colonization (1867-1954), there were various Muslim ethnic communities from French colonies, for example, the Indian people from Pondichery had a prominent presence in Ho Chi Minh City. There are 2 major beautiful mosques in Ho Chi Minh City built by the Indian Muslim community. In cities such as Nha Trang, Da Nang and Hai Phong along the coastal areas, the mosques built by the Indian communities during this time still can be seen. However, the first mosque in Ho Chi Minh City called Masjidir Rahim was built by a Malaysian and Indonesian Muslim community. Hence, the Muslim population in Vietnam has different origins, and the most numerous and prominent group in contemporary Vietnam being the Cham people.

The Cham people in Vietnam

According to the most recent National census, the population of the Cham in Vietnam was 132,827 in 1999. In terms of population, the Cham was ranked 13th largest of the 54 ethnic groups of Vietnam. There are 2 distinct groups of Cham people in Vietnam, when taken into consideration their place of residence, historical background and religion. The first group lives in the south central region of Vietnam, particularly Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces. These two provinces once formed a large province, called Thuan Hai, which covered a similar area to the part of the kingdom of Champa known as Panduranga. This is where the largest concentration of Cham people in Vietnam are said to be found with about 86,000 Cham living here[2].

The second group lives in the Mekong Delta, most of them around Chau Doc city in An Giang Province, near the border with Cambodia. About 12,000 Cham people live in this region[3], and almost all are Sunni Muslims. The Mekong Delta Cham also live in Ho Chi Minh City and surrounding provinces such as Dong Nai and Tay Ninh. In addition to this, approximately 20,000 Cham live in Phu Yen and Binh Dinh provinces, north of Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan. This particular group is called Cham Hroi, which is classified as a sub-group of the Cham ethnic group. It is believed that the Cham Hroi were members of the population of the kingdom of Champa, whom were left alone without contact with other

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[2] According to 1999 National Census, the population of the Cham in Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan is 86,493.
[3] According to 1999 National Census, the population of the Cham in An Giang and Tay Ninh provinces is 12,435.

Cham communities and developed different cultural traditions from the Cham living in Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan[4].

Chams are also found in various parts of Southeast Asia, the most numerous communities being in Cambodia, where the estimated population is somewhat between 300,000 and 700,000. After the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, a number of Cham people left Vietnam for Australia, Canada, and France, USA, and other parts of the world.

The Cham people in Ninh Thuan Province

In the past, the Chams were known as skillful seamen in the Southeast Asian maritime trade. Nowadays, however, Cham people live in villages far from the coast and no longer build boats or sail out to the ocean. They engage in the cultivation of wet rice and grow grapes. Some raise animals such as cattle, pigs, chickens and ducks. A few villages are also known for their handicrafts, such as textile and pottery which are mainly produced by the Cham women. With the increase of domestic and international tourism in Vietnam, Cham textiles are particularly widely marketed.

The education level of the Chams is relatively high, which is reflected in the large numbers of Cham school teachers. There are also Cham doctors, nurses and pharmacists working in the provincial hospitals, as well as, Cham lawyers and scholars working in Ho Chi Minh City.

Cham society is known for its matrilineal and matrilocal system[5]. When couples marry, the husband goes to his wife's house to live with her family. Then, when the sister of the married woman is preparing to get married, the married couple moves out of the wife's parents' house and build a new house nearby. The children of the Cham belong to their mothers' lineage and property is passed down through the female line.

The Chams of South Central Vietnam still maintain their traditional writing system, which is called *akhar thrah*. This script evolved from Sanskrit. All religious texts, legends and poems were written in *akhar thrah*. Nowadays, with provincial government support, a Cham Language Center (*Ban bien soan sach chu Cham*) has been established in Phan Rang, the capital city of Ninh Thuan province. Run by Cham people, the center is responsible for publishing the textbooks used in the Cham writing classes and for training teachers of *akhar thrah*.

The written script has the greatest authority over the Cham people's cultural knowledge. It has been previously noted that they value literature more highly than oral tradition (Blood 1981:6). Many Chams from South Central Vietnam think that if one lacks knowledge of *akhar thrah*, one cannot understand ilimo, culture. During my field research, I had to revise my original plans to visit different Cham villages to collect information, and instead spend a few hours every day studying *akhar thrah* at the Cham Language Center. This reflected a difference, in my understanding of Cham culture with my Cham teacher's interpretation of it. I understood the culture as something observable, while my teacher understood it as something found in texts. It became clear to me that Cham intellectuals place ultimate authority in texts. In answer to my questions, elderly Cham people often read and translated their books for me. This occurred often that I came to suspect that Cham intellectuals believe that the Cham culture only exists in written form.

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[4] According to Khong Dien, Cham Hroi was classified as a separate ethnic group by the state ethnic classification of 1974 yet it was merged into the Cham ethnic group at the time of general census in 1979 (Khon Dien 2002: 14-15, 24-25)

[5] Since Cham have adapted the Vietnamese name, the Cham children take their father's family name, but the children do belong to their mother's lineage not the father's.

This reliance on texts is peculiarly similar to the 19th century Orientalists' attitude to their studies, described by Edward Said. The knowledge the Orientalists possessed about the Orient came from books. The "classical Orient" – found only in texts – was considered to be the real Orient while the modern Orient was seen in terms of problems to be solved. In the Cham case, their intellectuals' textual orientation can be understood as a denial of Cham modern cultural practices. Vietnamese government minority policies have resulted in the loss of many Cham religious ceremonies and the modification of their rituals. They probably see their contemporary cultural practices as impure, by comparison with the culture formerly practiced in the kingdom of Champa, which they deem genuine and truly original. For them, real original Cham culture can thus be found only in the texts; if one is seeking "correct" cultural information about the Chams, one should learn to read the Cham scripts.

Cham people in the Mekong Delta

The Chams in the Mekong Delta are Sunni Muslim. They do not have much attachment to Champa. Some have even denied the connection and claimed their roots in Angkor. The Sunni Muslim Chams of the Mekong Delta tend to be seen as having lost the matrilineal and matrilocal principles, because of the influence of Islam. As a matter of fact, their living arrangements are ambilocal rather than strictly matrilocal. A couple's living arrangements often depend on their economic situation and access to the job market or education. But the basic rule remains matrilocal, as indicated by the forms of traditional wedding rituals. The 3-day-long Cham Muslim wedding culminates on the third day when the groom enters the house of his bride.

Religious leaders and educated Chams in the Mekong Delta speak Malay and write in Jawi script. A small number of Chams in An Giang province that were able to read old Cham scripts are featured in Marcel Ner's 1940s account of the Muslims of southern Vietnam (Ner 1942). In my experience, when I visited An Giang province in the mid 1990s, I did not find a single book written in *akhar thrah*. On one incident, an old man informed me that he owned several books written in *akhar thrah* which he had buried to save them from the confusion of war. After the war was over, he dug them out and found that the texts were no longer legible. The loss of *akhar thrah* among the Sunni Muslim Chams of the Mekong Delta is often viewed by the Chams of South Central Vietnam as a loss of culture, ilimo: the Mekong delta Chams are thus deemed to have lost their Cham authenticity. For the Chams of South Central Vietnam, their ability to access and process "authentic" knowledge of their past – of the kingdom of Champa – make them more authentic Chams.

Cham Balamon and Bani

The Cham people of South Central Vietnam have abundant ritual traditions: approximately 150 different religious ceremonies are known. There are two distinct groups of Cham in this region, if we consider their religious beliefs. One group called Balamon adheres to an indigenized form of Hinduism. They worship their gods called Po Yang and their deified kings, and hold their ceremonies in the ancient Champa temples in their region, which were built between the 14th and 16th centuries. They are supposed to observe a taboo on eating beef, and are normally cremated when they die[6]. They are led by a body of priests, *Halau Tamunay Ahier*.

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[6] Those who die before age 15 years old will not be cremated. There are two small Cham Balamon villages called, Palay Rio and Palay Bingu located next to each other at the east of one of the largest Bani villages in Ninh Thuan

The other group, called Bani adheres to an indigenized form of Islam. They worship their god, Po Alwah (Allah) at their village mosque called *thang muki*. They are supposed to observe food taboo on eating pork, and are buried without cremation. They are led by a body of priests, *Halau Tamunay Awar*.

The Cham Balamon and Bani do not live in the same villages[7]. There are 22 Cham villages in Ninh Thuan province. Of these, seven are inhabited by Bani people[8]. As Cham Balamon and Bani do not share common daily life in the same village, they know little about each other's customs and traditions.

The different sense of hygiene seems to separate the 2 groups, and also provides a perspective on their relative degrees of "progress". For example, my Cham language teacher was a Bani, and his wife often invited me for lunch when I was working in her village. She was very curious about my impressions of the Cham Balamon and often wanted to know what they fed me in their villages. She asked if I could eat their foods. I told her that although I was not familiar with some dishes, I had no problem eating their foods, including ceremonial dishes. She expressed her surprise in the following terms:

> We (Bani) eat first and then conduct our ceremony, so our foods are fresh and clean; meanwhile the Cham Balamon do the ceremony first, then eat afterwards. That is why their foods are not fresh and clean. Even though I am Cham, I don't dare eat Cham Balamon foods. You are not Cham, you're a foreigner, but you can eat their foods. You are better than me. But you need to be careful about the foods in Cham Balamon villages. They are not clean as ours.

The Bani people's comments on the Cham Balamon ceremony always related to hygiene; "dirty", "unclean", "unsanitary" and so on. The Cham Balamon, meanwhile, often agree with Bani criticisms of their religious practices. They admit that the Bani are more progressive and that their ceremonies are simpler. However, they also argue that they are unable to simplify their ceremonies as the Bani do, due to the reason that the Cham Balamon people must maintain the authentic cultural traditions inherited from the kingdom of Champa without alternation or simplification.

Ramuwan of Bani

In order to introduce Bani religion, I will talk about their holy month of *Ramuwan*. *Ramuwan* takes place on the exact same day of the Ramadan. However, three days before the first day of Ramuwan, Bani people visit their grave yards. On the first day, the Bani people from a village north of Phan Rang city go to their oldest grave yard located on the sea shore. The next day, they visit another grave yard, located at a distant field from their village, and on the third and last day, they go to a grave yard near their village where the

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province. There are 3 temples (*bimong*) in Ninh Thuan province, where the Cham people worship deified kings, and all Cham Balamon villages belong to one of these 3 temples. However, Palay Rio and Palay Bingu do not belong to any of these 3 temples. The Cham Balamon from these two villages will not be cremated when they die. According to some Cham local scholars, the people of these two villages practice a pre-Hindu religion or animism, others argued that the people of Palay Rio and Palay Bingu are not allowed to have cremation since they are the descendants of landless slaves. Today the people of these two villages have their lands. However, because of lack of good access to water resource, the villagers do not engage in wet-rice cultivation as do Chams in other villages. According to a legend in Palay Rio and Palay Bingu, their ancestors used to live around the northern part of Hue, and for some reasons, they sailed down south and arrived at Panduranga.

[7] One village called Phu Nhuan or Palay Boh Dang in the Cham language is an exception. In this village both Cham Balamon and Bani live together. However their residence is not intermingled; the village is divided into the Cham Balamon residential area and the Bani residential area by a narrow street cutting through the village.

[8] Population of the Cham Balamon in Ninh Thuan Province is about 32,000 while the Bani is 22,000 (Sakaya 2002:39).

recently deceased are buried. The meaning of their grave yard visit is to invite their ancestral spirits back to their houses. After the 3-day grave yard visits, people make offerings to the ancestral spirits at their house. First, they prepare an offering of a meal to all their ancestral spirits, then they make an offering to individual lineage members who have passed away. The oldest woman of the household has the responsibility of remembering the names of the deceased up till 7 generations and at which grave yards they are buried.

The next day, after the sunset, the Bani priests enter the mosque, and this marks the beginning of the holy month of *Ramuwan*. The priests change their cloth and head cover to prepare for prayer. The priests who conduct the prayer will go outside of the mosque where a crowd of women and some elderly men who are all dressed in white watch. After the ritual cleansing, the priests come back in and sit facing the west wall of the mosque. Candles are lit. One of the priests stands up and moves to the corner where a drum is kept. He hits the drum which signals the beginning of the prayer. Another priest joins him and they perform a call for prayer while facing the west wall. A woman who holds a special ritual role called *Muh Poh* and the wife of the highest ranked priest, are the first people to pray. Then, women, first older, then younger follow their prayer. More number of women congregate for the prayer than men, and the men pray after the women finish praying. The women's participation in Bani religious ceremony is crucial and they hold a significant role in their religion.

After the prayer, the priests make a circle and greet each other. Bani people believe that it is from this day, that their ancestral spirits who visited the descendants' household enter the mosque and spend the next 30 days with the priests. During the month of *Ramuwan*, the Bani priests stay in the mosque, away from their families. The first 3 days of *Ramuwan*, the priests do not go outside of the mosque, where they abstain from speaking, drinking and eating. During these 3 days, mosques are closed and lay people cannot visit there. The lay Bani people do not observe fast, yet they are forbidden to eat meat for the first 15 days of the month of *Ramuwan*. The pregnant women fast with the priests for the first 3 days of *Ramuwan*. During this holy month, the Bani people must behave morally by refraining from activities such as heavy drinking, and quarrelling. A funeral cannot be organized for the first 15 days of *Ramuwan*.

Ahier and *Awar*

Certain legends explain the origin of the Cham people's division into two groups, and in these legends Cham Balamon and Bani are consistently identified as *Ahier* and *Awar*. Both words are from Arabic, with *Ahier*, meaning "back, behind, or after" and *Awar* meaning "front or before". In the legends, *Ahier* denotes Cham Balamon and *Awar* denotes Bani. In daily life, the Cham use these terms to differentiate between certain types of ceremony, or between people of the Cham Balamon group and those of the Bani. They also use this dual principle in their cosmological explanations.

In the Cham lunar calendar, a month consists of 30 days. But the days are not counted from 1 to 30; instead, the days 1 to 15 are counted twice. The first 15 days are called *bingun*; the second 15 days are called *klam*. The first *bingun* half of the month is denoted *Ahier* while the second klam half of the month is denoted *Awar*. Both Cham Balamon and Bani hold their wedding ceremonies on the Wednesday of the *klam* half of the month. Why Wednesday? Wednesday is seen as a day of balance, and is thus considered to be the best day for weddings. This notion of balance relies on the principles of *Ahier* and *Awar*. The Cham week consists of 7 days, as in the solar calendar. The first 3 days- Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday – are considered to be *Ahier*; fire and heat are attributed to these days. The last 3 days – Thursday, Friday, and Saturday – are considered to be *Awar*: water and cold are

attributed to them. Wednesday, on the other hand, falls between *Ahier* and *Awar*. Furthermore, the soil – representing growth and fertility – is attributed to this day, which adds to Wednesday's suitability for weddings.

These principles also govern other cosmological beliefs. For instance, the upper part of the human body, from head to navel, is called *akhar* and considered *Ahier*, while the lower part, from navel to feet, is called *tanuh riya* and considered *Awar*. The Cham imagine the sky as the body of a human being, hunched over with the hands and feet on the ground; they thus see the part of the day from dawn until noon (the sky's upper body, head to navel) as *Ahier*. The period from noon until sunset (the sky's lower body, navel to feet) is *Awar*.

Legends about *Ahier* and *Awar* suggest that this two-realm division is meant to bring peace upon Cham society. One version of a legend I collected reads as follows:

> A long time ago, the prophet Po Nubi Mohamat was an *Ahier*. At that time, the *Awar* became very strong and Po Nubi Mohamat was very impressed with them. So he tried to change all the *Ahier* people to become *Awar*. However the *Ahier* people opposed Po Nubi Mohamat, arguing that "in the world there should be men and women. If we have only women, how can we maintain the world?" Thus *Awar* between the *Ahier* people and Po Nubi Mohamat broke out. They fought for seven days and seven nights. Then Po Nubi Ichbrahim came between them as a mediator. He asked Po Nubi Mohamat, "Can you live with only one eye, only one hand, and only one leg?" Po Nubi Mohamat did not know how to answer this question and agreed that the rest of *Ahier* should remain *Ahier* but he himself became *Awar* on this occasion. After 7 days and 7 nights of battle, Po Nubi Mohamat felt thirsty; he brought out water by magic and shared it with all the *Ahier* people, so peace between them was restored (this legend was related to me by a Cham Balamon Shaman).

The dualistic tendency in Cham cosmology was pointed out by Blood, who lived among the Cham people for several years before 1975. Of the 2 realms in the system she described, one belonged to the father, the other to the mother (Blood 1981:43, 48). In the legend above, *Ahier* is male and *Awar* female. Many Cham people express a similar idea of *Ahier* representing men and *Awar* women and further explain that, to function properly, society must have *Ahier* and *Awar*. Thus *Ahier* exists for *Awar*, and *Awar* exists for *Ahier*. The mutual dependence of the 2 realms holds the world of the Cham people together.
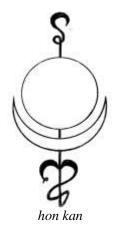
The Male and female attributes of *Ahier* and *Awar* have many manifestations, which include the 2 groups' respective bodies of priests. For example, a local scholar of the Cham Balamon told me the following story about the birth of his first child. After their marriage, he and his wife were childless for some time. His mother-in-law became concerned and sent him to a nearby Bani village to ask the Bani priests for help. He brought offerings of special candles and soup to the priests. They read the Qur'an for him. He made several trips to the Bani village, eventually he and his wife were blessed with a son, followed by 3 other boys and 4 girls. He explained to me why his mother-in-law asked him to see the Bani priests, and not Cham Balamon priests (the leaders of his own religion) because Cham Balamon priests symbolize men and men cannot give birth; only Bani priests, who symbolize women, could help the couple have children.

The gendered attributes of Cham Balamon and Bani priests are also manifested in their behavior and clothing. When Cham Balamon priests conduct ceremonies, they always sit with crossed legs as the way Cham men sit. Bani priests sit with their feet under them and to the side, in the way Cham women sit. Priests of both groups wear white turbans with red tassels at both ends, but on top of the turban Bani priests add a cloth called *khan djram*. The *khan djram* is an item of clothing used by Bani women; the priests wear it in the same way as the women wear it. Bani priests shave their heads when they enter the priesthood, while Cham Balamon priests wear long hair tied in a bun at the top of their head. When they are

conducting ceremonies, the bun is covered by a white turban without red tassels tied in a special way which represents the male sex, a linga.

Cham Balamon	Bani
Ahier	*Awar*
Male	Female
Right	Left

Ahier-Awar complementarity is also expressed in number cosmology. The Cham community identifies itself through a symbol called *hon kan*, composed of two numbers and two figures. The symbol's center is a circle representing the sun, under which there is a crescent. The number 6 is set above the sun, and the number 3 below the crescent. The sun and the number 3 are considered *Ahier*, while the crescent and the number 6 are *Awar*. For the Cham, the number 9 is the largest number in the script. The *Ahier* number 3 plus the *Awar* number 6 join to form the number 9 which is the most complete number. Thus the *hon kan* symbol – composed of *Ahier* and *Awar* elements – represents the most complete form of existence; unity, balance, stability and peace. In other words, when *Ahier* and *Awar* co-exist, the world of the Cham finds unity.

hon kan

We may also pursue the idea of complementarity in the symbolism of priesthood, as we have seen, Cham Balamon priests symbolize men and Bani priests symbolize women. But they also bear attributes representing something from the opposite sex. The Cham Balamon priests carry a yellow rectangle bag on their shoulder which symbolizes the uterus.

The Bani priests have 3 bags, which hang from their neck down onto their back. One of 3 bags is slightly larger than the others, and the 2 smaller bags are tied by the same cord. The Bani priests' bags symbolize the penis and testicles. These bags symbolize the acceptance, within *Ahier* and *Awar*, of their counterparts.

Janet Hoskins, who studied indigenous notions of gender and agency among the Austronesian-speaking Kodi people of the Western tip of Sumba in the lesser Sunda island chain, argued that gender is the most consistently evoked structuring principle within this "complementary dualism" (Hoskins 1987:174). She argues that male and female, as abstract categories, provide a language for talking about ways of effective action; "male and female are simply used to express contrasts which may be applied recursively: Male con-

tains Female, Female contains Male: Inside contains the Outside, the Outside the Inside; Black, White, White, Black" (Hoskins 1987:197).

Hoskins's notion of complementary dualism may be observed in Cham ceremonies. One peculiar thing is that one can often find more *Awar* elements in *Ahier* ceremonies than *Ahier* elements in *Awar* ceremonies. For instance, during *Ahier* funeral rituals, Cham Balamon priests make a triangle by placing their hands above their forehead to pray to Po Nubi Eta, Po Nubi Atam and Po Nubi Mota, all of who are *Awar* deities. According to a Cham Balamon priest, they have to pray to invite *Awar* deities to their funerals, weddings and other ceremonies, such as the celebrations held on the construction of new houses. On these occasions, the Cham Balamon prepare 2 different sets of areca nut and betel leaf, which are essential offerings in every religious ceremony. One is called *hala kapu*, which is the *Ahier* set; the *Awar* set is called *hala tam tara*. While *Ahier* people often present both *Ahier* and *Awar* set at their ceremonies, *Awar* people rarely present *Awar* set. The only time I observed the Bani people using *Ahier* set was on the occasion of a funeral.

According to Po Dharma, the strong Islamic influence in the Balamon religion was a result of the political situation of Champa during the 17th to 19th centuries. Comparison of old documents kept among the Cham in Ninh Thuan province with oral traditions led him to the discovery that *Awar* deities were placed higher than *Ahier* deities in the religious pantheon of Champa. He then came across documents on the origin of a ceremony called *Rija prong* explaining why the *Awar* god Po Alwah took the place of the *Ahier* goodness Po Inu Nugar. During that period, Champa tried to ally with military powers on the Malay Peninsula to fight against the Vietnamese, who increasingly threatened Champa. In order to maintain these alliances, in the context of ongoing Islamization of the Malay world, it was crucial for the court of Champa to show an interest in Islam. The replacement of *Ahier* deities with *Awar* deities in the state religious pantheon was made to meet political needs (Po Dharma 1990).

Po Dharma's argument is a convincing explanation of the existence of more *Awar* elements in the *Ahier* rituals. However, I would like to look more closely at the nature of the ceremonies, in order to understand how *Awar* elements work in *Ahier* ceremonies. I found that those *Ahier* ceremonies which contain *Awar* elements often bear meanings relating to "life" or "birth". For example, *Ahier* cremations contain the meaning of rebirth in the other world. All participants in the ceremony implicitly play the different roles involved in childbirth – including the newborn's parents, other relatives, godparents, midwife and so on. The funeral continues for 4 days with a day off on the third day. On the first day, a bowl of rice and a boiled egg are prepared for the deceased, and this meal symbolizes the meal for a pregnant woman. Thus the deceased impregnates a new life in his/her body.[9] When the deceased's skull is saved from the flames and the 9 pieces of bones are removed from the forehead, the deceased gives birth to his/her new life in the other world. Immediately after this ceremony – whereby the 9 pieces of bones are placed into the container, *klong*, a ceremony called *patrip* is performed; *patrip* symbolizes the new-born person's first meal in the other world.

The Cham Balamon people erect a special ceremonial house called *kajan* to place the body of the deceased person and to carry out funeral ceremonies and also a small shed called *rap*. The *rap* is usually occupied by musicians, and by the craftsmen who make the ornaments for a cremation carriage. Cham Balamon priests may not step into this *rap*, and some argue that this is because the *rap* is *Awar* territory. The rap is built for *Awar* deity, Po

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[9] In this symbolical context, deceased's actual sex seems to be disregarded.

Nubi Mohamat. Getting help from another *Awar* deity who holds a torch to light up the inside of the *kajan*, the Po Nubi Mohamat observes the sequence of the ceremony from the *rap*. The assistant of the prophet is symbolized by a torch-like thing inside of the kajan[10]. The *Awar* deity, Po Nubi Mohamat, is present at the *Ahier* funeral because the *Ahier* funeral contains the meaning of the rebirth. *Awar* here takes on a female role, giving birth and symbolizing fertility. With both elements *Awar* and *Ahier*, the life cycle – of which a death is a part – is complete.

Ahier and *Awar* amongst Bani

Up till here, I have discussed *Ahier* and *Awar* as religious distinctions between the respective groups of Cham people of the south central region. However, within the Bani community itself, *Ahier* and *Awar* also mark differences in religious status. For the Bani, *Awar* refers to the body of Bani priests, while *Ahier* refers to the Bani lay people who do not enter priesthood. Thus, the *Awar-Ahier* opposition, as it is used within the Bani community, distinguishes between the sacred and secular in the Bani religion.

The terms *Awar* and *Ahier*, as used by the Bani people, also bear male and female attributes. But an attempt to unravel which realm bears which gender attribute can lead to considerable confusion. Once, in discussion with the Bani, I repeated what I had learned in a Cham Balamon village about the male and female realms indicated by the directions right and left in a Bani village. I had understood that a person's right hand belongs to the domain of *Ahier*, indicating the male attribute, while a person's left hand belongs to the female domain of *Awar*. This caused a big debate among the elderly men. Finally the heated exchange ended with a bland sentence articulated by a Bani priest: "*Awar* is male". For the Bani religious community, *Awar* (normally regarded as female) when used to refer to Bani priests belong to the male realm; *Ahier* used in the context of Bani lay people belong to the female realm.

Bani lay people	Bani priests
Ahier	*Awar*
Female	Male
Left	Right

Being of the male realm, the Bani priests (*Awar*) need assistance from the female realm[11]. Within the priesthood, there are 6 different ranks[12], and according to a principle of seniority, the Bani priests gradually climb up the hierarchical ladder. The highest rank is *Ong Guru*, of which there is one at each mosque. During the period of my field study, the *Ong Guru* of one Bani village passed away, but the Bani priest in line to take the position of *Ong Guru* had not been promoted; the village had not had an *Ong Guru* for quite some time. Without an *Ong Guru*, the village was unable to organize several important ceremonies, including funerals, led by the priests of their own village. The reason for this situation

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[10] The torch-like thing in the funeral house is called troi which indicates the prophet *Po Nubi Mohamat's assistant, Ja Tin.*

[11] Women and unmarried men cannot enter the Bani priesthood.

[12] From high rank to the low rank; *Ong Guru*, *Ong Imam Krah*, Ong Imum tum, Ong Katip, Ong Mu Tinh and Po Char.

was both simple, and to me unexpected. The wife of the *Ong Guru* candidate was very sick, lying in hospital; Bani priests can be promoted only if their wives are healthy and have good moral conduct.

The priests' promotion ceremony is performed on the last day of the month of *Ramuwan*. On this occasion, the wives of the promoted priests wear a cloth similar to the one they wore at the *Karah* ceremony, by which one enters the Bani religion. They wear as much gold jewellery as possible, and sit in a guest house attached to the mosque to observe the ceremony. If she is sick or menstruating at the time, she cannot attend the ceremony. If they do not attend, the priests cannot be promoted. The Bani priests, as male, need assistance of the female.

The ceremonies conducted by the Bani priests require the presence of a woman, *Muk Poh*. In each Bani village there is 1 or 2 *Muk Poh*. Most of the Bani rituals involve an offering of rice to the priests. When each household prepares the offering, an unmarried young girl is chosen from the household to do the preparations: then, during the rituals, it is the *Muk Poh* who offers the rice to the priests. Bani priests cannot conduct rituals without the *Muk Poh*'s assistance. During Friday prayers the first lay persons to pray are the *Muk Poh* and wife of the *Ong Guru*. Their prayer acts as a signal to the other women to begin their prayers.

Ahier Awar and Akafir:

Within the Bani community, the gender attributes of *Awar* and *Ahier* – with *Awar* as male and *Ahier* as female – are consistent and possess their own internal logic. The reversal of the normal *Ahier* and *Awar* gender attributes within the Bani community can be explained by the contexuality of *Awar – Ahier* principles.

The Cham Balamon are excluded from the *Ahier* and *Awar* categories used within the Bani community. They are classified instead as *Akafir*. This term is equivalent to the Arabic term, *Kafir*, denoting non-Muslims. The terms *Awar*, *Ahier* and *Akafir* are, however, used only for people belonging to the Cham ethnic group. Initially, as a Buddhist Japanese, I thought I would be categorized as *Akafir*; later on, I was told that I was neither *Ahier* nor *Akafir* but Japanese. While Muslims generally use the term *Kafir* without regard to a person's nationality or ethnic background, the Cham use these terms only within their own ethnic boundaries.

Let me attempt to summaries the discussion so far. Firstly, when these symbols are used in the context of Cham religion as a whole, *Ahier*, (Cham Balamon) is male and *Awar* (Bani) is female. Secondly, within the specific religion of the Bani people, the gender attributes of *Ahier* and *Awar* are reversed; *Ahier* (lay people) is the female principle while *Awar* (priests) is male. Thirdly, when the terms *Awar* and *Ahier* are used in conjunction with the term *Akafir* as a set of three, the terms *Awar* and *Ahier* lose their male and female symbolism. Instead, they indicate the degree to which one embraces Bani religion. To the Bani, the relationship of *Awar*, *Ahier* and *Akafir* indicates relative distance from Po Alwah. The Bani priests (*Awar*) enjoy the greatest proximity to Po Alwah, the Bani lay people (*Ahier*) are the next closest, and the Chan Balamon (*Akafir*) exist at the greatest distance. Thus the distinction between *Ahier* and *Awar* reflects the different levels of multiple religious relationships. But in any case, when the 2 terms are used as a pair, they maintain the attributes of the male and female realms.

	Cham Balamon Religion	Bani Religion	
		Bani lay people	Bani priests
	Akafir	*Ahier*	*Awar*
		Female	Male
		Left	Right

Cham Traditional Religion

The terms *Ahier* and *Awar* are fluid. They change according to the group and its characteristics. Their meaning depends on the context in which they are used. This fluidity differentiates them from very fixed terms like Cham Balamon and Bani, and illustrates the interdependency of the 2 religions of the Cham people living in the south central region. At a glance, Cham Balamon and Bani seem like 2 completely different religions, of Hindu and Islamic origins, but they are in fact 2 different outcomes of the religion grown in the same ground. Cham Balamon religious attributes make sense only when in opposition to Bani religious attributes, and vice – versa. For the Cham people of south central Vietnam, this binary principle is the dynamic that constructs their world.

Young Cham Balamon and Bani students have opportunities to meet at high schools or universities, but the older people, especially women, have fewer chances to communicate with each other. Clear boundaries and differing cultural forms might seem to mark these 2 groups as 2 different ethnic groups. However, when I questioned about their ethnic identity, none of the Bani people answered that they belonged to the Bani ethnic group: they simply said that they were Cham. Neither group seems keen to articulate their differences for outsiders. The group division only matters within the ethnic group.

Relations between the 2 groups also take literary forms. Within the tradition of Cham lyric poetry, there are 3 significant poems: one of them is called Cham-Bani, and it is a story of unfulfilled love between a young Cham Balamon woman and a young Bani man. According to Inrasara, it was written around the end of the 19th century, and became the most popular lyric poem among the Cham of Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces. It relates the story of how a Cham Balamon and Bani fell in love, against the taboo of inter-religious relationship. Facing strong disapproval from her parents, the Cham Balamon woman escaped from their house in the village and secretly went to live with the Bani man. Later, however, she was caught by the Cham Balamon people, brought back to her village and punished with death. During her funeral, her Bani lover jumped into the cremation fire: they were reunited in the other world (Inrasara: 1993:175-181)[13].

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[13] In the lyrical poem, *Ariya* Cham-Bani, Cham Balamon is represented by a woman and Bani by a man. The Bani man throwing himself into the funeral pile can be understood as sati committed by a man. This lyrical poem has reversed male and female roles as I have discussed in this paper. I knew several inter-religious marriages amongst the Cham during my field study. It was mostly between Cham Balamon women and Bani men. Though I know only one case of Bani woman being married to Vietnamese man (Kin), I had never come across a case of Bani woman married to a Cham Balamon man during my field research and these cases of inter-religious marriage coincide with the relationship depicted in the poem.

Several folk songs among Cham in Ninh Thuan province broach the relationship between the Cham Balamon and the Bani. One of my Cham teachers taught me the following song, which he often used when teaching Cham scripts to the Cham school teachers:

> Cham Balamon and Bani are not separated far
> Actually, since long ago, we share the same blood
> Which gods created us?
> You are just a grain of rice and I am just a rice-husk.

The song suggests that the 2 share the same origin, that they are different parts of the same thing. Another song describes the pumpkin and the gourd, their vines ever tangled on the same trellis. The pumpkin and the gourd, of course, symbolize, the Cham Balamon and Bani. According to an ancient Cham text kept by a shaman, the Cham gods appear in different guises. They transform themselves from one form to another, crossing the boundaries between the 2 religions. For instance, one of the earliest and most supreme gods of the Balamon religion, called Po Ku, transformed himself into the goddess Po Inu Nugar. Po Inu Nugar means the universe, she is the mother goddess of Champa. She created human beings and the kingdom of Champa. She also taught the Cham people agriculture, sericulture, and weaving. Po Inu Nugar transformed herself into Po Alwah, the supreme god of the Bani religion. In another example, a Balamon god called Po Alwah Hu transformed himself into the Bani Po Nubi Mohamat. But Po Alwah Hu is the name given to the god when he is in the sky while Po Nubi Mohamat is the name given to him when he is on earth. In this way, the Cham Balamon and the Bani deities are the same.

Cham Balamon	Bani
Po Ku → Po Inu Nugar------------→	Po Alwah
Po Alwah Hu ----------------------→	Po Nubi Mohamat

Despite their differences, the Cham Balamon and Bani share the same system of beliefs – "the Cham religion" – and believe in the same gods. It might appear that they believe in separate traditions. But in actual fact, their gods are the same gods known by different names and worshipped in different ways by 2 different groups of the Cham people. The Cham Balamon and Bani may not know each others' customs and traditions well, yet they do express that they belong to the same ethnic group.

No distinction is made between them in the way they are depicted in Vietnam today: in this context too, they are the same ethnic group. They are, however, more often represented – in the choices made by people involved in assembling museum collections, books on minorities and other media – by the Cham Balamon. Bani people see no problem in being identified as Cham Balamon in the public sphere. Their religious differences do not create differences of ethnic identity. Sharing a belief system, a sense of belonging to the old kingdom of Champa and common ancestry, both Bani and Cham Balamon assert a common ethnicity to outsiders.

Within the ethnic group, however, a clear boundary surfaces, which temporarily disappears when they relate to outsiders? Members of the Cham ethnic group know the difference between Cham Balamon and Bani. Knowledge of this dual organization is a recognized token of membership in their society. This goes some way toward explaining why the Cham in south central Vietnam often omit the Mekong Delta Cham when they talk about

the Cham in Vietnam. The Mekong Delta Cham do not share this specific knowledge, so the south central region Cham do not acknowledge them.

Sunni Muslim Cham in Ninh Thuan province

Sunni Islam – know as *Jawa* by the Bani – was first introduced into Ninh Thuan province in the 1960s. The Sunni Islam converts in Ninh Thuan province claim that they belong to the realm of *Awar*. Neither Bani nor Cham Balamon agree. The Sunni Islam converts are thus excluded from the *Ahier* and *Awar* dichotomy which is a defining concept for the ethnicity of the Cham in south central Vietnam. The Sunni Islam converts have, as a result, become rather marginalized among the Cham communities of Ninh Thuan.

At present, there are 4 Sunni Islam mosques in the Bani villages of Ninh Thuan province. During my field research, 70 Sunni Muslim families lived in Phuc Nhon village, amounting to about 10 % of the population of this Bani community. In this village, I was told that Sunni Islam had been introduced by a college student from the village. This student was studying in Can Tho city, in the Mekong Delta, when he heard about the Cham living in a neighboring province, An Giang. Out of curiosity, the student visited the Cham in An Giang and found that the Islam they were practicing was different from the Bani Islam he knew. He returned to Phuc Nhon village and told Bani priests about the Islam practiced by the Mekong Delta Cham. None of the Bani priests knew about the Sunni Islam, but they did not approve of the way the Mekong Delta Cham practiced Islam.

Coincidentally, around this time a group of Cham people from An Giang, including Mufty Omal Aly and an Indian Muslim named Ismael Maulawi, visited Phuc Nhon to proselytize Islam. The student asked them the same questions he had put to the Bani priests; clear answers were given. Some of the Bani were impressed by their profound and extensive knowledge of Islam. In 1962, 15 Sunni Islam converts asked the Bani priests to open the mosque on a daily basis, so they could pray every day. Their request was rejected, so they decided to build their own mosque. The mosque was completed in 1963 with financial support form the local government, the Muslim community in Vietnam, Ismael Maulawi, an the *Hiep hoi Cham Hoi giao Viet Nam*, which was an association of Muslim Cham people established in Saigon as a part of Southern Vietnam government's ethnic minority policy.

As Islam gained ground among the Bani, the antagonism between the converted Bani and the remaining Bani increased. Some sympathized with the Muslim converts. Most of these were relatives of Sunni Islam converts, and they argued that religion should be chosen through individual will. These sympathizers were called *walai*: the villagers – including the priests – divided between the *walai* and anti-*walai*. Antagonism within Phuc Nhon village reached its peak in 1969 to 1971. There were a few violent incidents. Sunni Islam converts had to put up with various kinds of bullying from the Baritone elderly. A Sunni Islam person recounted that during the time of enmity, Sunni Islam converts could rely only on Allah and the local government.

The relationship between the Bani and the Sunni Islam converts softened after Vietnam reunification, when any kind of religious proselytizing was prohibited. Although Sunni Islam proselytization among the Bani people of Ninh Thuan has remerged since the onset of the *doi moi* reforms (1986), and the number of converts is slowly increasing, the violent incidents of the past have not been repeated.

The Bani tend to see Sunni Islam converts as people who have abandoned their original religion and the Cham tradition; they are deemed to be committing a sin by neglecting *muk kay*, the ancestral sprits. According to them, denying *muk kay* means denying oneself, as without the ancestors one would not exist. They also criticize the converts for abandoning Bani religion to gain development and humanitarian aid from foreigners. The Sunni

Muslim in Ninh Thuan are connected to Muslim communities around the world and have received donations from foreign Muslim visitors, and financial aid from foreign Muslim organizations. Because of such foreign connections, they teach English in addition to regular Qur'anic study. I was often surprised to meet Cham students in their mosques who spoke to me in English. The converts' foreign connections and access to foreign aid provoke envy among the Bani people.

The converts often become upset when they hear about such criticism from Bani people, and argue that they converted to the Sunni Islam in order to "follow the right path", and not for monetary gain. One of the members of this group told me that conversion to Sunni Islam and belief in Sunni Islam is a "revolution among the Chams". They believe that the Bani religion is a degraded form of Islam and that its practice is not right. It is steeped in superstition. It is unscientific and backward. Sunni Islam is scientific and more advanced. The converts often consider themselves more educated, more scientific, and more developed than Bani people, because they understand the theology of their faith and practice Islam "correctly".

Furthermore, although the Chams in An Giang province have adhered to Sunni Islam for much longer than the Chams in Ninh Thuan province, the newly-converted in Ninh Thuan claim that they are religiously superior. They admit that the Mekong Delta Chams can read the Qur'an more skillfully, that they are more familiar with the religious practice of Islam. But they also argue that the Muslim Chams of the Mekong Delta are narrow-minded and obsessed with religious practice, caring little about education. Few of their families send their children to school. According to these converts, the Mekong Delta Chams only know how to read the Qur'an, but they do so without understanding the meaning of it, and suffer from various superstitions caused by their lack of scientific knowledge.

Responding to the Bani people's criticism that they have renounced their Cham heritage, they argue that they have no intention of abandoning Cham tradition and culture: by maintaining *akhar thrah* literacy and by participating in traditional ceremonies – such as visiting their ancestors' graves before the holy month of Ramadan – they preserve their cultural and historical traditions, unlike the Muslim Chams in the Mekong Delta. They especially emphasize their efforts to preserve knowledge of the Cham script. They showed me signs in their mosques written in both the Arabic and Cham scripts. Someone from a mosque came to my Cham language teacher's office to discuss how to eradicate Cham script illiteracy amongst the Sunni Muslim. They were critical of the Mekong Delta Chams who cannot read *akhar thrah* and know nothing of the history of Champa. Thus the sense of superiority among Sunni Islam converts in Ninh Thuan towards the Mekong Delta Chams takes more than just a religious form.

Unlike the Chams in the Mekong delta, whose ethnicity is constructed around Islam, the Muslim Chams in south central Vietnam cannot use Islam alone to construct their ethnic identity. They need to include elements of tradition connecting them to the ancient kingdom of Champa: *akhar thrah* and the Cham language hold a significant place in their construction of ethnicity.

Conclusion

An ethnic classification often gives a homogenous and monolithic image to "a group", while in reality people's ethnic identity is complex and quite dynamic. Being a Cham in Vietnam has various meanings: from being descendants of the kingdom of Champa, to being Muslim from being honest to being backward: all depends on whom one is interacting with and in what kind of social context. The ethnic boundaries which determine the ethnic content always need to be articulated and readjusted according to the various relationships

to other groups, and the social context. Ethnicity is fluid and malleable. It is an "ambiguous aspect of social life" (T. Eriksen 1993:31).

The ethnicity of the Chams in south central Vietnam has been constructed around a connection to the past, the kingdom of Champa. Beyond their communities, they assert their ethnicity by claiming this heritage, by making links with the ancient kingdom which once established a civilization quite different from Vietnamese civilization and at least as prosperous as Vietnamese civilization. They assert their respect for and preservation of cultural traditions expressed through continued ritual practices, maintenance of cultural knowledge including the writing system, constant searching for the origins of the Cham culture, and a reluctance to marry non-Cham outsiders. Meanwhile, internally, their ethnicity is demonstrated by an intricate and fluid dualism, the concept of *Ahier* and *Awar*, the male and female realms. The fluidity of these terms illustrates the interdependency of the 2 religious groups, Cham Balamon and Bani and their construction of an ethnic identity as Cham.

Various local Cham scholars have identified *Ahier* and *Awar* as the linga and Yoni, the sacred symbols of Hinduism, the religion of Champa. Paul Mus argued that Hinduism was probably accepted by the population of Champa without resistance, as a result of a certain cultural predisposition. He explained this as follows. The area from the Bay of Bengal of India through Indochina, Southern China, Indonesia and other Pacific islands used to belong to a single cultural area called Monsoon Culture. In Monsoon culture, people believed in animism. Among the spirits, the spirit of the earth was one of the most important. To worship the earth spirit – an abstract being – people erected stones at sacred places. The erected stones were sometimes personified by heads of communities who played a significant role as links between the earth spirit and the community. In such a religious environment, the people of Monsoon Culture did not perceive the newly introduced Hindu religion as a totally foreign practice, but rather as something familiar. Mus argued that this local religious background led to the localization of indigenization of Hinduism, or in other words Cham Balamon religion (P. Mus 1975).

According to Tran Phuong Ky, a specialist of Champa art history, the dual principle of the Cham people can be observed in the structure of the sanctuary at My Son[14]. He further argued that the location of the 2 sanctuaries – My Son in Quang Nam province and Po Nagar in Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa province – reflects certain characteristics of the cosmological dualism. My Son, the sanctuary for the god Siva symbolizes the father/male realm, while Po Nagar, the sanctuary for the goddess of Po Inu Nugar symbolizes the mother/female realm (Tran Ky Phuong and R. Nakamura 2007). My anthropological research shows that this dual structure lies at the heart of the dynamics of identity which constructs their ethnicity and the world of Cham people in central Vietnam.

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[14] Personal conversation with Tran Phuong Ky during my visit to My Son in 2005.

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Bani Islam Cham in Vietnam

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Abstract

The Chams are an ancient ethnic group which inhabits several countries in Southeast Asia today. In Vietnam, the Chams are given official recognition as one of the 54 ethnic groups that make up the country. Numerically, the Chams number over 131,0000 people and historically they once had their own kingdom and illustrious civilization in Champa which overlaps with central Vietnam today. The Chams in Vietnam may be divided into three categories, namely, the Brahmanized or Hinduized Chams, the Bani Islam Chams and the Chams who follow orthodox Islam. Although these three groups of Chams have plenty of differences between them it is their ethnic identity as Cham that unites them as a people. In view of the uniqueness of their culture and history, there have been many attempts to study them from many different approaches. This paper attempts to examine the role of the Bani Islam Chams in Vietnam from the sociological perspective. Their heterodox version of indigenized Islam is very different from the orthodox Islam observed by their ethnic brethren in Southwest Vietnam as they are also distinctive from the Brahmanized or Hinduized Chams. Using appropriate illustrations, the paper tries to show that the unique and colourful culture and life-style of the Bani Islam Chams continues to be relevant today as they have been from ancient times.

Rationale

Religion is a social phenomenon which impacts on two sides of life, namely the community and the individual. Religion has existed from the dawn of civilization up till this present time. Religion plays a pivotal role in helping fulfill the spiritual need of believers. Religion does not only consist of rites and rituals but also encompasses social affairs. It is able to relate to the perceived world of the afterlife (heaven and hell) as well as influence the current living world. The activities of religion are closely associated with the life of the community and the nation.

Along with the problems of the present life, religion and religious festivities have always been a major focus of research. The field of sociology is particularly keen on looking at the various issues that the above generates. In Vietnam, the Bani Islam Cham is only a small community. However, with the current global trend of showing a lot of interest in indigenous communities all over the world, it has come to be appreciated as something unique. Interestingly it is this externally-inspired interest that has brought about the rejuvenation of the community.

There are 54 different ethnic minority groups inhabiting Vietnam. These groups have co-existed harmoniously with each other and have kept abreast with the changes of the time. One group that is of particular interest to researchers and the international community, are the Cham people. The Chams are an ethnic group which belongs to the Malayo–Polynesian family who have lived in Central Vietnam for a long time. They have had wide and extensive relations with the continent of Asia and with people from these areas. As an indigenous people who over time gradually became exposed to waves of external influences, the Cham

Map of Vietnam

people have over this long period, created, diversified, reinvented and developed their unique culture to sustain it and make it perennially relevant to the changing times.

Over time, the Cham people have settled in many places. In the process they began to mix with other ethnic groups. The impact of various factors such as the economy, society, environment and geography on the Cham people has been very deep. Today, the Cham communities are represented by three groups divided along religious lines, namely: the Bani Islam Chams, the Brahmanized or Hinduized Chams (Central Vietnam) and the orthodox or mainstream Cham Islam (of South Vietnam).

In Vietnam, the Bani Islam Chams do not ordinarily distinguish themselves from the broader Cham community. Therefore, we need to take note of the basic characteristics of the Cham people as a religious community and the Cham people as an ethnic community. In this sense, the most outstanding trait of the Bani Islam Cham is their unique lifestyle based on their version of Islam which is very different from that of orthodox Islam. This is the subject that I have chosen to address in this paper.

Up to now, most works on the Cham people have tended to ignore the Bani Islam, because they are not well-known. Thus, in this paper we aim to look at them from the sociological angle in order to develop new insights about the problem of the Cham people and the implementation of the law of Islam especially in Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces. We hope to also use the scientific contributions of other researchers from other scientific fields in the past in our attempt to examine the role of the Bani Islam Cham in Vietnam.

Overview of the problem

The Cham people and their cultural religion have been a subject of interest which has been studied for over one century already. For example, the rites, customs, and beliefs of the Chams have been examined in the early XIX century. And up till now, there have been numerous research works on this subject by scholars at home and abroad.

Works of French researchers such as A.Labussìere, Septfonts, A.Landed, and A.Bergaign, easily come to mind. One notable researcher who has made an enormous contribution to the field is E.Aymonier whose work is titled "Les Chams aø Bình Thuaän" (The Cham people in Bình Thuaän; February, 1891). E.Aymonier said that Islam was imported

into Champa in the early X century. Most of the Cham people that adopted Islam refused to be assimilated into Vietnamese society. Hence, they migrated to Cambodia, Siam (Thailand) and Haûi Nam [Hainan in China] island rather than submit themselves to subjugation by the Vietnamese.

In addition, in his works such as "Islamic Cham people and their religion" (April, 1891) he described the religious rites and organizational system of the Bani Islam. He also highlighted the life cycle rites of the Chams. However, his research was rather general and fragmented.

On the other hand, to complement more completely the study of the Cham people in Vietnam, the Cham people in Cambodia have been introduced in works such as "The belief and conformability regulations of a religion of Cham people in Cambodia" by E.Aymonier. They all practise orthodox Islam. They give up their ancestor's heterodox rites and only retained selected customs and attire. According to E.Aymonier, the population of the Cham people in Cambodia was about 10 000 with around 100 villages (paley) and most were well-off, living in crowded villages.

In 1906–1907, Cabaton wrote a series of articles about the Cham people and the Malays in Southern Vietnam; the Cambodian and Cham people in Phan Rang, Phan Rí. In 1941 in a monograph about Islam in Indochina, M. Ner mentioned some basic things about the economy, society, education and religion of the Chams at a Cham village in Chaâu Ñoác.

From the 1950s to 1975, many researchers on the Cham people began to emerge in Vietnam such as, Nghieâm Thaåm and Nguyeãn Khaéc Ngöõ. Works such as Dorohieâm's "Summary of the history of the Cham", 1974; Thaùi Vaên Kieåm's "The influence of Chieâm Thaønh on culture of Vietnam"; and Nguyeãn Vaên Luaän's "Islamic Cham people in the Southwest of Vietnam", 1974, were produced. The latter is a detailed description of the manners, customs and religious rites of the Cham people in the South.

After 1975, the country has been peaceful. The prevailing conditions favoured more studies on the Chams. Besides, with the growing interest on religious problems in the State, some scholars who had studied the Chams in the past, gradually took on a bigger research project such as Ngoâ Vaên Doanh's "Champa culture", 1994; and Maïc Ñöôøng's "The national problem in the Mekong Delta".

Recently, a work entitled "Cham culture" was published by Phan Xuaân Bieân, Phan Vaên Doáp and Phan An, in 1991. This was a meticulously researched work on the family, marriage and the religious rites of the Chams. However, this was only a general work and did not thoroughly examine the practice of the Islamic rites of the Islam Cham people.

In addition to the above, there have also been many articles which introduced the religion, rites and the relations between the Islam Cham people and the Viet people in popular magazines as well as papers presented at scientific conferences.

On the whole, up to now, although there has been some progress on the research on the Islam Cham people, the approach adopted by most researchers, hitherto, has been to rely primarily on historical, cultural, and ethnological perspectives. The sociological approach has been almost totally ignored. This paper hopes to fill up the above gap.

Methods and technique of study
The general method
The general method that is used in here, is a qualitative one, combined with descriptive and explanatory notes. The qualitative research helps us understand about the real thoughts and feelings of the Bani Islam Cham believers. Through this method, we should be able to know some of the delicate problems relating to religion and the nation.

The above research method which seeks to describe a fact or state of object in a verifiable way is a very objective approach. This description plays an important role in the analysis of selected phenomena to point out their relationship with the practice of Islamic laws.

Together with the descriptive method above there is also a need to add explanatory notes. The two methods are always in harmony. Further explanations are always necessary to clarify the relationships between an object and a particular phenomenon or several phenomena.

The concrete method

a.The methods of data collection and collation from available sources in the works of others which are related or relevant relate to the problem discussed here. Findings of reports, statistical data, and other relevant information which directly related to the problem being studied.

b. Methods of sampling: Looking for objects which fit the characteristics and demands of the subject being examined, which in this case is the Islam Cham people in Ninh Thuaän, Bình Thuaän.

c. Methods of analysis and processing of information.

The method of analysing documents: in printed matters in order to extract the necessary and relevant information.

Analysis of traditional documents:

Besides using the sociological method, the paper also tries to use the historical method especially in trying to trace the historical evolution in Vietnam of both the Bani Islam Cham in particular and the Cham people in general, the background features of their residence, and their activities all viewed within a historical framework.

As observed above there are 54 different ethnic minority groups inhabiting the various parts of Vietnam. These different ethnic minority groups have lived in harmony with one another and managed to preserve their respective ways of life, adjusting and adapting them according to the demands of the of the times. One of the nationalities in Vietnam that has aroused the interest of both foreign as well as local researchers is the Cham people. They are an ethnic group belonging to the Malayo-Polynesian family and who have lived for a very long time in Central Vietnam. They have had extensive relations with many different ethnic groups continental as well as insular Southeast Asia. For example, the Sa Huynh culture which is considered to be the forerunner of Champa culture with relics along the central coastal from Quang Binh to Dong Nai was a flourishing culture. Archaeologists have excavated and found many objects such as- earrings, silver and agate jewelry belonging to that ancient period. In ancient-medieval times there were many ancient architectural and sculptural works which were scattered everywhere in places such as: Amaravati (Quang Binh), Indrapura (Da Nang), Vijaya (Quy Nhon), Kanthara (Nha Trang – Dak Lak), Panturaga(Phan Rang – Dong Nai). The ancient steles, in particular, provide solid evidence of the long history of the Cham people in the region as well as their claim to being indigenous to the area. They had an illustrious civilization which could be easily compared to many other well known civilizations in other parts of Asia and the world. From their indigenous origins, the Cham people have evolved to acquire more complex characteristics due to the continual waves of exogenous influences, emerging in the process as a colourful, diversified and unique culture. This was how the Bani Islam Chams have evolved in Vietnam.

According to official statistics in 1989, the population of the Cham people in Vietnam numbered 131.282. They were primarily influenced by Indian culture and had three differ-

ent religions: Brahmanism or Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Among these the Muslims were divided into two branches namely the Bani Islam Cham and the Chams who practice orthodox Islam. In the case of Buddhism, it only existed amongst the Cham royalty and prospered in Indravarman II 875 A.D. The Bani Islam of the Cham people mainly live in central Vietnam in Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan (Phan Rang, Phan Rí), while the Cham people of the orthodox Islamic faith are to be found mainly in Southwest of Vietnam in An Giang, Ho Chi Minh city, Long Khanh, Binh Phuoc. In central Vietnam, two thirds of the Chams are followers of Brahmanism and the remaining one third are the Bani Islam group. In Southwest Vietnam 100 percent of the Chams are Muslims of the orthodox Islamic faith.

Islam was imported into Champa in the 9th century, Ed Huber said that he found a paragraph in a history book of Sung which explains as follows: "There are also (in Champa) many buffaloes in the mountains but people did not use them to plough. They offered them to a deity". When they kill a buffalo as a sacrifice, they prayed "Alla Akhar". This expression was in order to assert and honour Allah – the only Supreme Being who Muslims must call out in name during prayer.

Aymonier also found that in the historical books of the Cham people, one paragraph was described as follows: "In the Mouse year, one man who has Allah's nature who acted for perfection of the Champa Kingdom, yet people were dissatisfied so he donated his body and mind for God/Allah and lived in Mecca. After that he came back to Champa Kingdom". This account coincided with an archaeological excavation which found two steles in the central coast of Vietnam. One was dated 1039 and the other was from 1025 to 1035. Both of them mentioned Islam but they were foreigners who lived in the central coast of Vietnam. They were businessmen and craftsmen, and lived in groups and had a spiritual leader, who was called an Imaam, who presided over ceremonies.

This stele document proves that the imported Islam had already entered the Champa Kingdom in the 10th century.

Unlike the Bani Islam Cham people, the Cham people in the Southwest of Vietnam observed the orthodox religious laws, lived fully as a community of the faithful. These practices were based on Quranic and Islamic religious laws. This helped them observe their spiritual activities which were centered around the Mosque (Thang Mögik) which was considered as the center for religious and political activity in the village. The Bani Islam Cham people, on the other hand do not depend on Muslim laws. They have an their own religious law and rites which are quite different from the rites of the orthodox Muslims. These include things such as, "Karôh", marriage (Pakhaùh) and funeral (Pathih). They only need their clergy to sustain their version of heterodox Islam. In the Bani Islam concept of Islam the ordinary people could delegate the task of performing religious rites and practices to their clergy or elders and be relieved of their individual religious obligations.

The organization of Bani Islam:

Every family chooses one or two members (a family may choose three) to represent them and carry out the religious activities such as: marriage and funeral rites and etc. The delegated members of the family are called "Acar". Their mission was to recite their version of the Quran to undertake the various religious and to carry out the various religious rites. However, although the Bani Islam clergy (or priests) and/or the delegated members of the family are able to recite Quranic verses, they do not understand the meaning at all. When the delegates become "Acar", they have to obey the religious laws. If they break the laws, they will be punished either seriously or slightly. Normally, they must apologize (Ngah païh) to Poâ Auloah's (Allah).

This is a complete religious system which includes people such as the following:

- Acar
- Madin – madintan
- Imöm – Imömtan
- Gruø

These people carry out religious laws, first and foremost of which is the weekly communal prayer and other important services.

"Acar" or "Char" is a person who has newly joined the ranks of the clergy. They are required by law to practice and recite the Quran. They are divided to 4 grades: Jamak, Talavi, Poâ sit, Poâ prong.

"Madin" – "Madintan": is the one who chairs ceremonies and rites, and teaches children the Quran.

"Khotip" or "Tip": is one who delivers the Friday sermon to the Muslim congregation every week at the mosque. "Tip"'s mission in Bani Islam is to carry out the rites in mosques and private houses, and has no part in explaining doctrines or teachings.

"Imöm" or "Möm": is a person who is senior and has practised for at least 15 years. He is considered as being knowledgeable on the Bani Islam religion, is able to recite the Quran and perform all religious rites. Among these people is "Möm" – the person understands the Quran and Islamic morals thoroughly. He is chosen to present himself before the forty saints – called Möm Pah (Möm 40). This selection must conform to the strict regulations, particularly of the knowledge of morals and the Quran, and the acceptability of the priest (Poâ Gruø) in that area. Every year there are only one or two days of such an inauguration where the I Möm and Poâ Gruø would come to witness.

Poâ Gruø (The witness): is a person who all the clergy and people in the village vote for. He would lead people in the mosque or hold rites in private houses, and help resolve most problems about religious affairs and social affairs.

In every Mosque (Thang Gik), they choose a group to include Imöm, Din, Tip, Möm that serve for three years. Their task is to communicate the views and decisions of Poâ Gruø or marabouts to the believers.

The Bani Islam of Cham people do not observe the five pillars of Islam which orthodox Muslims must observe such as the declaration of faith to confirm their absolute confidence in Allah and Mohammad as the messenger of God; the five-times of prayers a day and attend the observance of the obligatory Friday prayer in the mosque; the giving of zakat [religious tithes] or [alms] charity; and the need to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime for Muslims who have sufficient means of finance and are in good health to do so. When a Muslim accomplishes his mission to Mecca, they will confer him the title Haji. Almost all the Bani Islam believers do not carry out the above mentioned duties because they believe that religious affairs need only to be carried out by the marabouts (Acar) and these people represent the believers to implement their duty towards Allah. Therefore, in respect of the implementation of their Islamic obligations, every family must have a person who is delegated to represent the whole family in its religious duties and obligations. This person will replace the other members of the family to assume the religious duties with Allah and carry out the practices of their customs such as in marriage and funeral rites and etc in the family. Especially, the title the delegated member of the family is passed from this lifetime to the next. It is clear from the above that the ordinary Bani Islam Cham members do not at all observe the Islamic practices of orthodox Islam. In fact, even the religious leaders of the Bani Islam Cham disregard these practices. Nevertheless, what is interesting for the Bani Islam Cham is that while in the case of the orthodox Muslims the mosque is supposed to be a place where believers pray five times a day and use it as a religious and political center, their mosque only opens on Fridays, in the Ramöran month

(Ramödan) and only during important ceremonies of Islam. The charity which is required of orthodox Islam as one of its principal tenets is changed into an "exchange of rice" by the Bani Islam Chams. The Islamic clergy and members in the family in the Ramöran month give rice in lieu of alms for the marabouts of their family.

The fasting month of Ramöwan (Ramadan):

If one is a Muslim, the month of Ramadan is considered a very special month where the observance of fasting is considered obligatory. This is part of the five main principles of Islam.. The fasting month always makes a very strong appeal to the Muslims. The fasting month starts from when the moon appears in the ninth month of the year in the Muslim calendar to ŧ when it occurs again the following month. The Cham people in Southwest of Vietnam have an Islamic calendar which is prepared by Hadji Isahat which takes notes of the holidays which coincide with the solar calendar. They therefore knowing when the fasting month starts and ends. In general, the Ramödan month is regarded as a very important month. To the Cham people in Southwest of Vietnam, all their other activities are usually stopped during the daytime and believers only resume normal life when the sun sets. But for the Bani Islam Cham people who mainly live in Phan Rang (Pa Rang) and Phan Rí (Pa Rik), Ramödan is not considered a fasting month for everyone. It is regarded as a training month for the new religious priests or a month where offerings to the dead for Allah and the Saints of Islam are made. During this month, young priests come to the mosque to conduct various ceremonies. Every family of a new religious leader must offer two sacrifical trays: one meal on a tray and one steamed glutinous rice and sweet soup on another tray or in place of it, a fruit cake. Members of the new religious leader's family must carry the rice and fruit for him. In the early part of the Ramövan month, the fifteenth day of the lunar month and the end of fast day, all believers have to bring offerings to the mosque. This includes one meal on a tray and one sweet soup on a tray. The Bani Islam Cham people think that this act demonstrates their sincerity to Allah. The mosque during the month of Ramödan becomes a center of religious activity, particularly at night. Because new religious leaders must enter the mosque to eat vegetarian dishes, their activities take place inside the mosque throughout the Ramövan month. In addition, the followers of Brahmanism also recognize Allah and pray for Allah's blessing. This fact is interesting. So, during the month of Ramödan the followers of Brahmanism also carry cakes and bananas to worship and pray in the mosque. This practice is probably the most unique in the world specific only to the Cham people.

According to ancient documents and notables from the previous century to the XXth century, the mosque (Thang Gik) was made of thatch, bamboo walls and ground. In the front of the house is placed seven flat stones for the priests to perform the ablution (washing arms and legs before holding a ceremony). Today, all the mosques of Bani Islam are built with cement, tile roof and bricks. With regard to the architecture, the style of the mosque of the Cham people is different from the mosques in the rest of the Muslim. But what is interesting is that it is still directed towards the West – which is the direction of Mecca. The end side of Mosque – the wall on the west has a corner, called "mimbar" – where priests explain the various doctrines relating to Sunna or Haji. The main religious activities of at the Bani Islam mosques are: the fasting rite during the month of Ramödan and the ceremonies on Friday every week, called "Sut yaâng" or "Zam at". Therefore the religious rites of the Bani Islam Cham are very different from those of the orthodox Muslims.

Generally speaking, the Bani Islam of the Cham people have existed for a long time. They have always preserved their cultural and religious activities with their unique and specific characteristics. Religious Laws had changed so much to suit the matriarchal society

of the Cham people. The appearance of the priest is specific to the Bani Islam Cham. The above features indicate that a small part of orthodox Islam which was imported into Champa and indigenized into Cham culture, became absorbed into its folk culture, manners and customs. This is probably the principal factor which has made the Bani Islam Cham people in Vietnam different from the other Muslims elsewhere in Southeast Asia and throughout the Muslim world.

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Pictures of Bani Islam Cham in Vietnam

Getting ready for the Thaon Ninh Rite (1)

Thaonh Ninh Rite

Women preparing for the Thaonh Ninh Rite

Preparing for the Thaonh Ninh Rite

Preparing for the marriage ceremony

Preparing for the wedding feast

Elderly women at a wedding

Marriage ceremony

Bride and bridegroom

Female worshippers at a mosque

Mosque scene

Praying at Home

Preparing for Khotam [Circumcision]

Bani Islam Cham Funeral

Funeral procession

Prayer ritual at the ancestral graves

Visiting ancestral graves

Paying respect to the ancestral graves

Children at the ancestral graves

The Baweans of Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract

This paper is part of my PhD research at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. It focuses on the third and fourth generation of descendants of a group of immigrants that left the Bawean Island in the Java Sea for the French Colony Indochina around 1900. This paper introduces this group of Muslims currently living in the Center of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. The members of this religious community are transnationally active and see themselves, at one and the same time, as "*orang Bawean*" or Bawean people, and as Vietnamese or even Cham, and as good Muslims. They live around one of the first mosques built in Ho Chi Minh City informally called the "*thanh duong Malaï*" or Malay temple. Some 60 of its members did not have any citizenship since they day they were born in what is currently known as Vietnam. In 2003 these people suddenly applied for Vietnamese citizenship. This presentation looks into the reasons for this decision and the implications it had for the Vietnamese state officials. It deals with questions of assimilation, influences of transnational religious contacts and the interaction between these "Baweans" and the state officials in a country that is hardly known for its pro-active approach when it comes to matters of citizenship or religion.

Hidir and I were sitting outside the mosque in the center of Hồ Chí Minh City looking at the Friday afternoon traffic. We were discussing his request for Vietnamese citizenship. Smoke drifted past us. It came from the *halal* chicken grilled behind us in the food-stalls erected against the mosque's gate and it enveloped a car with diplomatic plates as it pulled away from the curb and into a swarm of motorcycles. Usually the Indonesian Consul-General would stay for lunch after the Friday afternoon prayer. Sometimes he would invite one of the Muslims living around the mosque to join him for a meal because he feels connected to these people who share his religion and his country of origin, but not today. Hidir nodded his head at the car and commented,

> He was no help to us at all when we applied for Indonesian citizenship. We told him, 'In Vietnam we are classified as aliens but no foreign country accepts us as citizens. We cannot hold land titles or Vietnamese identity papers. We have not been accepted in universities, we have never been accepted for governmental jobs and we have not been able to leave the country legally. Still even today some of us have actively chosen not to register with the police or apply for Vietnamese citizenship. We want to ask you to help us become Indonesian citizens again.' But he was no help to us, that one[1].

Hidir's comment brings us to some of the main issues presented in this article: labels of ethnic classification, citizenship and the ways people have tried to find a way to deal with these labels. In this article I present the Baweans, a *Sunni* Muslim immigrant community in Vietnam of the western Malayo-Polynesian Austronesian language group[2].

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[1] Interview with Hidir, June, 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City, All Interviewees' names have been changed for the sake of anonymity

[2] Darrell Tyron, "Proto-Austronesian and the Major Austronesian Subgroups," The Austronesians: Historical and Comparative Perspectives, (Peter Bellwood, James. J. Fox, and Darrell Tyron, Canberra: Department of

Little is known of what has become of this small migrant group in post-colonial Vietnam, even less of it is known as a Muslim minority in a security-conscious state post- 9/11. The people in this group have lived under the Vietnamese state's radar screen as stateless citizens. In 2001, sixty elderly men and women within this group decided to apply for Vietnamese citizenship. They knew that as a result, state officials would have to fit them into the existing classificatory grid. But even in 2002, these people still had not been classified nor did they have legal citizenship.

Charles Keyes notes, "ethnic classification has been as an instrument of power … by modern states to fit in the "motley crowds" located on their frontiers"[3]. In this article I present a case study of one of these "motley crowds". Yet the Bawean people do not live on geographical "frontiers". Rather, and as they have done for the past hundred and fifty years, they live in the central business district of the country's economic hub. They do, however, exist on the fringes of formal classification and in many cases they do so willingly. They often chose for their children to remain stateless up to a certain age, as I will explain below.

This article shows that official ethnic classification as an instrument of power may blow an authoritative tune, but that it is not always listened to. When people wish to evade such classification they find ways to achieve that and when they decide to make use of such an instrument of power for their own benefit they will try and do so.

We suggest that over the past decade Vietnamese governmental institutions have become less restrictive with Muslim communities in Vietnam. Some scholars have even called the Vietnamese State's relations with its minorities relatively enlightened compared to global standards[4]. This is quite remarkable if we note that in East and Southeast Asia, relations between Muslim majorities and non-Muslim minorities (Indonesia, Malaysia) and between Muslim minorities and non-Muslim majorities (the Philippines, Thailand, China) are under stress[5] and often result in stricter governmental control or even abuses such as have taken place in Pattani, in southern Thailand. In Vietnam, governmental institutions do not actively set out to classify or control Muslim communities forcing them into the grid of fifty-four formally classified ethnic groups. In the Bawean case, this tolerance almost borders on indifference, but when state agents were confronted with the Bawean request for citizenship that Vietnamese law until then had not yet encountered, they suddenly act serviceable, even amiable. Before I present the case study I will provide some historic background information on the Bawean.

Who are the Baweans?

This article presents a case study based on fieldwork that lasted from 2000 to 2005. To describe the community's experiences from their arrival in Saigon around 1880 up to the present, in detail goes beyond the scope of this article. They are descendants of people from

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Anthropology Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1995): 17-35. According to Tyron, the Austronesian language family is very large, with some 1200 languages and approximately 270 million speakers… It ranges from languages with tens of millions of speakers (Malay/Indonesian, Javanese, Tagalog) to a surprisingly large number of languages with only a handful of speakers numbered in the hundreds. Austronesian languages are spoken from Madagascar in the west to Easter Island in the east. They are spoken almost universally in Indonesia and the Philippines, in Singapore and Malaysia, by the indigenous population of Taiwan and by minority populations in Vietnam, Cambodia and the Mergui Archipelago off the coast of Myanmar.

[3] Charles F. Keyes "'The Peoples of Asia': Science and politics in the classification of ethnic group in Thailand, China, and Vietnam" Journal of Asian Studies (2002): 1163-1203, 1174

[4] Terry A. Rambo, "Vietnam," Ethnicity in Asia, Asia's Transformations (M. Selden, London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002): 109-135

[5] Leif Manger, Muslim Diversity: Local Islam in Global Contexts (Richmond: Curzon, 1990)

Bawean Island north of Madura in the Java Sea. These islanders came to Indochina from the Netherlands East Indies as early as the nineteenth century. They now form an Austronesian *Sunni* Muslim immigrant community in Vietnam. Their migration was firstly prompted by socio-economic motivations. They wished to escape the repressive Dutch colonial indentured labour system[6]. Secondly, emigration was a structural cultural element of Bawean culture also known as *merantau* [emigration][7]. Thirdly, their migration was indirectly the result of their religious beliefs. Muslims, men and women, who could afford it, would travel to Mecca as pilgrims. On the way to Mecca and back, their ships would cast anchor in what is currently known as Singapore. Some individuals would stay on either to make some money before venturing on a pilgrimage or for their return home afterwards. Some travelled along the Mekong River working for Chinese businessmen and tried to find a job in Saigon once they arrived[8]. Later, during the colonial period, stories about life in Indochina where the French Colonial Administration welcomed non-locals attracted them. As a result some Bawean people travelled from what is Singapore's harbour today to Saigon over sea, by river or over land.

Around 1850 some three hundred men had settled on the banks of a small branch of the Saigon River. The newly arrived Bawean migrants constructed their first houses from wood with thatched roofs on the banks of the river. Little is known about their life prior to and during the colonial period in Indochina. Informants recall their parents telling them how the French officials actively provided them with a variety of jobs such as security guards, custom officials and construction workers[9]. From documents still in their possession I can conclude that upon arrival in Saigon the French government officially labelled them with the cover term *Malais*.

Certain branches of the colonial administration used cover-terms to structure and control the colonial society. The earlier French colonial government had such trouble classifying people that contemporary authors already complained about these inaccuracies. *Malais* for example was an ethnic cover term and its intended use was for people from the areas now known as Indonesia and Malaysia. As an ethnonym it did not describe someone's national or citizenship status. Confusingly enough, in many cases local officials classified people from other areas as *Malais* as well. Antoine Cabaton, wrote that often state officials made no distinction between *Malais* or *Cham*[10]. Marcel Ner complained that it was difficult to get a precise count of the number of alien Muslims and Arabs living in Indochina because the statistics and regulations used by the colonial administration often added them to the groups that were classified as *Indien* which also had people of Hindu persuasion.

This structural inaccurate identification and allotment of individuals to certain categories was even formalised in colonial administrative law. Different groups or congregations of immigrants in Indochina had to fit into:

    1 les Chinois: Les congrégations de Canton, Foukien, Tvhiou-Tchao, Hakas, Hainam.
    2 les Indiens: celle des Musulmans et celle des Bouddhistes.
    3 les Malais, les Javanais, et les Arabes

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[6] Malte Stokhof, Javanese in Hochiminh city today: an Aftermath of Coolie Migration in French Colonial Vietnam? (MA Thesis: Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2002)

[7] Jakob Vredenbregt, De Baweanners in hun moederland en in Singapore: Een bijdrage tot de kulturele antropologie van zuidoost-Azie, (PhD dissertation Leiden: Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1968)

[8] Fieldnotes, June 2001, Hochiminh City

[9] Marcel Ner, "Les Musulmans de L'Indochine Française" Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extreme-Orient vol. XXXVII (1937): 152-198

[10] Antoine Cabaton, "Les malais de L' Indochine française," Revue Indochinoise (1912): 163-171

4 les autres Asiatiques étrangers et assimilés[11].

These congregations forcibly grouped people of different language-families indiscriminately together. They were based partially on the geographical area of origin such as is the case with the first two congregations. *Malais* as an ethnic cover term was to play an important part in the lives of these people and their descendants as we shall see in greater detail later.

There were other Muslim communities in Saigon and most of them built mosques claiming to be the first in Saigon[12]. It is not clear who were actually the first to start building a mosque in Saigon. Documents found in the Archives in Hồ Chí Minh City indicate that a congregation of Muslims from what is Pakistan and India today had received land where they had started building a mosque even before the Bawean but it took them years to finish the project. The Bawean claim to have built their mosque in 1885 and they may well have completed the construction of their mosque before the other communities[13]. Their temple was called the *Chùa Mã Lai* [Malay Temple] up to 1972 but as some elderly men interviewed in 2001 recall,

> We wanted to change that name because we are of Indonesian origin, not Malaysian. Around 1973 we changed the name after a major mosque in Jakarta, Indonesia[14].

In the interview it was clear that the informant interpreted *Mã Lai* as Malaysia. With that change of name they reaffirmed their connection with their country of origin.

The first generations tried to keep in touch with their relatives overseas either in their country of origin or with the people living in what is currently Singapore. As time passed on, these contacts slowly lessened and eventually most of the relations with fellow Bawean abroad died off. From their first arrival in 1880 to 1976 people from Bawean and other origins arrived and settled around their mosque in Saigon. Some returned.

Most of the first migrants were men and they married local and non-local Muslims. Some married non-Muslims under the condition that they would convert to Islam. There was also a small contingent of Javanese manual labourers in Saigon but the Bawean community did not interact with them[15]. Children born from marriages were considered Bawean and if someone within the community passed away, he was buried at a cemetery in Saigon that was in the care of a Bawean immigrant who lived on the plot with his family.

Later, during the Vietnam War President Ngô Đình Diệm's Regime strove for a more monolithic Vietnamese society[16]. During his regime this process of forced ethnic simplification and formalisation of the indigenous population that had been started under the French continued to be applied. Classifications of foreigners by earlier governments were often uncritically accepted and their ethnonyms were translated into Vietnamese or English versions. For the Bawean who decided to register, this meant that they were now no longer

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[11] René Deschamps, La main-d' Oeuvre en Indo-Chine et L'immigration étrangère, (PhD dissertation: Université de Poitiers, 1908)

[12] Marcel Ner, "Les Musulmans de L'Indochine Française" Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extreme-Orient vol. XXXVII (1937): 152-198

[13] Commisariat de la Police des Ports de Saigon Cholon, 1933, Goucoch divers 2995 Note sur l'affaire de la mosque de Saigon, Vietnam National Archives II (VNA-II), Hồ Chí Minh City. This document deals with quarrels over money in the 'Indian Mosque' and mentions that in 1863 the colonial government assigned land to the 'Congrégation de Indiens Musulmans' [the congregation of Indian Muslims].

[14] Interview with hakim of mosque, July, 2001, Hồ Chí Minh City

[15] Malte Stokhof, Javanese in Hochiminh city today: an Aftermath of Coolie Migration in French Colonial Vietnam? (Ma thesis: Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2002)

[16] Rie Nakamura, Cham in Vietnam: Dynamics of Ethnicity, (PhD dissertation: University of Washington, 1999)

Malais, but had become *Malay*. It should be stressed at this point that this word was still used as an ethnic cover term.

Around 1976, the community had around two thousand people living close or directly next to the mosque. Based on interviews taken from 2000 to 2006, the current number of people with Bawean origins is approximately two thousand. This is an estimate because it has become increasingly difficult to count these individuals because firstly not all descendants of this group wish to be known as Bawean, secondly I cannot base our census on papers because of the lack of proper documentation or the confusing ethnonyms or nationality stated on those documents. Another point is that not all Bawean wish to come out of the woodwork to present themselves for a census.

Reunification of Vietnam, a Scramble for Papers

In 1976, after the Second Indochina War the newly established Socialist Republic of Vietnam gave people of non-Vietnamese nationality permission to repatriate and many who wished to escape the new regime tried to leave the country. Those people with alien status that stayed behind were asked to re-register at the local police offices. From interviews I learned that people were well aware that their future partly depended on how the new state officials would appreciate and interpret their old identity papers. Most people had no proper documentation and this now led to questions and concerns about the ethnic and national categorization the new administration might have in store for them. Ahmed, an elderly guard who claims to have worked for both the French and the Americans puts it in plain words,

> We had no papers because, before, we could do without them. My parents experienced many governments, the Dutch government in Indonesia, the government of Singapore, the French, the Japanese and many different governments before the unification of Vietnam. Of course many of us did not learn of the regulations [of various governments] for these kinds of documents. Anyway we never intended to stay forever. We have also been through three wars and during times of war we still gave birth or passed away, but we did not register these facts of life as we would in times of peace[17]

It is clear from his story that the introduction of new regulations passed some of these people by. What is striking in his story is the fact that he uses the word 'Indonesia' for what at the time was still the Netherlands East Indies. Many informants use Indonesia to denote their country of origin but it should be clear that Indonesia as a country did not exist at the time their ancestors left the Netherlands East Indies. Another important point is that he plainly states that he and his fellow Bawean did not intend to stay forever. This is a diasporic sentiment that I have found in many interviews and I will introduce further below.

As has already been mentioned, some realized that there might exist a direct link between the way people were labelled and officially classified and the possibility to leave the country. This resulted in a scramble for national and ethnic identities. Descendants of Bawean immigrants that had lived in Vietnam for several generations now dug up their grandparents' papers from former regimes or looked for foreigners that had prayed at their mosque to vouch for them. Some would present themselves as foreigners in the hope that they would be accepted as aliens by the new administration and were allowed to leave the country.

Some used false documents that claimed nationalities such as Arab, Indonesian, Malaysian, Yemenite, Chinese and Cambodian. Quite a few Bawean informants suggested that

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[17] Interview with Ahmed, January 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City.

one could easily buy formal identities because many of the state officials were corrupt. This is in line with Huynh Kim Khanh's piece that states that,

> The regime has also tried to deal with an unexpected, yet apparently proved to be most serious, problem that had occurred since liberation, that is, corruption and bureaucratism among revolutionary cadres. In a few months following liberation, the population of Saigon was astonished beyond belief to discover that there were among the supposedly puritanical and morally upright communist cadres those who willingly accepted bribes or demanded them […] There are well-known incidents of cadres accepting bribes or even joining schemes of extortion. Other cadres gave work to unemployed prostitutes (perhaps out of humanity?)[18]

Some informants suggested that the state officials were just ill experienced,

> Because at that time the administration had just entered, they could not differentiate, whichever person held this or that paper he would just get that identity. The new regime only wanted to know what kind of foreign resident you were, so all they did was to identify everyone according to the papers from the old regime[19].

They further explained that as a consequence many Bawean individuals were able to register as non-Vietnamese citizens. This meant that some had passed the first hurdle on the way out of the country, but they often could not pass the second one, the consulate of their supposed country of origin. These institutions would not directly accept people who could not provide all needed materials or as Scott puts it, who did not speak the 'language of the state',

> If you wish to have anything standing in law, you must have a document that officials accept as evidence of citizenship, be that document a birth certificate, passport, or identity card. The categories used by state agents are not merely means to make their environment legible; they are an authoritative tune to which most of the population must dance (Scott 1998: 76)

It was with this authoritative tune that the Indonesian Consulate rejected Bawean men and women who could not provide documentation clearly stating the Netherlands East Indies as their country of origin. This is where the second hurdle proved too high.

To begin with, many had no papers whatsoever. If people had any documentation at all, the French Colonial Administration had in most cases provided it. As was said earlier, these papers stated *Malais* as their ethnic affiliation. These papers were not accepted as proof of being of Bawean origin.

If people had no proper papers, the consular officials would start looking for relatives or ancestors in the country to vouch for these people. In most cases they could not find anyone in the country of origin to sponsor the Bawean individuals. It had become almost impossible to return to their country of origin. Many of the Bawean individuals I met suggested that up until that point they or their family had taken their return to their country of origin as a matter of fact. They were now suddenly confronted with the realization that there was no way back for them.

It should be stressed at this point that many of the Bawean people who lived with this idea of a return to their country of origin belonged to a second-generation of immigrants. These men and women had been born in Indochina and the supposed country of origin, Bawean Island was their parents' place of origin not theirs. This prolonged idea of return to

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[18] Huynh Kim Khanh, "Year One of Postcolonial Vietnam" Southeast Asian Affairs (1977) 4:287, 296
[19] Interview with Ahmed, January 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City

a country that one has never visited is a phenomenon often found among diasporic communities. We will pursue this issue further below.

Other Bawean individuals decided to stay in Vietnam because they had heard rumours about the new area of settlement in Indonesia. Mohamed remembers some of the stories about where they would end up if they would return,

> We heard from people that the Indonesian government was clearing a piece of jungle for the home-comers close to Pontianak [West Kalimantan]. We heard that this area was hardly any good because it was far removed from any city and lacked infrastructure. Some of the older ones here did not want to go there because there were a lot of spirits, ghosts! Because of the Japanese, they killed many locals right there. So many here were concerned and decided to stay[20].

Those people who could not leave had to re-register at the local police offices together with the people who had decided to stay in the first place. Not everyone did because some were not aware of the need to re-register or did not have the funds to do so. Others decided not to comply. They feared the new administration and wanted to stay under the radar screen of the state. Those who did register were classified as alien citizens. Almost all Bawean who registered received an alien status in Vietnam with *quốc tịch Mã Lai* [Malay nationality] as their nationality.

To summarise, in the first part of this article I already mentioned that the French had labelled the Bawean with the ethnonym and cover term *Malais*. This became *Malay* during the Second Indochina War under the US-backed regimes and was still used as an ethnonym. This term was later translated into Vietnamese and resulted in the ethnic cover term *Mã Lai*. However, the use of the ethnic cover *Mã Lai* in direct combination with the term *quốc tịch* [country or nationality] on formal identity papers is troublesome. It states that the holder of such identity papers is a citizen of the non-existent state 'Malay'. Below, I will show how this led to misunderstandings under Vietnam's current government.

Ethnic classifications in Vietnam

After the second Indochina war, for the Socialist Republic of Vietnam enhancing national integration has been a constant preoccupation and even today great emphasis is placed on strengthening unity among the nation's different ethnic groups. The metaphor of the Vietnamese nation as a single 'great family' is frequently invoked and *Kinh* ethnic chauvinism officially discouraged. After the Re-unification, determining the ethnic identity of its citizens became an important state priority[21]. Current literature often portrays the state as the dominant institution in society, whose political policies regulate ethnicity and increasingly shape ethnic boundaries and influence patterns of ethnic identification[22]. As indicated above, Charles Keyes presented ethnic classification as a State's instrument of power to control people living on the fringes of society[23].

When it comes to the non-migrant Vietnamese indigenous population, the state did not fully respect the ethnic consciousness of members of ethnic groups. Charles Keyes indicates that in cases where there were disagreements between the subjective definition and

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[20] Interview with Mohamed, May 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City

[21] Terry A. Rambo, "Vietnam," Ethnicity in Asia, Asia's Transformations (M. Selden, London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002): 109-135

[22] Stéphane Dovert, Benoît de Tréglodé, Vietnam Contemporain. Collection Monographies Nationales (IRASEC Les Indes Savantes, 2004).

[23] Charles F. Keyes "'The Peoples of Asia': Science and politics in the classification of ethnic group in Thailand, China, and Vietnam" (Journal of Asian Studies, 2002): 1163-1203, 1174

the objective definition, the ethnologists were instructed to use 'scientific data' collected among people or elicited from historical records to explain to the people in question who they were supposed to be, often imposing an identity on them in the process.

A comprehensive classification was not completed until 1979 and in 1989 another similar scientific investigation was carried out reaffirming that there were (still) 54 ethnic groups in all of Vietnam. However, as Priscilla Koh has indicated,

> based on the research findings of a recent investigation in several minority regions, it is likely that the figure is much higher than the present 54. The researchers noted that a significant number of minority groups wanted to be reclassified as a separate or different ethnic group.[24]

Later on in this article I will show that in line with some of the minority groups mentioned above, Bawean individuals too went out of their way to negotiate with state officials. They wished to be classified according to their own expectations even though these might contrast with state criteria.

In 1976, after the Second Indochina War, the newly established Vietnamese government registered aliens at the *ủy ban quân quản thành phố Sài Gòn Gia Định* [the City's Military Committee of Administrative Affairs]. Many Bawean men and women received identity papers for alien citizens called '*Iấi* [sic] *chứng nhận thương trú tạm thờI* [sic]' [temporary residency permit]. These papers had tables printed on them that were used to provide information about a person such as family- and given names [*họ và tên*], sex [*nam nữ*] and *quốc tịch* [citizenship' or 'nationality[25]']. In this case the officials recorded *Mã Lai* [Malay] under the last category. The Bawean men and women had unwittingly attained *quốc tịch Mã Lai* meaning Malay[26] citizenship.

It is important to note here that *dân tộc* [ethnic affiliation] was not asked for nor was it recorded on these documents. This term is problematic as well and has been applied ambiguously in the past,

> The term *dan toc* Tay could refer to the Tay ethnic minority at one level, and/or a hypothetical Tay nation and nationality on the other. Although this ambiguity was never clarified by party leaders and academics alike, it seems that in its narrower definition, and specifically with regard to minority groups or communities, the term *dan toc* refers to an '*ethnie*' or ethnic group, not nation or nationality per se (at least not 'nationality' as commonly understood, i.e. in the sense of being part of a separate and sovereign independent nation-state)[27]

Under Vietnam's current government an ethnic label was given another role. *Mã Lai* was interpreted as 'being of Malaysian nationality' even though the word for Malaysia is *Malaixia*. This confusion on how to classify this group of people has resulted in an ethnonym being reinterpreted as a nationality and being transformed into a status of foreign citizenship. The combination of this ethnic cover term together with the formal term 'nationality' is a contradiction. It is troublesome just like the term 'of Arab nationality' would be today. The term suggests that the person holding these papers in Vietnam is an alien and

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[24] Priscilla Koh, "Persistent Ambiguities: Vietnamese Ethnology in the Doi Moi Period," (Journal of the Southeast Asian Studies Student Association 2004) 5: 1, 3
http://www.hawaii.edu/cseas/pubs/explore/vol5no2.html (accessed July16 2007), 5

[25] Bùi Phụng, Từ Điển Việt Anh (Hanoi: Thế Giới, 2003)

[26] Bùi Phụng, Từ Điển Việt Anh (Hanoi: Thế Giới, 2003)

[27] Priscilla Koh, "Persistent Ambiguities: Vietnamese Ethnology in the Doi Moi Period," (Journal of the Southeast Asian Studies Student Association 2004) 5: 1, 3 http://www.hawaii.edu/cseas/pubs/explore/vol5no2.html (accessed July16 2007), 5

does not have Vietnamese citizenship. It implies that this individual is a citizen somewhere else outside Vietnam. The nation indicated however does not exist.

State officials may have erroneously interpreted *malais* and later *Mã Lai* as Malaysia or it may mean that state officials have their own idiom that differs from academic interpretations when it comes to ethnic classifications. Even in 2005 in conversations with the authors, state officials at the local police station used *quốc tịch Mã Lai* [Malay nationality] and *quốc tịch Malaixia* [Malaysian nationality] interchangeably. In both cases they meant Malaysian nationality. Today an ethnic cover term is still used to denote nationality and a term signifying nationality is used to indicate ethnic origin. This may indicate that there is some confusion on how to use these terms or there is a structurally different interpretation of ethnonyms in the language of the state.

The Bawean individuals who received such papers were caught in a real Catch 22 because neither Vietnam, nor Indonesia or Malaysia accepted them as their citizens. As Aliens in Vietnam they had to re-register at the immigration office yearly until 1997. Around 1997 they suddenly received a paper called '*giấy tờ chứng nhận thương trú của người nước ngoài*' [permanent residence status for foreigners]. This also served as an identity card. They were told that they did not have to present themselves every year anymore, but would be contacted if deemed necessary, but they never were. Up until 2003, the Bawean individuals in this case study had no papers other than the 'permanent residence status for foreigners' they received earlier. Officially they were alien citizens belonging to a 'Malay state'.

Interaction of the State-less with the Vietnamese State

There is not much literature on similar cases because for Vietnam, discussions of ethnicity have generally been restricted to the official minority groups and communities consisting of Vietnamese citizens. Immigrants with transnational contacts residing in the country who fall outside official ethnic classifications of the fifty-four *dân tộc* received less attention. We will focus on the Bawean interaction with Vietnamese state officials as both parties try to achieve their projects.

Charles Keyes described the modern state as one that 'disciplines'; one that attempts to impose 'standard grids' on the diversity of both humans and nature, which it brings under its control. State, civil society and nationalist precepts constrain processes of ethnic identification and 'influence modes of ethnic organization'. This has also been the case for the Bawean living in Vietnam. When the state classified them as aliens they were cut off from all jobs limited to Vietnamese citizens.

However, such decisions are not the state's alone to make. People like the Bawean are perfectly capable of moving out of the state's gaze into so-called blind spots. In the past many of them did not register and succeeded in living in Vietnam without any papers whatsoever until their death. Such non-conformity has been found among other groups in Vietnam as well. Oscar Salemink[28] for example has written about the resistance among Montagnards against the state's attempts of surveillance and discipline. To evade state control people would move to villages in remote areas. We have to keep in mind however that the Bawean do not live in remote mountainous areas, instead they live in the center of the country's economic hub.

For example, Bawean parents still do not automatically accept that their children are Vietnamese upon birth. Partly because they do not want to burden their sons with army en-

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[28] Oscar Salemink, The ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlanders: a historical contextualization, 1850-1990, (London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003)

listment but the main reason is that they still wish to hold on to what they consider to be their original ethnic identity. When they register the birth of a child, they argue and plead with local authorities to leave their children's nationality open so that he or she can decide what nationality he or she wishes to choose at eighteen, the age when one needs to apply for an identity card. This shows how the Bawean are able to manipulate and limit the state's control by staying outside of the standard grids.

It is important however to note that people like the Bawean are not only capable of living under the state's radar so to speak. Below I will show that people do make themselves officially known and have themselves formally classified by Vietnamese state officials on their own terms.

Up until 2003 this group of around two thousand people had at least sixty-five individuals who had no citizenship even though they had been born in Vietnam. Their country of origin, current-day Indonesia did not accept them as its citizens, making these people stateless citizens. Even in 2007, these people still live around the mosque and maintain distinct religious and ethnic characteristics that set them apart from non-Muslims such as the Kinh and Muslims such as the Cham alike. Ironically, according to numerous Bawean individuals they applied for Vietnamese citizenship precisely to uphold some of these ethnic characteristics.

It is important to point out here that for them to be Bawean is to be a good Muslim and a proper Muslim goes on the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his life. For them, religion is a fundamental part of their ethnic identity. What was at stake for the group of sixty-five Bawean individuals was the fulfilment of one of their religiously inspired dreams, to go on the *hajj* [pilgrimage to Mecca].

They were aware that the only way they would be able to leave Vietnam and enter Saudi Arabia was with a passport. They developed a strategy of partial participation while at the same time preserving elements of their ethnic identity; the application for Vietnamese citizenship in order to leave the country temporarily. We will present the process of application for citizenship in greater detail in a section further below. Now I first need to reveal more about two important elements of Bawean ethic identity, namely diasporic narratives and religion.

Longing for the Past: Diaspora

Mohamed is one of the sixty-five individuals who requested Vietnamese citizenship. When I first interviewed him or others within that group I was struck by their feelings that would lead us to believe none of them would ever accept Vietnamese citizenship,

> I was born right here at home in 1952. My father came from Bawean Island and my mother came from Singapore. But her parents came from Bawean too. We have lived here all our lives. Because of them I am proud about my ethnic origins. I often think of my parents and grandparents, it makes me long to return to my origins. They passed away but when I think of them I remember their stories and then I miss Bawean Island and I want to go back. I can still hear my mother's singing and I am ashamed that I don't know what the words mean anymore[29].

What is of interest here are his sentiments. He mentions he misses and wishes to return to a place he has never set foot on. This idea of return, it will be recalled, was expressed in other interviews with most of the individuals applying for Vietnamese citizenship. He even

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[29] Interview with Mohamed, May 2001, Hồ Chí Minh City

expresses shame for not being able to understand a language he never acquired or needed in his host country.

The Bawean I interviewed and who are presented in the case study below exhibited typical behaviours of members of a diasporic community. They often mentioned the powerful sentiments they experience such as a longing for their roots, for the life on the Island Bawean and its people. Memories and ideas about their origins and ideas about what it means to be Bawean feed this longing. In discussions, they often mentioned how their senses, taste, sight, smell and hearing stir up memories that bring about these strong emotions that are both based on and strengthen their ethnic identity. This idea and these strong sentiments are phenomena often found among diasporic communities.

Robin Cohen sees a diaspora as a post-migration population entertaining imagined and actual connections with a place of origin and with people of similar cultural origins elsewhere. By "imagined" it is not meant that such connections might not be actual. Rather, the often, strong sentiments and mental pictures according to which members of diasporas organize themselves and undertake their cultural practices are emphasized. A focus towards the place of origin can take forms such as, cultural, religious, or economic endeavours.

During group interviews the Bawean argue amongst themselves about the content of their grandfathers' or grandmothers' life stories that take place on the Island Bawean. Sometimes they suddenly lash out with a *pencak silat* move, an Indonesian martial art they regret not having learned from their grandfather. They demonstrate stances of dances they saw their mothers perform. They whisper of magical powers and regret the loss of their valued *keris* knives they had to turn in under the Japanese occupation. They stress how their senses bring back memories of places and times past. The waft of a *Kretek* clove cigarette, the tastes and smells of *ayam nướng* [(sic) grilled chicken] or *sate* [meat grilled on wooden skewers] burning on the grill by the side of the road are no longer mere smells, but have become fragrances that bring out this yearning for something that their parents and grandparents instilled in them. They hum songs and congratulate each other when they hear others sing words they themselves have forgotten the meaning of. These memories and emotions affect the actions they take in daily life. An example I mentioned earlier was the renaming of their mosque to stress their relation to a mosque in Indonesia's capital and to distance themselves from the ethnonym *Mã Lai*.

These feelings are reproduced within the family by grandparents and parents, through stories, historical narratives told over and over again to children and among adults. These stories or as Charles Keyes calls them, narratives of origin, migration are also reproduced within the wider community for example during national Indonesian festivals, sermons and interactions with staff of the Indonesian consulate. Bawean individuals are proud of their heritage as it sets them apart from Vietnamese in general and Cham in particular. The differences within their community are glossed over and the differences between their community and other communities around them are temporarily deepened. This is achieved through their idiosyncratic manner of performing social-religious rituals such as circumcisions and marriages, or religio-cultural festivities such as the birthday of the prophet Mohammed and the celebration of national or transnational holidays after the independence of Indonesia in 1945. From conversations I had with the organisers of the festivities for the prophet's birthday, it became clear that they experienced religious, ethnic and national pride. Guests from other Muslim communities such as the Cham commented in interviews that the way the Bawean went about organising that celebration was out of order. They confided that it focused too much attention on the prophet and was a form of *shirk*, polytheism which is strictly forbidden in Islam. When I confronted the Bawean with this idea,

they seemed pleased almost and reacted that these were the differences between their culture and that of other communities.

Apart from feelings of pride, they also experience feelings of shame about losing certain aspects they imagine are intrinsically ethnically theirs. One such skill is to be able to speak or sing using *Bahasa Indonesia*, the official Indonesian variant of Malay and the language they assume their ancestors spoke. Mohamed studied the language and even started an on-line course *Bahasa Indonesia*,

> We once had a consul who was a Christian so he did not pray at the mosque, but his assistant was really friendly and he gave a lecture at the mosque about us, our roots, about Bawean Island. It filled us with pride and longing but we were also ashamed because he spoke in Indonesian first and we did not understand anything he said at first. He was very surprised that people had forgotten their own language and he offered us help to study Indonesian at the consulate. That is how I started to learn *Bahasa*[30].

He studied the Indonesian language for a while but did not pursue it because there were hardly any opportunities to use these language skills. It is important however to note that their parents did not speak *Bahasa Indonesia*. At the time the first Bawean left their Island for the French colony, *Bahasa* as an official language did not yet exist. It became the national language of Indonesia not until after 1949. Before he accepted an offer from the consulate to study *Bahasa Indonesia* Mohamed had never learned the language or the local variant of Madurese that his parents may have spoken. In a sense he changes history or the narratives of history by thinking or remembering that *Bahasa Indonesia* was his forefather's language of origin. This shows us how narratives and the roots this group of people recalls change, and with them, the content of its ethnic identity changes. To paraphrase Liisa Malkki[31], people's roots move, change shape, colour and grow.

These narratives, focused on a connection with their place of origin and as such they are what Cohen defines as 'imagined connections with a place of origin and with people of similar cultural origins elsewhere'. It is these perceived connections with their place of origin that have driven them to the renaming of the mosque, to entertaining warm relations with the consulate and to the acquisition of a foreign language. These same sentiments brought about by the narratives have led them to request citizenship at the Indonesian consulate first and to negotiate with Vietnamese state officials about the choice of their official ethnonym.

A Case Study

It should be recognized from the outset that this case study does not present everybody's views within the community. Different ideas exist about religion and issues related to ethnic identity. There exist variations between the views of the younger and older generations, between men and women, between families living around the mosque in the urban center and the families living on the Bawean cemetery on the outskirts of the city. Youths living around the mosque do not identify with their Bawean past the same way their parents do and some see each other as Vietnamese Muslims. Some Bawean families have received Cham identity papers. These people do not live around the Bawean mosque and instead pray in a mosque run by a Cham community. They too do not identify with the same his-

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[30] Interview with Mohamed, May 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City
[31] Liisa Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," Cultural Anthropology vol. 7 (1992): 24-44

toric elements that are of such importance to the people I will present below. In that sense the community is quite heterogenic.

The people presented below are elderly men and women who on certain occasions play an important role in the community. These people manage festivities organised for example around the prophet Mohamed's birthday. It is during such happenings that the community closes its ranks and presents a closed front, a closed ethnic Bawean boundary as it were. The way they organise and execute such activities differs from other Muslim and non-Muslim communities and this in turn actively adds to the pronunciation of the Bawean identity. In short although the people introduced in the case study below do not present the whole community, they influence and manage the way this group presents itself through festivities and rituals.

Although I have spoken with many individuals, I have chosen to narrate their shared trajectory from one individual's perspective. This individual has been a spokesperson for the group and has taken the lead within this group during their citizenship application process. In the beginning of the application process sixty-five of his fellow Bawean would join his visits to state officials, but this proved to be impractical in the long run. Instead he collected their files and submitted their applications along with his. The case documented below is based on interviews with several informants, but I have decided to mainly quote Mohamed because he experienced every step of the application process.

Mohamed's Case

Mohamed is a fifty-five year old widower and lives with his children close to the Bawean mosque. He and his children were born in Vietnam and have lived in Vietnam since. He has recently received Vietnamese citizenship but both his daughter and son who are under eighteen years of age do not hold official Vietnamese citizenship.

He has a lot of time on his hands and in between such activities he visits Internet cafes to check his mail and look at Islamic sites of various sorts[32]. Directly after the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 for example, he followed discussions about Bin Laden and currently he tries to keep himself informed on the War on Terror in the Middle East. He likes to chat with fellow Muslims or takes a virtual tour around Mecca. He can spend hours on end on the Internet playing online games or listening to Koran recitations.

Religion as a part of his ethnic repertoire is more widely documented on the Internet than the cultural or historic facets of his ethnicity. Often the interviewees stressed the inherent connection between their origins and Islam and feelings of pride and shame,

> Islam is our religion. A good Bawean is a good Muslim and that makes us different from the Vietnamese even different from many Cham. When I have prayed five times like yesterday I feel much better about myself. If I forget to live properly or to pray, I feel ashamed. I want to live a good life so I try to be close to God. When I have a chance I want to go to Mecca as well[33].

From interviews with him and others I learned that this part of their ethnic identity not only connects them with Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world but connects them with Muslims on a global scale as well. Islamic religious practices such as prayer and fasting during *Ramadan* [the month of fasting] and eating *halal* food promote a sense of belonging to a worldwide religious Muslim community.

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[32] http://www.islamworld.net/, http://www.islam101.com/, http://www.angelfire.com/
[33] Interview with Mohamed, May 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City

According to Ralph Grillo, what is at stake in transnational identities is a certain degree and form of identification with an imagined 'transnational' community such as the *umma*[34]. The Bawean realize, when performing Islam's rituals, that they share duties and practices of Muslims across political borders. During sermons their *imam* [leader, prayer leader] narrates Islam's histories and mentions Muslims in other parts of the world. Daily discussions in people's homes about Muslims for example in Iraq, Afghanistan and Southern Thailand create and strengthen an imagination of an Islamic community transcending the boundaries and borders of their local mosque.

These practices and sources of information they find in their mosque however, cannot compete with the information they delve up from transnational interactions they develop through the Internet. Steven Vertovec describes a transnational network as the existence of communication and interactions of many kinds that members of a group undertake with others in the homeland or elsewhere within the globalized ethnic or religious community[35]. From discussions with various informants, it has become clear that the Bawean do not interact with other Bawean either in the place of origin or elsewhere. They do however increasingly use the computer to learn more about Islam.

These transnational sources of information strengthen their awareness that they are part of a larger global religious community as well. Mohamed uses the Internet to learn about the state of Muslim world affairs or to chat with fellow Muslims in other countries. For him it is the only source of religious information in Vietnam besides personal narratives of people who have returned from studies overseas or pilgrimages. His daily visits to Internet cafes connect him and others like him to a transnational religious network that forces him to think about his stance on things not only as a human being in general, but also as a Muslim in particular.

Benedict Anderson[36] has noted that print media have had great influences on nationalism. We suggest that currently new media may well be doing the same for Islamic repertoires and narratives in Vietnam where printed matter such as secondary literature on religious issues is hard to come by. Dale Eickelman and Jon Anderson[37] emphasize how such a new sense of collective awareness and connection among Muslims in various parts of the globe has especially been forged through new communication technologies. Nina Smart adds that:

> Such a consciousness of belonging to a world community has grown considerably in very recent times. Even for relatively remote groups, transnational narratives "construct and negotiate the relationships between multiple identities" by tying individuals and communities into larger common constituencies[38].

Bawean individuals shape the religious repertoires of their ethnic identity by their visits to Internet cafes and chat rooms. Some of them spend several hours a day, a few days a week on this digital gateway to global Islamic opinion, science, history, law, gossip, sermons, and popular culture such as music, movies and merchandise. They burn audio re-

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[34] Ralph Grillo, "Islam and Transnationalism" Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies no. 30 (2004): 861-878

[35] Steven Vertovec, "Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism," Ethnic and Racial Studies (1999)22: 447-463

[36] Benedict R. O. G. Anderson, Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism (London: Verso, 1983)

[37] Dale Eickelman, and Jon Anderson, New media in the Muslim world: the emerging public sphere, (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1999)

[38] Nina Smart, "The importance of diasporas," Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism (Steven Vertovec and Rob Cohen, Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1999): 420-429

cordings of sermons, Quran recitations, *fatwa*'s [legal experts' or consultants' written legal opinions], Arabic language lessons and news on VCD's and watch them at home. They learn about international religious scholarships and funds that sponsor Muslim pilgrimages. They chat with fellow believers in all parts of the world about topics both religious and political. In other words, the new media wave is currently doing for their Islamic repertoires and narratives what printed media have done for nationalism and the Bawean are actively surfing that wave.

From interviews with many Bawean both young and old I learned that they are able to access every Islamic Internet site they look for. This seems surprising especially if we consider that according to some scholars the Vietnamese state tends to place religious communities under close scrutiny.

Since the September 11, 2001, assault on the World Trade Centre in New York, public discourse has often referred to Muslim networks as fundamentalist and academics around the world feared that Southeast Asian states, even those that are Islamic might develop distrust for Muslim communities or individuals. This may lead to states trying to control such communities. According to Trần Thị Liên[39] for example, religions are under real control because of their possible effect on the masses. Religions run the risk of becoming political. So it is to prevent religion becoming a political concurrent of the state that the state conserves its control over religious activities.

It is true that in the past Bawean and Muslim Cham communities in Hồ Chí Minh City were visited by police for check-ups. Although such visits do not occur any more, the *công an phường* [neighbourhood police] have certain contacts within the communities that are supposed to report any 'irregularities.' Examples of irregularities are local people planning to organise a religious festivity without state permission or informal visits of foreign visitors from Malaysia or Saudi Arabia. These informants are also called upon to come to the police station for specially convened meetings, for instance, directly after September 11, 2001 to gauge the reactions of the local Muslims. It is important to stress that these contacts work both ways, for example when in 2000, in Hồ Chí Minh City a Vietnamese non-Muslim threw a piece of pork meat into the Nancy mosque in district one. The man was reported and arrested. According to informants he received a sentence for seven years of imprisonment.

Trần Thị Liên[40] suggests that the Vietnamese State carries an inborn distrust for religious communities rooted in the universal lack of sympathy socialist governments feel for religious communities in general. But Jay Willoughby[41] finds that the Vietnamese government's attitude toward the Muslim Cham is becoming more relaxed, partly due to Hanoi's good relations with Indonesia and Malaysia. His observation is supported by our interviews with both Bawean and Cham individuals in southern Vietnam.

The government allows mosques to set up independent mosque committees and to organise religious training and Arabic language classes. Muslim students study at international Muslim universities, Vietnamese Muslim delegates attend international conferences and participate in Quran recitation competitions in Southeast Asian countries. The last few years an increasing number of Muslims went on pilgrimage to Mecca and two years ago the Vietnamese government allowed the publication of the first bilingual Quran in Vietnamese

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[39] Trần Thị Liên, "La question religieuse," Vietnam Contemporain, Collection Monographies Nationales (Stéphane Dovert, Benoît de Tréglodé, IRASEC Les Indes Savantes, 2004): 369-382
[40] idem
[41] Jay Willoughby, "The Cham Muslims of Vietnam," ISIM newsletter, (Leiden, 1999)

and Arabic. At present there are 61 mosques in Vietnam and one third of them have been repaired with international funds. New mosques are built.

I am aware of some of the internal and international discussions on Vietnamese law when it comes to religious freedom. We do not deny that the Vietnamese State has seriously suppressed non-approved religious communities and ethno-nationalistic movements in other areas in Vietnam[42]. But, I do wish to point out the contrast that exists between its approach towards Muslims and other religious communities. In the past decade, as far to what many countries consider being the major global threat of the moment the Vietnamese government has been, comparatively, quite relaxed in their control. Mohamed for example can move around freely and visit Internet cafes or other people's houses whenever he wants without being scrutinized.

He visits the mosque every day and uses the opportunity to visit others from the community. On his visits his friends and neighbours discuss their children, grandchildren, developments at the mosque and national and international affairs. International affairs discussed are often centred on Muslims in other countries, such as the war in Iraq, Afghanistan, or the current problems in Southern Thailand.

In the past he had wanted to go on the *hajj*, but did not have sufficient funds for the journey and hoped that he would be eligible for sponsorship. In 1999 Mohamed received news that he could apply for a sponsorship from the Saudi royal family to go on the *hajj*. He could not accept this funding because he did not have a passport. When in 2001 he again heard of such a sponsorship, he decided to apply for a passport, even if that meant accepting Vietnamese citizenship.

He knew that foreigners had to apply for citizenship at the Hồ Chí Minh City Department of Foreign Affairs at the level of Hồ Chí Minh City's People's Committee. They would have to buy and fill in several official documents and have their knowledge of Vietnamese culture and language tested. Lastly they had to provide a document of the embassy of the country where they were currently citizens. The embassy or consulate had to put in writing that it had been notified of its citizen's change of nationality and that it gave permission to do so. Only then would the Vietnamese government accept the application for Vietnamese citizenship. However it was impossible for Mohammed and the others to provide such a document because none of the consulates accepted him and his fellow Bawean as citizens,

> I had studied the documents, you know, I studied law but could not finish it…. Anyway, so I knew that we could not get that letter because we had no citizenship. We did not belong anywhere. Our papers said *quốc tịch Mã Lai* [Malay nationality] and *Malais* [Malay]. Some officials here told us we were Malaysian but I know those terms do stand for a country. Malaysia and Indonesia would not give us such a letter…still many of us wanted to try to become Indonesian citizens again. That is why, in the beginning I did not go to the Department of Foreign Affairs of Hồ Chí Minh City [43].

What is striking in this quote is that people express the explicit wish to become Indonesian citizens again. This is troublesome because of several reasons. The first, as indicated earlier in this article, none of them has ever been an Indonesian citizen, mainly because that nation did not exist yet when their ancestors left for Indochina and because since its establishment it has not recognised any of the descendants still left in Vietnam up to 2007.

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[42] Writenet, Vietnam: Indigenous Minority Groups in the Central Highlands, (UNHCR Centre for Documentation and Research, 5/2001)
[43] Interview with Mohamed, May 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City

Another important point is that since their first settlement in what is Vietnam today, these men and women have married Muslim and non-Muslim local men and women such as Cham, Chinese and Kinh. Although they have intermarried with communities of different ethnic backgrounds for three generations, Mohamed and others in the Bawean group express pride in being an ethnic group of Indonesian origin. Some still see their grandchildren as *người Chà Và*. Meet for example Abdulhadi[44], *hakim,* [judge] and a first generation descendant from Bawean immigrants. He was caretaker of the Bawean Mosque in 2001. He recalls:

> I was born in Saigon in 1924 but I still consider myself an '*orang Bawean*', [Bawean man person]. Most of the *người Chà Và* living in Hồ Chí Minh City now are from the same area as my parents were. Almost everybody is Bawean here around the mosque[45].

The informant uses the term *Người Chà Và* [from Java, Malay, and Malayan[46]] here. I wish to point out here that this touches one of the nerves of the problem I wish to explore -the ethnic labelling of people. Both the labels people use for their own kin and the labels the state officials use are subject to the same phenomena: labels change through time but more importantly they have the tendency to change instantly as well depending on the context. We wish to point out that it is far more informative to understand the dynamics behind the acceptation or rejection of certain labels than it is to know or search for the 'correct' or 'objective' labels for people based for example on their place of origin.

Here Weber's definition of ethnic groups is useful. He sees ethnic groups as,

> Those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for group formation; furthermore it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists[47].

Weber speaks of an ethnic community's subjective belief in common descent. There is no need for an existing objective blood relationship for people to feel ethnically connected. We found this belief in Mohamed who was born in Indochina and whose mother is from Singapore. Just as many of his fellow Bawean he grew up in the country now known as Vietnam but he still longs for a place none of them have ever set foot in. It is this belief in common descent fuelled by diasporic narratives that stimulated the group of elderly Bawean to first visit the Indonesian consulate in Hồ Chí Minh City.

A Visit to the Indonesian Consulate in Sarong

The group of sixty-five elderly Bawean men and women dressed in their interpretation of Bawean costumes had set off for the Indonesian consulate.

> We all went to the Indonesian consulate because we feel that we are Indonesian and should have Indonesian citizenship so that we may return to Indonesia. If that was not possible we wanted them to help us receive Vietnamese citizenship. I thought that they would help us because we maintained good relations with the Indonesian consulate here. Sometimes our contact cooled down. It depended on which religion the consul adhered to. If he or she were Muslim, the consul along with staff would pray here at the mosque every Friday. They would invite us to Indonesian national and

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[44] All names are pseudonyms to protect the informants' identities
[45] Interview with hakim of mosque, July, 2001, Hồ Chí Minh City
[46] Bùi Phụng, Từ Điển Việt Anh (Hanoi: Thế Giới, 2003)
[47] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Ethnicity and Nationalism (London: Pluto Press, 2002)

religious festivities held at the consulate. The consul and some of his co-workers have also asked our *imam* to teach, to advise on family matters.

I told you that we used to have strong magic. We had a man here. He was a *dukun*. [sorcerer and village medicine man or healer]. He has performed rituals such as *selamatan* [Javanese ceremonial meal] there. He has passed away now. He was very strong. He could do exorcisms. One time he had to exorcise a spirit at the Indonesian consul's house. We all went and spent the afternoon and the night at his place. This was an Indonesian spirit so he had to do it. No other nationality [sic] could help her. So that is why I went there first.

I dressed in a *sarong* with a *batik* shirt and met with the consul general. He was so surprised when I spoke using *Bahasa Indonesia*. I said: 'you know us, we are descendants of Bawean and we are connected to Indonesia by blood. You pray in our Indonesian mosque and we have been in your house. We feel we should become Indonesian citizens because our identity is in our blood, our bones and in our marrow even!

They [men and women of the consulate] explained that they knew that we [the Bawean in Hồ Chí Minh City] were of Indonesian origin, but formally they could not accept us as Indonesian citizens under Indonesian law. 'We know most of you but we cannot help you. You have lost touch with your families in Indonesia and you have no papers proving citizenship. It hurts us but it is impossible to accept you as citizens. We will help you and write a letter to the *Sở Ngoại Vụ* of Hồ Chí Minh City [Department of Foreign Affairs] explaining that you are all Bawean and of Indonesian origin but can not be accepted as citizens of Indonesia under Indonesian law. We will ask the Department of Foreign Affairs of Hồ Chí Minh City to help you acquire Vietnamese citizenship'[48].

In this quotation there are several important elements that come to the fore. During the presentation of their case at the consulate the Bawean used the Indonesian language, dressed in Indonesian attire and spoke of magic and blood to show that they are tied to Indonesia. They also tried to tie the consular staff to themselves when they mentioned the role the *imam* had played in the past. We have shown above that the use of the Indonesian language is grounded in diasporic narratives that shape the community's ethnic identity. The same is the case with the Indonesian dress and the expression of blood ties and stories of magic.

What is of interest here as well is not only the theme used during the presentation, Indonesia, but also the way it was communicated. Thomas Hylland Eriksen shows that people are free to choose whether to over- or under-communicate their identity. Ethnic identities cannot be completely manipulated however, not because ethnic identities are primordial givens, but because if ethnic identities could be totally contrived, generated or administered by state agents, groups would have chosen any identity they wanted. When Mohamed presented his case he chose the Indonesian consulate because he and the group that went with him genuinely felt that they were of Indonesian origin and hoped to achieve Indonesian citizenship. He reminded the consular officials of their longstanding relation based on their shared place of origin in the hope that he might get out from under the Vietnamese state's control. When this did not succeed, he changed the way he communicated his case as we shall see below.

A Reprimand at Hồ Chí Minh City's Department of Foreign Affairs

Their first attempt had been unsuccessful and they decided to try the alternative, they would present their case at the Hồ Chí Minh City's Department of Foreign Affairs. From

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[48] Interview with Mohamed, May 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City

then on Mohamed took it upon himself to present their case at the various administrative offices and his fellow Bawean trusted him because of his legal studies.

When the Department of Foreign Affairs of Hồ Chí Minh City received him its employees reprimanded him for going to the Indonesian embassy first.

> I knew that they would be angry so I had to be real polite you know….Oh I wore pants and a normal shirt with my pair of shoes. I spoke really politely in Vietnamese of course. So I apologized and told them that we did not know how to do things properly and that we had only asked the Indonesian consulate for advice,…yes acting a little gullible…[laughs].

> Then they asked why we wanted to become Vietnamese, I explained that in daily life, because we hold papers stating that we are foreigners we are in a real predicament. Being foreign has negatively influenced our daily interactions with the government. We cannot find work because for most good jobs we have to show our name documented in our *hộ khẩu thường trú* [family registration book for permanent residence]. But if you do not have Vietnamese citizenship you do not have a *hộ khẩu* so companies and small enterprises will not accept foreigners.

> Because of this we are in a real fix economically and we do hope that you will study the case. We ask you to help us obtain Vietnamese nationality with ease. We want to have our names in a *hộ khẩu thường trú*. We were born in Vietnam, we grew up in Vietnam and have lived here ever since. We use Vietnamese language in our daily lives and have received Vietnamese education. We understand Vietnamese history, culture, laws, customs and traditions and that is why we are eligible for Vietnamese nationality[49].

As we have seen in the last quote, Mohamed did not dress in Indonesian traditional clothes and spoke Vietnamese. He stressed socio-economic reasons for his application, described how with papers stating alien status he had met difficulties with administrative procedures and was unable to apply for jobs in most companies or small factories. He also emphasized that he was born and grew up in Vietnam, conversed in Vietnamese in everyday life and more importantly had received Vietnamese education and this meant that he understood Vietnamese history, culture, law, customs and traditions.

In contrast to his presentation at the Indonesian consulate, he downplayed the group's ethnic sentiments at the Department of Foreign Affairs of Hồ Chí Minh. This is not only in line with Thomas Hylland Eriksen mentioned above, but also with George de Vos[50] who suggests that ethnic identity is something that agents can partly ascribe to themselves. He indicated that ethnic identity is something that can be actively manipulated in response to a certain need or context but at the same time ethnic identity also has a non-instrumental, non-political element providing a psychological feeling of security.

Mohammed told me how the members of staff at the Department of Foreign Affairs of Hồ Chí Minh were quiet for a moment. His words had turned their hostile approach around and they even complimented him on his Vietnamese Language skills. They offered him tea and sweets and discussed his life with him. They asked him about the kinds of work he had had, his religious beliefs and how he was housed. Eventually, they asked him to sit in the hallway while they studied the case more carefully in private. They returned after some time and explained they recognized this as a case that fell outside Vietnamese law.

They were used to cases where Vietnamese law fell short but they had not encountered a similar case before. They pointed out that Vietnamese law accepts everyone who applies

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[49] Interview with Mohamed, May 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City

[50] Vos, G., A. de. "Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation", The sociology of race and ethnicity (M. Cross, Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, 2000): 3, 113-142.

for Vietnamese citizenship if he or she can live up to some of the following criteria: proficient in Vietnamese, knowledge of Vietnamese history, culture and customs, and a letter from ones country of current citizenship accepting the change of citizenship. This means that only people who already have citizenship somewhere, people who are recognized by a nation outside Vietnam as its citizens, can officially give up that citizenship in order to apply for Vietnamese citizenship. The people at the Department of Foreign Affairs of Hồ Chí Minh City understood that Mohamed could not provide them with such a letter.

After further deliberation they advised Mohamed not to follow the regular route of citizenship application because this would be a dead end for him. Instead, the department wrote a letter to another governmental unit, the Hồ Chí Minh City Department of Legal Affairs at the level of in Hồ Chí Minh City's People's Committee. The letter explained the situation and requested their colleagues at the Department of Legal Affairs of Hồ Chí Minh City to take a look at the case and to advise them on the matter. I traced one of the people at the Department of Foreign Affairs who helped Mohamed on his way. She is a legal expert and still remembers the case quite vividly. She machine-guns her words in a staccato northern accent while she goes over the case she answers phones and shuffles through papers,

> Our law states that people should pledge that they should give up their original nationality, if they have one, when applying for Vietnamese citizenship. When they do not have a nationality at all, than it becomes a bit of a predicament, and that is why we solved the case of the Malays [Mã Lai] pro-actively and dynamically [linh hoạt]. Because, if I remember correctly, some of these people did have papers proving that they had been born in Vietnam. These were even from before 1954, mind you. And they had permanent residency papers for foreigners from the puppet regime. They knew their origins but could not locate their ancestors there anymore. The Legal Department here decided to act quickly and ask the consulate of Indonesia and Malaysia to state that these people were not accepted as their countries' citizens. From then on it had become a case of people who had no citizenship at all and it was then that Vietnam was prepared to accept them as its citizens. There you have it. That is a way to deal with something quickly and positively. In our law we had not yet dealt with such cases before, of people who have no citizenship. This department has definitely reported this case to the president of the country or to the Department of Justice to decide what to do with such cases in the future. Because to have fifty-five or so people who do not have a nationality in a city as crowded as ours, makes it really hard for the administration to govern the city[51].

Her office composed the letter while Mohamed waited. The letter explained the situation and requested their colleagues at the Department of Legal Affairs of Hồ Chí Minh City to take a look at the case and to advise them on the matter.

Joane Nagel[52] suggests that the state's formal ascriptions of ethnic identity are the main factors in the development of ethnic identities. Our case study however suggests that there is some room for manipulation from the citizen's side. It shows the negotiation between the state's formal ascriptions and the strong sentiments of the people it needs to classify. The state officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs hardly tried to discipline Mohamed. On the contrary, when confronted with this case that clearly falls outside Vietnamese law they were quite friendly and proved pro-active in their approach to solve the matter. They could easily have forced him too take the regular approach or to keep his alien status. However not all departments in the Vietnamese state apparatus are as pro-active in their approach.

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[51] Interview with lawyer at the Department of Foreign Affairs, November 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City
[52] Joane Nagel, "Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture", (Social Problems 1994) 41: 51-75

Pleading at the Department of Legal Affairs City and the Malaysian Consulate

I dressed like before, no not in a *sarong*, but still decent. I went over and had to wait for a long time. There was a lot of activity and people were running around with folders. When it was my turn I met with a young woman. She did not listen to me at all. I explained my case like before, but all she heard was that I was a foreigner and wanted to apply for Vietnamese citizenship. So she did not understand the case the way the people at the other department had. She said: 'you want to become a Vietnamese national, you just go to the Department for Foreign Affairs and buy the forms just like everybody else.' She closed the file and returned it to me so I left.

I knew that I had to find a different way so the next day I went to the consulate of Malaysia. I dressed the same as before like a businessman and spoke Vietnamese. It was so funny. When they heard my story they did know what to do. I asked them for a letter stating that firstly I was a Malaysian citizen and secondly that the Malaysian Consulate accepted my change of citizenship. They must have thought that I was not normal [laughs] to ask for citizenship in Malaysia just to replace it with Vietnamese citizenship[53].

As he had feared, the Malaysian consulate could not provide him with such a letter even though it was sympathetic to his case. The Department for Legal Affairs might not have been forthcoming immediately but eventually its officials went out of their way to provide a solution for this extraordinary case.

Relief at the Department of Legal Affairs and at the Malaysian Consulate

Mohamed now returned to Hồ Chí Minh City's Department of Legal Affairs and explained to another of its employees that neither the Indonesian nor the Malaysian Governments had accepted him as citizen and that as a result they did not provide him with the letter that was required for the normal Vietnamese citizenship application for foreigners. The employees of the Department of Legal Affairs of Hồ Chí Minh City now took an interest and they too acknowledged the difficulty of the situation. They withdrew in a back office and after some hours of deliberation they asked him to come back the next day. The next day they presented him with their solution. Instead of a letter of proof of foreign citizenship, they would now also accept a letter of proof of non-citizenship. They needed a letter of the Malaysian Consulate stating that Mohamed was not accepted as a Malaysian citizen.

He left for the consulate the next day and when he presented himself there the officials looked pained. When he conveyed them his new request they could hardly hide the relief they must have felt. They provided him with the needed document a month later. It stated that the he had never been a Malaysian citizen. When he left they excused themselves for not having been able to provide him with Malaysian citizenship.

Bargaining with the police of District 1 in Hồ Chí Minh City

Two and a half years after Mohamed had presented the letter provided by the Malaysian Consulate at the Department of Legal Affairs of Hồ Chí Minh City he received a document stating he had achieved Vietnamese citizenship. This is extremely fast compared to some fellow Muslims from Malaysia that had Malaysian citizenship and followed the regular trajectory for citizen application. They had waited for four years. This was a good first step, but what he really needed was a passport. The first thing he arranged was a *hộ khẩu*, [a family registration or household register], after that he could request a *thẻ chứng minh nhân dân* [identity card] at the office of the police of District 1. He could only put in a

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[53] Interview with Mohamed, May 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City

request for a Vietnamese passport if he had these other documents. When Mohamed went to the office of the police of District 1 to apply for his identity card however, he needed to fill out a request form called a *tờ khai chứng minh nhân dân*, [application form for citizenship] and this was the first document that required him apart from date of birth and religious affiliation, to record his *dân tộc* [ethnic identity].

Up until that point, *dân tộc* had not been an issue in the process of citizenship application. There had been no request to fill in his *dân tộc* on any of the papers he had submitted. Mohamed was aware that now that he had become a Vietnamese citizen, in this context *dân tộc*, meant the fifty-four state sanctioned ethnic identities. He was aware that his ethnic identity did not feature on the limited list of fifty-four, but he still wrote down 'Bawean, Indonésia',

An employee took one look at my application and did not even look up when he said, 'Bawean, Indonésia' does not belong to the ethnic possibilities.' I explained my predicament and the employee called one of his colleagues over. Both officers studied my application and asked if I was really a foreigner, 'How long did you study Vietnamese? It is really very good.' I told them that I had been born and raised in this country and that it was part of me. It had fed me and I knew its customs. They expressed their surprise with the fluency of my Vietnamese once again. They asked me, 'where is this Bawean located?' and I drew a map on a piece of paper. Then a third official, a lady listened in. During the conversation she took my application and studied it. Then she said, 'but you are a Muslim aren't you?' I answered, 'yes' and that was what she wanted to hear. She smiled, put down my application like this and as if she had found the solution she offered, 'but then you're just Cham right?'. So I pointed out that indeed most Cham were also Muslim but that I was certainly not Cham.
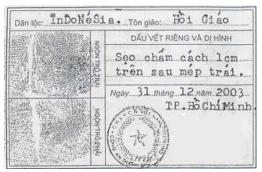
The lady called to the back of the office where some of her female colleagues were resting to come out and bring out the list of ethnic minorities. Two more ladies in uniform joined the group and brought a laminated list along. The first employee I had spoken to laid my application next to the list and the group compared [the term] 'Bawean' with the official list of ethnic groups in Vietnam. They were all quiet and I wondered what they would come up with. After careful scrutiny of both documents, one of them looked up and said that Bawean was not on the list. I said I believed he was right and I expressed hope that they would let me use my own chosen name [ethnonym]. One of the ladies pointed to the list, 'how about Ba Na, is that not almost the same as Bawean?'. So I asked them all, 'would you want to be called Cham?' and they agreed, they would not. I explained, 'my identity is part of my blood; it flows through these veins. I cannot accept someone else's, just like you'.

They discussed the matter further and one of the uniformed men asked me, 'are you sure that you cannot accept Cham?', but the ladies in the group told him off and one of them even hit him on his upper arm [laughs], 'how would you like to be called *Hoa* [ethnic Chinese]?' She quipped. All of them found that unacceptable and giggled. At last I thought of *Indonésia* as an option and this was accepted after some deliberation because they said that Bawean was just too obscure, *Indonésia* was better known [sic]. When my identity card was finished one of the officials asked me not to show the card to anyone because *Indonesía* might get him into trouble[54].

Below I present an illustration[55] of the back of one of the identity cards that was provided at the police station.

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[54] Interview with Mohamed, May 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City
[55] The signature of the official has been removed to protect the identity

A thẻ chứng minh nhân dân [identity card]

Priscilla Koh [56], Rambo [57] and Salemink stress the Vietnamese government's pre-occupation with the need of Vietnamese citizens to belong to one of the fifty-four designated *dân tộc*. Paraphrasing Salemink, the state imposes its ethnic categories on the highland population for example through identity cards[58]. Rambo too, mentions the identity card. "Every citizen must belong to one of the fifty-four recognized groups with this affiliation shown on the identity card everyone carries. No ambiguity is permitted. An individual having mixed ancestry must be assigned to only one group, normally the father's[59]"

Mohamed's reception at the neighbourhood police office shows us a softer side of the Vietnamese state. Here it does not seem pre-occupied with strict categorization. It leaves room for a humane approach, room for ambiguity. Mohamed presented himself with an official document stating that he had already achieved Vietnamese citizenship. There was no need for him to be careful about his ethnic sentiments now. That is why he pleaded with the officials not to deny him the ethnonym that he chose as the official ethnic classification. The group of Bawean individuals who received Vietnamese citizenship were handed a *giấy chứng minh nhân dân* [identity card] with a *dân tộc* [formal ethnic affiliation] that does not feature on the 'list of fifty-four *dân tộc*', namely *Indonésia*.

This encounter with the local police was the first occasion when Mohamed was asked about his religion. Up until that point he had articulated his ethnic origins at the Indonesian consulate and he used socio-economic arguments at the Department of Internal Affairs but on none of the occasions was he asked or did he have to state his religious affiliation. Below I look at the state's approach to this group's religious activities.

Conclusions

This article deals with what seems to be a contradiction: by becoming Vietnamese citizens these people feel they strengthened their non-Vietnamese ethnic identity. Their actions are fed by cultural-religious motives stemming from a personal interpretation of their ethnic identity. Mohamed and others explained how they express and reproduce his cultural historic and contemporary religious narratives, influenced by experiences that are not only of local and national but also of transnational religious character. These experiences not

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[56] Priscilla Koh, "Persistent Ambiguities: Vietnamese Ethnology in the Doi Moi Period," (Journal of the Southeast Asian Studies Student Association 2004) 5: 1, 3http://www.hawaii.edu/cseas/pubs/explore/vol5no2.html (accessed July16 2007), 5

[57] Terry A. Rambo, "Vietnam," Ethnicity in Asia, Asia's Transformations (M. Selden, London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002): 109-135, 115

[58] Oscar Salemink, The ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlanders: a historical contextualization, 1850-1990, (London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003)

[59] Idem

only change narratives but also the notions of roots he recalls and, along with that, the content of his ethnic identity changes.

The Bawean men and women did not formalise their ethnic identity and nationality earlier because of the latent and sometimes explicitly expressed wish to return to Indonesia. We have indicated that such sentiments are often found among diasporic communities. They expressed the hope to return to Indonesia but without any knowledge of the language or acquaintances this seems difficult.

From interviews I gathered that in the past the community oriented its transnational contacts toward its homeland or toward Bawean relatives or acquaintances in other countries. In the past fifteen years, in their travels and transnational relations, the Bawean community has turned its focus away from its historical roots. They do not have these transnational relations anymore. They have intermarried with non-Bawean Muslims and non-Muslims. They do not speak their ancestors' language and have never set foot on their place of origin. They still believe themselves to be ethnically Bawean people belonging to Indonesia.

Together with cultural and historical ethnic repertoires described above, religious ideas and practices have become the most important marker of ethnicity and have shaped Bawean ethnic narratives. As such Islam is presented as an intrinsic part of 'being Bawean'. Today the Bawean community increasingly orients itself toward Muslim centres elsewhere and it uses new ways such as chatting and cheap international calls both made possible by the Internet. If they really wanted to return to Indonesia now that they have a passport they were able to do so. Instead they went on the *hajj*. Since they received a Vietnamese passport forty have been to Mecca, none have visited Indonesia.

In the case study presented the Bawean people actively dealt with different governmental institutions and governmental representatives from several states: Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam as they formalise their ethnic identity and nationality. When dealing with Vietnamese state officials they downplayed both the diasporic ethnic and religious dimensions of their identity and even over presented their connection with the host country. Nonetheless, they did not officially let go of their status as aliens and formally became Vietnamese citizens because they wanted to assimilate to Vietnamese society. On the contrary, they perceived it as a way to distance one self from actual Vietnamese cultural citizenship. Instead, they wished to fulfil an ethnic religious duty that cannot be actualized locally. *Đi hành hương* as the Bawean and Cham call the *hajj* is one of the 5 pillars of Islam. A loss of Islamic practice is seen as a loss of Baweanness.

The Bawean case study balances the view that some contemporary literature on the Vietnamese State generates. Current literature positions "motley crowds" on frontiers or in non-urban settlement areas, but this case study presents such a crowd that exists on the frontiers of formal classification while living in the centre of Vietnam's economic hub.

It also shows that official policies are not necessarily followed through on lower governmental levels. State agents did not force Mohamed into the existing formal or official classificatory grids in line with an oppressive uniform ideology. This shows that this ideology, suppressing diversity for the sake of the idea of a greater Vietnamese family, is not implemented the same way everywhere, without respect to regional or population variations.

Some scholarly literature presents state classification as a state's hegemonic instrument, as an instrument of state-power alone. However, ethnic classification is an instrument that is not used by the state alone. As shown above, when people feel the need they will decide to make use of such an instrument of power. In the past as well as in the case study presented above Mohamed has actively manipulated aspects of his ethnicity in response to his needs and the situations he has had to overcome. His feelings of ethnic pride have in the

past made him hold on to his ethnic identity choosing not to become a Vietnamese national. Later when he needed something the Vietnamese state could provide him, he manipulated state agencies while formally classifying his ethnic identity and in doing so he used ethnic classification as an instrument to his benefit. This provided him with a permit that enabled him to undertake a journey that in turn serves a non-instrumental, non-political element of his ethnic identity. In fact most of the people who received Vietnamese citizenship are in the autumn of their lives and they claim that this request for Vietnamese citizenship not only influenced their life in or their functioning within Vietnamese society it also was a preparation for life after death.

This pilgrimage provides him with a psychological feeling of security in the religious context of an afterlife. It soothes other emotions such as longing and answers the need for religious purpose and actualises his imagined membership to the *umma*. Cultural, historic and religious narratives and his religious explorations of the Internet have instilled these feelings in him. This case reveals how *Indonésia* has become a *dân tộc* and how Bawean men and women became an officially registered ethnic community in order to fulfil one of their last religious duties.

Another argument is that even after September 11, 2001 the Bawean were not investigated or restricted in any way. A reason might have been their (ex-) alien status or that the agents of the Vietnamese government just as current scholars do not consider the Bawean and others living in urban areas as a border or frontier "motley crowd" because of lingering geographical criteria (mountainous, close to national borders) for marginality.

Vietnamese State officials did not interfere in Bawean daily life. In the case of citizenship application, they even pro-actively helped them even though this Bawean citizenship case did not fit the existing legal formats as these only cater to people who already belong to a (foreign) country as citizens. State officials did not show the pre-occupation that citizens must belong to one of the fifty-four recognized groups with this affiliation shown on the identity card. They permitted ambiguity when they allowed the Bawean to choose their own ethnonym to be documented as their *dân tộc*, [ethnicity], on their *giấy chứng minh nhân dân* their identity card. Some state institutions seem to have let go of the standard grids and have accepted, up to a point people's subjective ethnic identity as the official one.

List of Interviews

The author has established long-term relationships with several informants and some informants have been interviewed several years in a row.

interview with *hakim* of mosque Nuhr, July, 2001, Hồ Chí Minh City

interview with *Hidir*, June, 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City

interviews with *Mohamed*, June 2001, Hồ Chí Minh City

interviews with *Mohamed*, May 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City

interview with lawyer at the Department of Foreign Affairs, November 2005, Hồ Chí Minh City

Dynamics of Faith:
Imam Musa in the Revival of
Islamic Teaching in Cambodia

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Abstract

Born a Cambodian Cham, Ly Mousa who later became Imam Musa, left home at a tender age of twelve to go to Bangkok, and Patani, in Siam and then to Kelantan, in Malaya, to pursue his religious education. After returning home right after the Second World War, he married a young girl from an influential family, and became an instant well-known religious activist not only in Cambodia but the whole of French Indochina. A different Islamic teaching, not only in approach but also in content, was taught, initially, in the village of his wife, to men and women, young and old. His teachings, after some time led to the breaking up of the Muslim Cham community into *Kaum Tua* and *Kaum Muda*. By 1970, when the Cambodian civil war started, his followers had spread from Kratie to Phnom Penh, on the eastern bank of Mekong River. The dynamism of Imam Musa and his followers, known as *Kaum Muda*, created the *Sangkum Ly Mousa*, even before the *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* was born. During some twenty years of his brave and active teaching, national primary schools were built by the *Sangkum Ly Mousa* in the heart of Cham villages where Cham children could easily have access to formal education; through some organized economic activities, his follower's livelihood have known some changes. This paper also briefly discloses the present situations of the Cham in Indochina. It discusses the ups and downs of the life of Imam Musa, how Imam Musa implanted the dynamism to the *Kaum Muda* Cham community and how their ethnic identity was respected in the Buddhist Cambodian majority community, until his tragic death in 1975, just after the Khmer Rouge take over.

Introduction

The Muslims in Cambodia are composed mainly of the Cham, Malays and a very small number of Arabs, Pakistanis and *Kabul*, the Afghans, as they are known locally. At present no one knows exactly how many of them exist, but the number ranges from some 500,000 to 1.5 million. They live all over the country in rather small communities or big ones. They mainly live in the eastern part of Cambodia; but since the 1980's, they have opened up small hamlets, which can be found all over Cambodia. Generally, they are known as Cham (one of the ethnics of the old kingdom of Champa), Khmer Islam, Cham-Chvea or simply Chvea (referring to Jawa but meaning the Malays) to the locals. Beside those living in Cambodia, the Cham-Malay are also found in Vietnam and Laos. Since the fall of Indochina to the communist regimes, they have found shelters in Malaysia and remote countries such as the USA, Canada, and Europe, and in Japan as well as in Australia.

Until this present day, no one knows exactly when the Cham became Muslims. However, it was known that Islam had arrived in Champa as early as the 9th century. Though from the 14th century, Islam was part of the beliefs and religions of the Champa people.

Since then the Muslim Cham and the Malays from the Malay Peninsula, especially Kelantan and Pattani, established a very good religious relationship[1]. This good relationship led to the coming of a young Champa prince, whom later became king Po Rome (1627-1651), to Kelantan to learn Islamic teachings. The coming of– young Chams to Kelantan to learn Islamic teachings continues until this present day. And one of them was Ly Mousa, who later was known as Imam Musa.

Imam Musa

Imam Musa was born Ly Mousa or Musa Bin Ali, in the year of the Snake, or 1916 in the Christian era. He was born in Phum (the village of) Ampil, Khum (sub-district of) Pœuh, Srok (district of) Krauch Chmar, Khet (province of) Kompong Cham, Cambodia to a farmers family. He was the eldest of seven siblings of three boys and four girls.

At a very young age he understood the living conditions of his family and the others in his village, almost all of them were farmers. He vowed to bring his family out of poverty. Then he left Ampil at a tender age of twelve and headed to the town of Poi Pet, near the Cambodia-Thailand border. At Poi Pet, he helped town traders in their businesses.

After only six or seven months later, he was spotted by a Thai businessman, by the name of Hj Ismail, from Bangkok. Hj Ismail brought the young Musa to his house, adopted him as his child and sent him to a Thai school. We are not sure how long he went to a Thai school but we know that he spoke, wrote and read Thai fluently. His adopted father passed away in 1987[2].

From Bangkok he proceeded to Patani to learn Islamic studies. As he did not get enough financial support, he started a ∖small business. When the Second World War started he had already travelled quite often to Kota Bharu, Kelantan. He usually brought along with him construction materials such as nails, zinc and cement for sale. (Aziz Chik…); On the other hand, other Cham students chose to beg for *zakat* (tithe) or any other forms of donation from Muslims.

Usually he would stay for long periods in Kota Bharu, where he attended the Nik Salleh pondok, in Kampung China. It was here that he met with Yusof bin Osman, Noh bin Osman and Muhammad Zain (three uncles of the writer whom he addresses as Walong Soh, Wangah Noh and Wawan Zain respectively) whom came here much earlier than Ly Mousa. In Kota Bharu too he met another village mate of his, Son Ahmad who studied in a different *pondok*, in Melor. Later Son Ahmad became known as Imam Ahmad India, as he pursued his studies for a Masters degree in India. Son Ahmad returned home in 1956.

At the age of 29 years old, right at the end of the Second World War, Ly Mousa returned home to the elation of his family members.[3] It is to be noted that by the time the young Mousa was studying there, the *Islah* movement was very active, not only in the Malay Peninsula but also in the whole Malay Archipelago.[4] In the Malay Peninsula, as a result of many young Malays who upon returning home from studying in the Middle East, set a new development in their mode of thinking. Basically, the *Islah* movement is a movement

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[1] See Mohamad Zain Bin Musa 1994.
[2] Pada tahun 1987, Khusyatillah telah pergi ke Bangkok dan dapat mencari rumah Hj Ismail. Beliau telah meninggal, dan isterinya pada ketika itu, masih ada. Rumah Hj Ismail ada dalam 45 minit perjalanan kereta dari Bangkok. Nama kampungnya adalah Arun Amarin.
[3] Imam Musa's life in Patani and Kelantan is not studied here. It is a subject of another research at this point of time.
[4] Joroen Peeters 1997.

set up to restore the true teachings of Islam based on the Quran and *Hadith*. And those who spread this teaching were called *Kaum Muda*.

The birth of *Kaum Muda* threatened the religious leadership of the old folks and some of the Malay Lords, who were practicing the Islamic teachings mixed with other beliefs such as ancestral customs which include animism. The *Kaum Muda* believed that due to this practice of the Islamic unorthodoxy, the Muslim communites were underdeveloped. Among the fore runners of the *Kaum Muda* were famous personalities such as Sheikh Tahir Jalaluddin and Muhammad Yunos.

As time passed by, many newspapers were published, the first one was *al-Imam*, a Malay newspaper published in Singapore in 1906. This paper appealed to the Muslim community to follow the true path of Islamic teachings based on the Qur'an and *Hadith*. They urged the Muslim community to accept knowledge of the West which is considered beneficial. They also urged the community to allow women to have freedom in education and be active in community life. Besides *al-Imam*, other newspapers such as *Neracha, Utusan Melayu* and *Lembaga Melayu* were also published in Singapore. The *Kaum Muda* also published a magazine *al-Ikhwan* in 1925 in Pulau Penang under the leadership of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi.

The *Kaum Muda* struggles were not going on smoothly. Those who espoused the *Kaum Muda* idea were strongly opposed by a group called *Kaum Tua*. To respond to the many articles published by the *Kaum Muda*, the *Kaum Tua* also had their own voices heard through *Lidah Benar*, which was published in Klang. And to allow women to further their education, the first building was built and completed in 1936 to accommodate female students. This building was part of the Maahad II Ihya Assyarif, built by Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Bakir in Gunung Semanggol, Perak in 1934.

As it has been mentioned earlier, due to the lack of documentation on the activities and with whom the young and energetic Imam Musa associated with, we shall continue discussing the life and times of Imam Musa in his beloved homeland of Kompong Cham. What had been preached and practiced by Imam Musa is similar to the approach and practice by the *Kaum Muda*.

Imam Musa Bin Ali (1916 – 1975)[5] Zainab Binti Mustafa (1929 -)

At the age of 31 years old, Imam Musa married Miss Fa Nab or Zainab Binti Mustafa. Fa Nab is from Phum Prek Krut, Khum Svay Khleang, Srok Krauch Chmar, Khet Kom-

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[5] The three photographs published here are by Courtesy of Khusyatillah Bt Musa.

pong Cham. Prek Krut is a village about five kilometers away from Phum Pœuh, the famous Imam Musa's natal village. Fa Nab was from an influential family. The marriage resulted in nine children, six boys and three girls. Now, Fa Nab lives in the USA with two of her children, Kyusyatillah and Khidir. The other two living children, Khifatullah and Ihsan are in Cambodia.

Islamic Teachings

Upon arrival in his village, Ampil, Imam Musa's distictness was in his dressing. Usually, a religious man, such as an *imam*, a *khatib* or religious teachers in the whole of Indochina, at that time, had their head shaved and wore a turban and *av Jva* (*baju Melayu*, a Malay long sleeved shirt) as village folks wore sarong, *av jva* with either a *kopiah* (white cap) or black *songkok*.

The villagefolks who initially welcomed him tried to turn away from him as in their opinion his outlook did not show a learned religious person. He wore trousers, sometimes even shorts, shirts, kept his hair and grew a beard. They despised him to a point that when he felt unsafe, he kept a dog under his house, for his own protection. This again fueled their hatred for him even more so as a dog to them is the dirtiest (*najis mughallazah*) of all animals.

The breaking point of the relationship between him and the villagers was in their daily prayers. Two traditional practices in a prayer by the old folks were the wiping of their faces or foreheads after the 12th *rukun* that is after the *Salam* and the reading of the *qunut* as part of the *subuh* prayer. Both of these practices were not parts of Imam Musa's prayer, though he sometimes read the *qunut* when and only it was needed.

In addition to this, Imam Musa started teaching the translation and interpretation of the holy Quran to his wife's village folks, men and women, old and young. These classes were conducted almost every evening between *Maghrib* and the *Isha* prayers. The *hadith* were also taught in these classes. In the meantime, he trained those who wanted to pursue their studies. The number of his students grew as time passed. Only when he felt they were qualified, were they allowed to teach the translation and interpretation of the Quran. And through his diligence, up to 1970 when the Cambodian civil war started, he managed to train a handful of them. Some of them obtained scholarships to pursue their religious education abroad.

His *new* method of teaching and interpretation of the Quran, which prior to this was thought to be only the domain of special people, was well accepted by many people, from normal village folks to the educated and socially high-ranking personalities. To the normal folks, some of the topics Imam Musa had introduced were unheard of before or contradictory to the five tenets of Islam. Imam Musa even taught lessons on economics and politics. I remember him vividly teaching to the village heads who were known as *hakim* and *imam*, who felt that their position in the society was threatened.

Following this, the Muslim community was split into two groups known as *Kaum Tua* and *Kaum Muda*. Imam Musa was at the head of the *Kaum Muda*. Because of the existence of both of these groups, the members of the community were literally broken up: some husbands and wives were separated; some members of the same family did not speak to one another. Imam Musa and his followers were accused of practicing deviant Islamic teachings and *kufur*. All these could happen because everyone wanted to go to heaven after their death, thus they must practice what they know to be right.

Despite all this, religious schools were slowly set up by Imam Musa in villages where there were enough numbers of his followers. These schools consisted of a few tables and long wooden benches set up under some houses, especially the imam's. In some villages

which they had access to, classes were conducted in the *surau* or *masjid*. Besides those so-called *pondok*, the first religious school was built in Phum Khbop, Khum Svay Khleang in 1968. The building of this school could not be completed as the Cambodian civil war, or the spill over of the second Vietnam War, started in 1970.

Some of the *pondok* teachers were those who were teachers before; but some others were given the task by Imam Musa after having attained a certain level of education from him. As for the religious books, they were brought from Malaysia, Penang or Kelantan. And as there were not enough copies, the lessons were hand copied and distributed to various villages.

Imam Musa's teachings not only spread within the confines of Srok Krauch Chmar but also reverberated along the Mekong River, in the eastern part of Cambodia and in the whole of Indochina, especially in the regions of Saigon and Chaudoc. As the crisis between the two groups, *Kaum Tua* and *Kaum Muda* grew, they decided to hold a major debate in 1955. Imam Musa headed the *Kaum Muda*, and the *Kaum Tua* was headed by Tuan Hj Ali from Moat Chrouk (Vietnam) assisted by a few other Tuans. This debate was seen more as a competition between those whose sources of knowledge depended on secondary sources (*Kaum Tua*) against those who relied on the holy Quran and *hadith* (*Kaum Muda*).

The breaking up of families actually happened after this debate where the secondary sources could not withstand the primary sources of Islamic teaching. And the effects of this debate also brought about a series of accusations against Imam Musa, some cases were police cases aimed at discrediting Imam Musa and a major accusation was one done to eliminate him permanently from the religious scene in Cambodia. This case was aimed at both Imam Musa and Imam Ahmad India. They were both expatriated but some months later managed to find their way home and lived until their painful death at the brutal hands of the Khmer Rouge in 1975. He suffered all his life due to his intention to bring about the change and introduce dynamism in the teachings of Islam to a community which did not seem to progress according to the teachings of Islam; besides some Muslim communities seemed to vegetate all year round.

National Education

The education of the Muslim communities in Cambodia under the leadership of Imam Musa was beyond just religious education alone. He was now convinced, of his ideas which he had before he left his home in Phum Ampil, some forty years ago, that education could potentially bring about mobility to his community. However, this education has to include national or modern education. Where modern and religious education is given to both sexes.

Imam Musa and his closest followers who included Maklong Sah (Aishah binti Wan Mohamad), Cei Phin @ Po Phin, Hj Sos (Hakim Yusoff), Vadeur Sa and Vangah Kechik from Phum Prek Krout and Pet Sa (Math Mousa or Musa Bin Ahmad), also from Prek Krout but worked in Phnom Penh, held a series of discussions on how to improve the living standard of the Muslim communities. But first they needed to form a well organised community which they named *Sangkum Ly Mousa* (I would translate it as *Ly Mousa Solidarity*) in 1953. This organisation of *Sangkum Ly Mousa* was created ahead of the formation of a national political movement known as *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* by Norodom Sihanouk in 1955, «usually translated as People's Socialist Community»[6].

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[6] D. P. Chandler 1996, *A History of Cambodia,* p. 188.

The *Sangkum Ly Mousa* built in 1955 the first primary school for the national education system, which is secular in nature, in the middle of Phum Prek Krout, where majority of its population are Muslims. The wooden school building, a block of three class-rooms was built with brute energy of the Muslim community, starting from cutting wood in the forest to make it into planks; sand and pebbles collected in the Mekong river, just opposite their houses, and of course donations from well-to-do individuals. The second block of another three class-rooms was built later. The Krauch Chmar district education officer, Mr. Uom Kek, who later became a well-loved headmaster and teacher of the *Sangkum Ly Mousa Primary School*, approved the application for the school. He was one of my beloved teachers.

The first *Sangkum Ly Mousa Primary School* teachers were Cham picked by Imam Musa himself. Only after a short time later, qualified teachers were sent to the school by the government, all of them native of the district of Krauch Chmar. Their salaries were paid by the government; and the school was administered under the education system of Cambodia. Following that success, a few more primary schools were built by the *Sangkum Ly Mousa*, one each in the Khum Kompong Ro, Prek Sandai (Chœutéal Phloueh in Khmer) in Srok Chhlong, Khet Kratie. Many young Cham children were sent to the school without any more fear by the parents as it was believed before that sending Cham children (meaning Muslim) to national schools, the children would become Khmer (meaning not Muslim of *Kufar*). In the 1970s many had reached the university level and left the country for further education overseas.

Economy

As an individual, Imam Musa was a fisherman, like many others living along the Mekong river. He used drifting nets as a means to catch fish. He also had a medium size motor boat which he hired for transporting goods. He did not own any piece of farm land like his father did.

For the community, his economic plan was about to become reality by the year 1970. But it was too late and just a dream for him and many others. By early 1960's, the *Sangkum Ly Mousa*, built up a fund, *Baitulmal* (treasury), where a family member of the Sangkum contribute 800 Riels (around 20USD) per year. Those who could not afford the sum would go and collect sand or pebbles from the Mekong river to sell. By 1963 two points of sale had been established, one in Prêk Bak (srok Krauch Chmar) and the other one was at Chruoy Cham (in Chœutéal Phloueh).

By late 1960's, the *Sangkum Ly Mousa* started to buy paddy fields in the village of Makh, Srê Véal in the district of Prêk Kâk village not far away from Svay Kléang and on the opposite side of the Mekong River. In the late 1960s, the paddy fields could produce enough for the yearly need of some 10 teachers. The quantity of the paddy produced was about 200 thang[7] per year. The teachers whom benefited from the program were those in Khum Svay Khleang (in the province of Kompong Cham), Phum Thmei and Kompong Ro (both in the province of Kratie).

The money to buy those paddy fields came from contributions of his followers and donations by sympathisers. To the question of why he started the economic reform very much later? The answer is very simple. First the community was generally poor. And secondly he believed that if the people did not have the conviction, and did not understand the importance of collective work, it was futile to explain the idea to them. And this took many years of his

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[7] 1 thang = 15kg of rice.

precious leadership life. And to carry out the economic reform it had to start from things that the participants (villagers) understood; as we knew that the people of the districts were individual farmers or fishermen and never worked collectively before. And the process had to go through education first, as what was being done. And by education it meant that it had to combine religious education to the modern education which included mathematics, sciences, history, geography etc… That was the reason why the first national primary schools were built at the heart of the Muslim community villages of his followers so that the young found it easy to go to school and parents too felt secure in sending their children there.

Legacy of Imam Musa in Indochina

As mentioned earlier, the Muslims in Indochina were mainly descendants of the kingdom of Champa. Due to so many reasons, mainly the long process of the *nam-tien*, the displaced Cham had founded their villages in the kingdom of Cambodia, including Tayninh and Chaudoc, formerly known as Rong Damrei and Moat Chrouk, in Khmer[8]. They are also found in Vientiane, Laos.

After 1993, in Cambodia, the Muslims started to build new villages in almost every part of Cambodia in search of better living. The migration from their home villages to other parts of Cambodia was mainly due to economic reasons. When it was hard to earn a living in their villages, the people started moving out in search for a better livelihood elsewhere. This movement of the Cham Muslim communities within Cambodia could easily be done as they were considered as part and parcel of the whole Cambodian community. On the contrary, in Vietnam, since 1975 life does not seem to be that easy.

In Vietnam after 1975, new land reforms were introduced. The effects are more predominant in the highlands where other Champa ethnic communities, such as the Rade, Cru and the Jerai, live. This culminated in the 2003-04 event where many met with death and some survived to tell their stories[9]. The Muslim Cham live in the regions of Ho

The Malay-Cham Settlements in Indochina

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[8] See Mohamad Zain Bin Musa 1990 and Mak Phœun 2003.
[9] See www.aitpn.org, www.persecuton.org.

Chi Minh City, An Giang and Tayninh and the regions known as their ancestor's lands. In Laos, the Muslim community is rather small. Their concentration is in Vientiane.

In Cambodia, after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, every Cambodian, including the Cham people, started to find their way back to their villages. Upon reaching their villages they started to rebuild their lives together by picking up bits and pieces left off after the Khmer Rouge regime. Besides rebuilding their own family, they concentrated on renovating, and later in some villages, building new mosques or *musallah*, where which they immediately looked for someone who could barely read the Qur'an to teach their young. Donations poured in. Islam is important to them as it is believed and history has taught them so, that the identity of the community survives because of Islam, which differentiate them from the majority of the population who are mainly Buddhist. Islam is the core of their unity and identity. For the Muslims in Indochina, everything evolves around the teachings and their practice of Islam. They have started once again from Zero[10]. Copies of the Qu'ran were needed[11].

Even though *Kaum Muda* and *Kaum Tua* could not be identified in Indochina, especially in Cambodia, Imam Musa's students and followers who survived the Pol Pot regime, still practiced the dynamics of faith propagated by Imam Musa's *Kaum Muda*. Children, whenever and wherever possible, were immediately sent to schools. And a new breed of young graduates from the Middle East, once again, brought in the new dynamism in the interpretation and application of the Islamic faith, a trend which has seen the refusal of some parents to send their children to some Islamic schools.[12]

Conclusion

Imam Musa was a man of vision. With all his sincerity, he sacrificed his entire life working for Islamic causes by first improving their education, religious and modern education. He brought many changes to the Muslim society in Cambodia, in terms of the understanding of Islam, the teachings and the practices of Islam, and most importantly the application of the Islamic faith. The teaching of Islam is not about rituals and blind belief but it teaches us to understand as we all know that there were so many verses in the holy Qu'ran, which put forward things, ideas, concepts of living in the form of questions. This world is the bridge to the future. And as an individual, in the words of his own daughter, Khusyatillah, and I personally believe so as well, he was a caring person.

Imam Musa and his family (early 1970s)

[10] See François Ponchaud 1977.
[11] See Mohamad Zain Bin Musa and Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abd. Rahman 2003, chapter 7: The cham in Cambodia after the Pol Pot regime.
[12] See chapter 8 of Mohamad Zain Bin Musa and Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abd. Rahman 2006.

This caringness has brought about unity and solidarity within the community. As a father and an Imam, he was very honest and truthful. He strongly believed in himself. He was a role model for so many younger generations who wanted to emulate him. The faith he taught us has brought the dynamism into the whole society. He was the envy of many of his contemporaries.

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A. Aziz Bin Chik
Imam Musa's student
Born in 1944 (63 yrs old), in Phum Prek Krut, Khum Svay Khleang, Srok Krauch Chmar, Khet Kompong Cham, Cambodia.
Former Cambodian Army Officer in the Lon Nol regime.
Now living in Muar, Malaysia.

Fa Nab (Zainab Binti Mustafa)
Imam Musa's wife.
Born in 1929 (78 yrs old), in Phum Prek Krut, Khum Svay Khleang, Srok Krauch Chmar, Khet Kompong Cham, Cambodia.
Now living with her daughter in the USA.

Khusyatillah Binti Musa
Imam Musa's daughter.
Born in 1959 (48 yrs old), in Phum Prek Krut, Khum Svay Khleang, Srok Krauch Chmar, Khet Kompong Cham, Cambodia.
Now living in the USA.

Ly Imweur
Born in 1953 (54 yrs old), in Phum Ambil, Khum Pœuh, Srok Krauch Chmar, Khet Kompong Cham.
Imam Musa's student.
Survived the Khmer Rouge regime.
Now, Entrepreneur, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Nasrullah Bin Ahmad
Son of Imam Ahmad India
Born in 1973 (36 yrs old)
Keep very close contact with the family if Ust Azhari, a pondok mate of his father
B.A. (usulluddin) from Al-Azhar university, Egypt (2000)
Now living in Cambodia

Hj Nik Sulaiman Hj Wan Nor
A follower and student of Imam Musa
Born in 1947 (60 yrs old), in Phum Prek Krut, Khum Svay Khleang, Srok Krauch Chmar, Khet Kompong Cham, Cambodia.
Now living in Nibong Tebal, Pulau Penang, Malaysia.

Hjh Rafeah Hj Osman
A follower of Imam Musa and a contemporary of FA Nab

Born in 1933 (74 yrs old), in Phum Prek Krut, Khum Svay Khleang, Srok Krauch Chmar, Khet Kompong Cham, Cambodia.
Now living in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia.

Zakaryya Adam
Born in 1950, in Phum Khpob, Khum Svay Khleang, Srok Krauch Chmar, Khet Kompong Cham.
Imam Musa's student.
Presently a politician, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The Re-organization of Islam in Cambodia and Laos

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to examine the role of Islam in present-day Cambodia and Laos. Specifically, the paper tries to focus on how the re-organization of Islam in Cambodia has been negotiated and how that process has affected the role of the Muslims in the contemporary Cambodian polity. The paper begins with a discussion of the profile of the Muslims and then goes to examine the various contexts that the Muslims have had to cope with in recent Cambodian history such as the two decades of civil war, the intervention of the United Nations and the re-introduction of democracy in Cambodia. Subsequently, the nature of Islamic reconstruction in post-1993 Cambodia will be analyzed. In the case of Laos, only a brief examination of the profile of the Muslim community will be made. It will be obvious in the paper that the role of Islam in Cambodia and to a lesser extent Laos, has been very much determined by contextual factors which may have little to do with Islam but the internal religious motivation of the Muslims has also been significant to impel them to reorganize themselves using Islam as the basis. For Cambodia particularly, the reorganization of Islam is not only attributable to the structural changes that have taken place in the kingdom since 1993 but has also been driven by the phenomenon of Islamic revivalism.

1.Introduction.

The role of the Muslims in Cambodia and Laos has not been fully appreciated or understood even though they have been part of these countries for a very long time. Hitherto there is only a dearth of works on Islam and the Muslims in that part of Mainland Southeast Asia. Philip Taylor's most recent work, "*Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta: Place and Mobility in the Cosmopolitan Periphery*" is a notable exception but even then its focus is on the Mekong delta region of Vietnam rather than that which encompasses Cambodia and Laos as well. There are other minor works which try to document the history of the Chams like the volume entitled *The Cham Community Through the Ages* written by Mohammed Zain Musa and Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abdul Rahman, but they are still far and few in between. The paucity of academic literature on the Muslims in Indochina is obvious.

In my earlier papers on the Muslims in Cambodia I have tried to highlight this problem [Omar:1998]. In my first paper on the Muslims in Cambodia I identified four reasons for this unsatisfactory state of affairs which are namely, (1) research on Islam and the Muslims in Cambodia has not been systematically developed; (2) there is a dearth of published materials on the subject; (3) there is still some considerable confusion as to who the Muslims in Cambodia are and as the Chams constitute the overwhelming majority of the Muslims in Cambodia, there is a tendency to use the term Muslim and Cham synonymously as if they mean the same thing thereby excluding the range of other Muslim ethnic groups who also constitute an essential part of the larger Muslim community; and, finally (4) probably due to the research bias of academics the esoteric preoccupation with the Chams, for example, had led to a growing interest on Chamic research internationally at the expense of trying to

understand the overall role of Islam in Cambodia. Chamic research too is also not just confined to Muslim Chams but also involves non-Muslim Chams. Research on the Chams may indeed help provide useful information on their religious profile in Cambodia but that information alone will not be adequate to explain the comprehensive role of Islam in Cambodia which certainly goes beyond the Cham community. The situation is even worse in the case of Laos as there hardly has been any serious publication on the role of the Muslims and to this day even basic data on them is either hard to get hold of or hardly reliable.

There definitely is a need for more research and more work to be done on this theme. This paper constitutes a very preliminary and modest attempt to provide some basic information on the subject with a view to stimulating discussion on it. The main objective of this paper is to trace and evaluate the role of Islam in Cambodia and Laos in the last decade or so particularly following the end of the Cold War. For Cambodia especially the role of Islam will be assessed in the context of the post-UNTAC reconstruction era. Specifically, the paper will focus on how the re-organization of Islam in Cambodia has been negotiated and how that process has affected its Muslim population. The paper begins with a discussion of the profile of the Muslims in Cambodia. The paper then examines the various contexts that the Muslims have had to cope with such as the two decades of civil war, the intervention of the United Nations and the re-introduction of democracy in Cambodia. The nature of Islamic reconstruction in post-1993 Cambodia will also be analyzed. The paper will try to argue that the re-organization of Islam in Cambodia is not only a function of the structural changes that have taken place in Cambodia but is also a consequence of the phenomenon of Islamic revivalism in the kingdom itself. In the case of Laos, there are obvious structural limitations for the Muslims besides the fact that numerically they are also a very small group. Thus, the paper will merely confine itself to profiling the Muslim community in Laos and highlighting the manner in which Islam has been negotiated to reconcile the needs of the Muslim community with the demands of the communist state.

2. Profile of the Muslims in Cambodia.

According to the 1993 Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia Buddhism is the official religion of the country but freedom of religion is guaranteed. The Constitution also advocates parliamentary democracy as Cambodia's political system. The position of Islam in Cambodia today has to be seen in this context. It is both the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom as well as the electoral strength of the Muslims that have enabled the re-organization of Islam to take place to give it a more tangible, public and positive role within the new Cambodia. At the same time it also has to be acknowledged that for at least a few centuries Islam has been an integral feature of Cambodia although for a variety of reasons this has not been fairly reflected in the existing academic literature. In an important sense its impact has been so significant that it has emerged to become the irreducible and definitive element of Cham ethnic identity in Cambodia. All Chams in Cambodia are Muslims although not all Muslims are necessarily Cham. The centrality of Islam in the lives of the Muslims in Cambodia, Cham or otherwise, who constitute a significant numerical, historical, cultural and religious minority is easily identifiable.

The Muslims in Cambodia today are however characterized by diversity. Essentially they are represented by various categories of people including Chams, Chveas, Khmers, Indians and Arabs. The Chams are indeed the most important ethnic category because they are not only the most numerous but also are generally accepted as being synonymous with the Muslim community, constituting literally, its backbone. But even the Chams are basically represented by two major groups, namely the *Cham Shariat* [i.e. Chams who observe

the Sharia, or Islamic law in the Shafiee tradition of Islam] and the *Jahed* or "*Kaum Hake-kat*", also known as "*Kaum Jumaat*" or "*Cham Bani*" who have a rather superficial Islamic identity. It is the *Cham Shariat*, however, which is the dominant and dynamic group. The principal denominators of their identity are basically knowledge of the Cham language, continued practice of Cham culture, a common Cham ethnic ancestry and a strong sense of attachment to orthodox Islam. As indicated above, their Islamic identity has become an inseparable part of their ethnic identity. There is also a third group which is still in a very nascent state of formation and this is the group primarily consisting of members of the Jahed community who are beginning to move towards the Ahmadiya version of Islam.

The *Chvea* or *Jva* is another important ethnic group within the Muslim community. The term *Chvea* or *Jv*a, is actually closer to Jawi, which has been more commonly used as the equivalent of Malay with a strong Islamic connotation. The term *Chvea* in the context of Cambodia is used to refer to Malays in a generic sense. According to Po Dharma, there are actually three categories of Malays, namely *Jva Krapi*, *Jva Iyava* and *Jva Melayu*. *Jva* (*Chvea*) *Krapi* refers to Jva Kerbau which indicates Malays who are from Sumatra including those from Aceh and Minangkabau. Jva (*Chvea*) *Iyava* specifically refers to Malays from the island of Java while Jva (Chvea) *Melayu* refers to those from the Malay Peninsula. [Po Dharma n.d: 9] Besides the Chams, the Chveas are the most numerous although in terms of percentage they are still a very small group. The Khmers are also a very significant group within the national Muslim community because they constitute the natural link between Islam and the indigenous Khmer culture and demonstrate the affinity that can develop between Islam and practically every ethnic or indigenous group.

Interestingly as the Muslims become more empowered educationally, economically and politically the latent religious schisms within the broader Muslim society have begun to re-emerge. The most obvious traditional division within the Muslim community has been between the Jaheds or the heteredox Muslims and the Cham Shariat, or the orthodox Muslims. But recently there have also been other groups such as the Ahmadiya sect, the Wahhabis and even the Jamaat Tabligh, which have been consolidating their respective constituencies, thereby contributing to internal religion frictions within the Muslim community.

There are various estimates of the Muslim population in Cambodia today. The percentage of Muslims in relation to the total population of the kingdom is usually stated to be around 4 to 5 percent. As the population of Cambodia today is estimated to be at least 13.5 million, there could be as many as 650,000 Muslims in Cambodia. The Secretary of State in the Ministry of Cults and Religions, Mr. Zakariyya Adam, suggests a slightly lower figure of just above a half million people but admits that it is very difficult to verify the authenticity of whatever figure that is given at the moment. Probably a better way of gauging the numerical presence of the Muslims in Cambodia is to look at the distribution of mosques throughout the kingdom. In the early 1990s when the reconstruction of Islam in Cambodia had just begun it was generally believed that there were about one hundred mosques in existence throughout the kingdom but as of 2007, according to the latest Mosque List, the number of mosques throughout the kingdom has exceeded four hundred and this figure does not include the scores of *suraus* or *mussallas* that usually perform lesser functions compared to the mosques. In addition to this there are also more than 300 madrasas or Quranic schools spread over 315 villages throughout the kingdom of Cambodia. What is obviously significant is the fact that these religious institutions, from mosques to Islamic schools are to be found in practically all the provinces in Cambodia from Phnom Penh to Rattanakiri, and Preah Vihea to Preah Sihanouk. The largest concentration of mosques occurs in Kg. Cham which has over 148 mosques. This also means that the largest concentration of Muslims occurs in Kg. Cham. It is no wonder that the present Deputy Governor of

the province, Sem Sokprey, is a Muslim. The next largest concentration of Muslims is to be found in Kg. Chnang, which has over 42 mosques. The deputy governor of the Kg. Chnang province, Saleh Sen, is also a Muslim indicating. The numerical as well as the political strength of the Muslims is again reflected here. The capital city, Phnom Penh, has a total of 12 mosques.

Culturally, the Muslims can be fairly easily identified by their practice of Islam but linguistically, although among the Chams the Cham language continues to be the principal medium of practical communication, almost without exception all the Chams can also speak Khmer without difficulty. Language code-switching seems to be a common practice among the Chams and also the Muslims. Many Chams also learn Malay, which is perceived as a language of religious instruction although they may have only limited speaking ability. The Muslims in Cambodia therefore generally tend to be bi-lingual if not multi-lingual.

Occupationally the overwhelming majority of the Muslims in Cambodia are either fishermen or farmers. A significant component of the Muslim population though is engaged in either vendoring or cattle-rearing. A small number is employed in factories, the service sector or as government servants. There is also a very small group of Muslims engaged in trade and commerce. There is a noticeably large number of Muslim economic migrants working abroad especially in Malaysia and Thailand. Within Cambodia, unemployment among the Muslims is also very high. By and large, the majority of the Muslims in Cambodia appear to be socio-economically disadvantaged.

Educationally, many *madrasas* or Islamic schools have been built and the traditional Islamic educational system revived. Muslim children in Cambodia are generally enrolled both in Islamic religious schools as well as the secular national schools where they will divide their time almost equally. Students who opt for religious education study both at night and in the daytime. It is also common now for Muslim children to the Quran school or Ta'hafiz which specializes in training its students to memorize by heart the whole Quran. Thus, it is not uncommon to find young Cambodian Muslim children who can recite the Quran through memory. There is also a tendency for students in the religious school system to want to go abroad especially to Pattani in Thailand or Kelantan in Malaysia to pursue further their religious studies. Many madrasas in Cambodia follow the curriculum of the Malaysian religious school system. Some Cambodian Muslim children even aspire to go to the Middle East if they can acquire funding. Since the 1990s there has also been a proliferation of educational institutions to cater to the needs of the Muslim children of Cambodia. Nevertheless, despite the growing emphasis given to education by Muslim leaders and NGOs, in terms of infrastructure, facilities, textbooks, teachers, curricula and teaching methods, the situation is still far from satisfactory.

The case of *Ummul Qura*, an Islamic school with one of the best infrastructures in Cambodia whose medium of instruction was principally Arabic, illustrates the educational and political dilemma facing the Muslims. This school was set up in 1998 with generous Saudi funding and was officially opened by Prime Minister, Hun Sen himself, a symbolic act which not only the highest recognition of Islam by the state but also the harmonious state of relations between the Muslims and their non-Muslim counterparts and political masters. The opening ceremony was launched with great fanfare and drew a lot of publicity in the local as well s international media. Its teaching staff comprised mostly foreign Muslim teachers from a variety of countries in the Middle East as well as Southeast Asia. Since it had very good boarding facilities it was able to cater to students from all over the kingdom. Although the student population was overwhelmingly Muslim, a good number of non-Muslims students especially those from the remote provinces, were also enrolled. The

school also functioned as a feeder institution preparing its graduates for university education abroad especially in the Middle East.

The *Ummul Qura* school had emerged to become the talking point of the Muslims in Cambodia as they were perceived to be directly helping the new generation of Muslims in Cambodia for their educational empowerment. Following the war on terror which was launched by President Bush, in 2003 just before an international conference which was scheduled to be attended by the U.S. Secretary of State then, Colin Powell was held in Phnom Penh, the *Ummul Qura* school was closed by the Cambodian government, twenty-eight of its foreign teachers expelled from the country within 72 hours and three expatriate teachers were accused of being members of the international terrorist organization, *Jemaah Islamiyah* [JI].

The harsh action of the government was extremely unpopular with the vast majority of the Muslims and created a serious crisis of confidence in the Muslim leadership at that time. To neutralize the ire of the Muslims and prevent a political crisis, the government almost immediately handed over the Ummul Qura school to the Mufti of Cambodia to take over its administration. In view of the problem of logistics and funding, the local Muslim leadership under the Mufti could not revive the school immediately. When this happened very much later, the school was not able to restore its former status. The credibility of the government and the United States was seriously undermined by this development. Although dislocation of the Ummul Qura affected drastically the confidence and hope of the Cambodian Muslims at that time, eventually this was made up by various friendly gestures by the United States Embassy in Phnom Penh to try to repair the damage that was done. Among other things, Muslim leaders would be invited for '*iftar*' or breaking of the fast ceremony during Ramadhan with the American Ambassador and members of the Muslim diplomatic corps in Phnom Penh. The U.S. Embassy also began supporting financially and materially many projects undertaken by the Muslim NGOs in Cambodia to uplift the conditions of the Muslims. This Ummul Qura episode is a stark reminder of the vulnerability of the Muslims to attack not only by outsiders but also by its own government.

3. The Different Contexts.

The role of the Muslims in Cambodia has been primarily a function of the different contexts with which they have had to exist in. The civil war years were the most discordant, disruptive and destructive for the Muslims. The absence of peace created a situation where the Muslims, like the rest of the Cambodian population were not able to lead normal lives. Beginning from the decade of the 1970s Muslims began to be uprooted and dislocated from their homes and villages all over Cambodia culminating in the period of Khmer Rouge rule under Pol Pot when they became one of the primary targets of the genocidal policies of the regime. There have been various estimates of the number of Muslims killed during this period but many Muslim sources insist that as many as half a million of them had been exterminated as a consequence of the genocide. Ben Kiernan, however, offers a much smaller estimate of about 70,000 Muslims killed. But what was less disputed was the phenomenon of tens of thousands of Cambodian Muslims having to flee their country to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. The turmoil that ensued following the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge regime by the Vietnamese military at the end of 1978 and the beginning of 1979 did not improve the situation very much although the post-Khmer Rouge period witnessed some measure of the rehabilitation of the Muslims under the patronage of the Vietnam-backed Cambodian Communist Party, the situation was far from normal and the Muslims continued to live in a state of anxiety and with lots of uncertainties. In the meanwhile

the civil war in Cambodia continued. The Vietnamese-installed regime of Cambodia was refused recognition by the ASEAN and the United Nations, which instead recognized the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea [CGDK] which was a lose coalition of all the parties opposed to Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. It was not until the intervention of the United Nations in Cambodia following the end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia that the situation began to change dramatically for Cambodia and its Muslim population.

It was the establishment of UNTAC [United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia] that marked an important watershed in the recent history of Cambodia. UNTAC had created the conducive conditions for the political reconstruction of Cambodia, which in turn, facilitated the rehabilitation of Islam in the kingdom. It was this development that had enabled the re-assertion of the political role of the Muslims both through traditional channels as well as the democratic platform to take place within the reconstructed polity. In addition to this, the creative use of external Muslim sympathy and support has also helped the local Muslims to reorganize Islam in Cambodia not only to make it more relevant to their practical needs but also to give it greater visibility to demonstrate its affinity with the state.

The 1991 Paris Agreements, and in particular, the creation of UNTAC led to the emergence of a conducive climate for the re-emergence of Islam on the national scene. This happened in four ways. First, the presence of UN soldiers and civilian personnel from Muslim countries such as Indonesia, Egypt and Malaysia, helped create new channels of contacts and cooperation between the dislocated local Cambodian Muslims and the sympathetic UN Muslim soldiers and officials. This was the crucial period in which the patronage and sympathy of the UN Muslim soldiers helped restore the confidence and morale of the Muslims. Second, in fulfillment of one of the essential provisions of the Paris Agreements, many Muslim refugees too began returning to their homes or villages Cambodia. The reconstruction of Muslim villages, under the protection of UNTAC, was undertaken. Third, many well-educated and well-connected Muslim refugees who had fled to Malaysia, United States and other Western countries were persuaded to return home to help in the process of the democratic and economic reconstruction of Cambodia. Their return and their subsequent role helped provide a new focus of Islamic leadership in Cambodia. And finally, the holding of democratic national elections in May 1993 under the auspices of the United Nations, conferred on the Muslims an electoral role which instantly made them a significant electoral group, whose support was sought by all the candidates, especially in areas where Muslim voters were dominant or present.

Following the elections, the promulgation of a new constitution and the formation of the first government in the post- UNTAC era, the role of the Muslims became further strengthened with the co-option of a number of leading personalities into the government. Beyond that, in attempting to seek foreign investment and assistance to stimulate the economic recovery of the country the government of Prince Ranaridh, was impelled by political considerations to move closer to countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore to avoid being over dependent on its big neighbours, Thailand and Vietnam. The role of Indonesia and Malaysia correspondingly became a significant factor in the economic reconstruction of Cambodia. Indonesia, for example, initiated a major Rural Development Programme to help Cambodia rebuild its rural infrastructure. Indonesia too, is one of the countries supporting the Angkor Restoration Project. Both Indonesia and Malaysia also invested heavily in Cambodia helping to bring in the much-needed foreign capital. Although these aid projects and business investments are not directly tied to any policy requirements, they have had the implicit effect of making the government more sensitive to the special needs of the Cambodian Muslims as a minority group. Conversely, Muslim businessmen and

government officials from Indonesia and Malaysia as well as other countries from the region as well as outside have also on their own accord been very positive and helpful towards their Muslim brethren in Cambodia.

The emergence of an expatriate Muslim community in Phnom Penh, with the setting up of many Malaysian companies and business houses and other forms of investments has also helped create new channels of contacts between the Cambodian Muslims and their foreign counterparts. Muslim Embassies and Muslim officials of international organizations in Phnom Penh too have been very forthcoming in handing out assistance to the Muslims of Cambodia. The open political system which Cambodia enjoys at the moment guaranteeing freedom of expression, movement and association has also helped to enable the local Muslims to organize themselves institutionally to promote Islam and the interests of the Muslims.

The 1993 Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia upholds fundamental human rights which include the freedom of religious belief and worship.[1] It was with this liberal spirit that the reconstruction of the Cambodian polity was undertaken in the post-conflict period. The role of Islam in Cambodia which had been severely displaced during the turbulent years of the nation's civil war began to be rehabilitated. The Muslims of Cambodia, who had suffered greatly as a consequence of the political upheaval in Cambodia, especially during Pol Pot's regime which targeted them for extermination, have, in the process begun to emerge as one of the main beneficiaries of the new Cambodia. The political recognition and space that they began to acquire in the first few years of the new democratic era were very promising. It was in this period that the reconstruction and re-organization of Islam was undertaken in an unprecedented way.

In the post-1993 constitutional era, the Muslims enjoyed political representation in Cambodia which even appeared disproportionate to their numbers. There were Muslims in all the major political parties in Cambodia. The Minister of Education, Youth and Sports in the Coalition Cabinet then, Toh Lah, was a Muslim. There were two Under Secretaries who were Muslims including one who was the Under Secretary of the Ministry of Cult and Religion. There were three Muslim Members of Parliament representing the different political groupings in the country. There was also a significant number of Muslims working as parliamentary support staff for several senior Members of Parliament. The secretary of the Speaker of Parliament, for example, was also a Muslim.

After the 1998 general elections, the Muslims continued to be well represented in public office representing the different political parties in Cambodia. This trend, no doubt showed that the Muslims were indeed already accepted as a national minority within Cambodia whose numbers and political role seemed to matter. Perhaps on account of this the Muslims in Cambodia today enjoy a much higher public visibility compared to any time in the past.

The commune council election in 2002 which sought to establish a decentralized system of governance through the creation of democratically- elected councils in each of Cambodia's 1621 communes helped to empower the Muslims throughout the kingdom as they are to be found in all the provinces of Cambodia and exist in concentrated numbers in several of them.

Subsequently, following the general election of 2003, under the premiership of Hun Sen, they have continued to be well represented in government as well as in parliament. There are now three Secretaries of State in the present Cabinet, two of whom are in the

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[1] For detailed provisions of the Constitution see *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia 1993* published in Phnom Penh.   It contains 14 Chapters and 139 Articles.

Ministry of Cults and Religions and the third in the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. In addition to this there are also four Undersecretaries of State, one each in the Office of the Council of Ministers, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Women. The first ever Muslim ambassador to serve in the post-conflict government of Cambodia has been appointed to Brunei Darussalam. There are six Members of Parliament representing the Cambodian People's Party, FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party. There are also two Muslim Senators representing the Cambodian People's Party and the FUNCINPEC respectively. Due to the democratic development in Cambodia the Muslims, by and large, have become politically active especially at the grass-roots level as well as in the political party level. There seems to be a special relationship developed through the political patronage system between the Muslims and the Prime Minister, Hun Sen and his Cambodian People's Party and coalition government although the Muslims are also represented in other political parties.

4. The Nature of Islamic Reconstruction.

The rehabilitation of Islam in Cambodia would not have been possible without the dividend of peace that the modern kingdom enjoyed in the post-UNTAC era. The restoration of peace in Cambodia made possible the return of Islam to the kingdom. This process, however, has also been partly helped by the phenomenon of Islamic Revivalism which has characterized the situation in much of Southeast Asia. Although Islam in Cambodia had, for much of its existence there, adapted itself to the local contexts its external links remained. Cambodian Muslims continued to look beyond their homeland for religious inspiration, education and contacts. The *haj* was one institution that helped Cambodian Muslims establish an important channel of communication with the Muslim world. Another important venue of contact was through education. It was common practice for Cambodian Muslims to send some of their bright young men to study in the Islamic educational centres in the region, such as those in Pattani and Kelantan or even those in the Middle East such us Mecca or Cairo. The existence of Cham villages or emigrants in areas outside Cambodia, such as in Thailand or Malaysia, has also helped keep alive important social and family contacts between Muslims within Cambodia and those living outside of the country.

In an important sense, the Muslims in Cambodia, although insulated in some other ways from the outside Muslim world continued to constitute a part of a loose and informal international Muslim network that was in existence for a long time. But before their dislocation within Cambodia, the nature of their contacts with the outside Muslim world, significant though it may be, was still essentially limited. In most cases these contacts were maintained at their initiative. Outside initiative to link up with them, for various reasons, was either very limited or did not exist at all. This partly explains the fact that very little was really known about the Muslim communities in Cambodia by their co-religionists elsewhere. And it was also this factor that led to the perpetuation of the deviant practices of Islam among some of the more insulated sections of the Muslim community in Cambodia such as the Cham Jahed.

The civil war in Cambodia and especially the carnage committed by the Khmer Rouge on the Muslims between 1975 and 1979, which led to an exodus of Muslim refugees across into neighbouring countries paradoxically had the unintended effect of highlighting their plight to the outside world. This development helped the Cambodian Muslims in at least two ways. First, many were resettled abroad in countries such as Malaysia, United States and France, and in their new homes they found new economic and educational opportunities for their self-improvement, something which escaped them even in their homeland.

Second, many who had fled to safety in the refugee camps in Thailand or Laos and Vietnam, continued to be involved in varying ways in the developments that were unfolding in Cambodia. This, for example, was what made it possible for a leader like Mat Ly, [a senior member of the Cambodian People's Party until his recent death], who had fled to Vietnam to return to Cambodia after the Vietnamese invasion of the country to work for the Vietnamese-installed regime in Phnom Penh to basically look after the interests of his co-religionists. Although religion was never given a high profile place in the post-Democratic Kampuchea period, the rehabilitation of Islam in Cambodia, albeit in a very nominal way, actually began in this period. It was during this period that many of the displaced Muslims began to return to their villages, a phenomenon which immediately led to the reconstruction of mosques, which constituted the focal point of Muslim communal life. Likewise, Cambodian Muslim refugees in Laos and various parts of Northeastern Thailand, actually played an important role in promoting Islam in these non-traditional areas of Islam.

The relative peace that Cambodia was now able to enjoy has made it possible for Muslims to regroup and reorganize themselves communally. One of the most obvious consequences of this was the remarkable growth in the population of the Muslims in Cambodia. It was in this context of a fast-growing Muslim population that the reconstruction of Islam has been undertaken. The process of reconstruction itself has manifested itself in a variety of ways. The Muslims have become very active in Cambodian civil society recently. Most of the Muslim NGOs were formed in the post-conflict era and practically all of them have been involved in soliciting foreign funds to support their activities in the kingdom. Many of these organizations have also tried to link up with INGOs to coordinate their activities. Some of the most active Muslim NGOs include the Highest Council For Islamic Religious Affairs in Cambodia, the Cambodian Islamic Centre, the Cambodian Muslim Development Foundation, Cambodian Islamic Women Development Association, the Cambodian Islamic Development Association, the Cambodian Islamic Association, the Cambodian Muslim students Association (CAMSA), Islamic Medical Association of Cambodia (IMAC) and the Cambodian Islamic Welfare Association. Muslim INGOs which are active in Cambodia include WAMY Charity Organization, World Islamic Call Society, International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) and Muslim Aid. Since March 12, 2004, Radio Sap Cham or the Voice of Cham, has been on the air with a view to "reaching out to and connecting (with) the Cham Muslim community and Cham diasporas as well as maintaining and preserving the Cham linguistic and cultural identity."

It is through the above organizations that funds from foreign as well as local sources have been solicited for distribution to their respective national constituencies, usually to support repair work or the reconstruction or completely new construction of mosques or *madrasah* (religious-school) in the local villages. Donations have been forthcoming from international Muslim organizations, Muslim Embassies as well as individual foreign donors and Cambodian Muslims who now live abroad. The Malaysian and Indonesian Embassies, for example, have been very generous in supporting mosque reconstruction efforts in Cambodia.

The Islamic International Relief Organization, on the other hand, has been active in providing assistance to build toilets and ablution facilities in mosques all over Cambodia while the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been providing generators to these mosques to facilitate power supply. Individual Arab donors have also contributed generously towards projects involving the construction of new mosques. The Dubai Mosque in Phnom Penh, for example, which is now easily the biggest mosque in Cambodia, built on

the premises of a building that used to be a dancing restaurant, was undertaken with funding from two wealthy Dubai Arab businessmen.

The Muslims, especially the Chams, who had fled Cambodia as refugees, brought Cambodian Islam with them. This, for example, explains the emergence of Cham mosques in areas where there were none before in the country and in places abroad such as in Vientiane, Laos and Santa Anna in the United States. In Malaysia, a large number of Cambodian Muslims were resettled in the East Coast States of Kelantan and Trengganu, and have quickly assimilated into Malay society. By and large, they now appear almost indistinguishable from Malays. Nonetheless, especially for the Cham Muslims, a shared sense of collective historical memory seems to prevail among them. Perhaps it was partly this factor that has brought about the emergence of a loose Cham transnational network beyond the political boundaries of Cambodia.

The various Cambodian Muslim Associations mentioned above have also been organizing the pilgrimage of selected individuals to Mecca every year. In addition to this, scholarships from several Muslim governments, like Malaysia, tenable at universities abroad for a range of subjects have also been offered to many Cambodian Muslim students. A wealthy Turk businessman had also sponsored a number of Muslim students for their studies in Turkey. The *Samakhum Kuwait* has established a large and modern school for Muslim orphans in Phnom Penh. The Cambodian Muslim Development Association has started a computer school in Phnom Penh, which is open to both Muslims and non-Muslims. It has a large enrollment of not only Muslim students but also some non-Muslim students as well. The Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank supplied large copies of the Quran and other related religious literature to Muslims throughout Cambodia. In fact, even Japanese aid agencies, made generous donations to the Muslims through the Ministry of Cult and Religious Affairs to support school projects as well as Islamic books distribution schemes. The generous support given to Islamic projects in Cambodia by many quarters coupled with an active national Muslim leadership had helped reinvigorate Islam in the kingdom. This can be seen not only in the growing number of mosques and religious schools in Cambodia but also the frequency and variety of Islamic religious programmes sponsored and supported by the community. Probably, the most important aspect of this renewal of Islam in Cambodia is the attempt to create a national organizational network of mosque officials throughout the country. The *Khana Chuol Kapuol Islam Kampuchea* rendered into Arabic as Mufti, the highest officially-recognized authority on Islam in the kingdom, is now democratically elected for a five-year term. In February 1994, the name *Sheikhul Islam Kampuchea* was used to designate this post which was called *Changwang Islam Kampuchea* in Khmer but from 1996 it has been changed to *Khana Chuol Kapuol Islam Kampuchea* or Mufti. This election for this post is undertaken at a special meeting of the country's Imams specifically called for this purpose. Although technically this practice has not yet been legislated into law the Under Secretary of State of the Ministry of Cult and Religions determines the procedures and regulations pertaining to the elections and supervises it thus giving it official sanction. But the office of the Mufti and the national socio-religious network that it has tried to create is very much a civil society movement. The energy that Muslim civil society acquires seems to be tapped from and through Islamic religious sources. Islam has been creatively used to create an ostensibly cohesive national Muslim community under the leadership of an officially-sanctioned Mufti.

While the above structural and formal organizational changes have been extremely important in the overall reconstruction of Islam in Cambodia, these have also been adequately complemented by the systematic and frequent spiritual inspiration that they have received from a number of quarters. The *jamaah tabligh* movement is easily one of the

most important sources of spiritual influence for the Cambodian Muslims. Tabligh groups from many countries including Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan have been frequently organizing trips to Muslim villages in Cambodia no matter how remote these places were in order to demonstrate the spirit of Islamic brotherhood to their Cambodian counterparts. They would normally stay in any one place no more than three nights holding various religious activities to draw the participation of the locals and to re-affirm their commitment and faith to Islam. Their continual presence, which was unprecedented in the pre-conflict days in Cambodia, has had the effect of drawing the Cambodian Muslims closer to Islam and the Muslim world. In fact, under the leadership of Imam Suleiman Ibrahim, who has been the head of the *jamaah tabligh* movement in Cambodia since the post-UNTAC era, regular tabligh activities have been regularly undertaken and his markaz tabligh in Kompong Cham is recognized as one of the most active in the Southeast Asian region holding annual gatherings which draw tens of thousands of people from all over Cambodia and beyond.

Another extremely important source of religious inspiration for the Cambodian Muslims is Malaysian Islam. The Malaysian Government has been very supportive of Islam in Cambodia and has been directly and indirectly involved in promoting Islam along its own lines. Many mosque-building projects in Cambodia are supported not only by the Malaysian Government but more importantly Malaysian NGOs and individual philanthropists. Religious training and instruction have also been offered by Malaysia to the Cambodian Muslim leaders. In April 1995, for example, with the support of Pusat Islam (Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia) and RISEAP, the first ever national seminar for Imams in Cambodia was held in Kampong Cham drawing about 300 participants nation-wide. The main aim of the seminar was to improve the way the Islam is organized in Cambodia. Following this event, more religious seminars and classes have been organized with the assistance of human and financial resources from Malaysia. Malay religious texts now find their way to most of the mosques in Cambodia and Malaysian-trained Islamic teachers have been active in promoting Islam. Malay is now taught in practically every madrasah or mosque-school in Cambodia, although this may not be a completely a new trend as it used to be for a long time the language of Islam in the region. What is important to note here is that, Islam in Cambodia has been reconstructed in the image of orthodox Islam that is practised in Malaysia.

Perhaps another significant development in the reconstruction of Islam in Cambodia is the growing relevance of Khmerization. As Muslims try to develop a national posture in Cambodia it is inevitable that there will be a greater effort to identify with the State. The Khmer language, which is the national language will certainly grow in importance among the Muslims. In fact, even now it has emerged as the principal medium of official communication for the Muslims, including the Chams. Most mosques in Cambodia too now deliver the Friday sermon in Khmer although routine announcements may be made in the Cham language. The attempt to translate the Quran into the Khmer language and the attempt now being undertaken to come up with a common Friday sermon for all the mosques in the nation in the Khmer language are compelling signs of the Khmerization process accompanying the reconstruction of Islam. The increasing number of conversions to Islam among the Khmer too is bound to stimulate further the re-orientation of Islam towards Khmer.

5. Islam in Laos.

Islam has had a long association with the area that now constitutes modern Laos but unlike its neighbours, China, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and even Vietnam, numeri-

cally, culturally, politically and economically, the Muslims are not a significant community. Although there was a period of time in the 1960s and early 1970s when there was a noticeable presence of the Muslims in various parts of Laos the emergence of a communist system and an authoritarian system of government had caused many of them especially the Haw Chinese to migrate overseas. The urban centres of Vientianne and Luang Prabang too had a visible Muslim presence before which has been disappearing in the last decade or so. The 1991 Constitution of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, amended in 2003, provides for the freedom of religion and it is this provision that gives Islam a legal presence. It is estimated that about 40 percent of the Laotian population adopts Theravada Buddhism, Nonetheless, the practice of all religions, including Buddhism, is severely controlled although there was an attempt to relax some of the more restrictive rules pertaining to the religious practices of the minorities. The political constraints that exist in Laos on all religious groups have contributed to constrict the role of Islam in the country.

In terms of numbers, it is almost impossible to even give an estimate of the Muslim population in Laos but various sources, including Encylopedia Britannica speculate that the Muslims make up about 1 percent of the total population of Laos which should come to about 50,000 as Laos now has a population of 5 million people. This is likely to be an inflated figure but even if it is accurate, in terms of visibility, Islam hardly makes an impression in Laos. But what is known is that like Muslim communities elsewhere in the region, the Muslims in Laos come from a diverse cultural and ethnic background. The biggest group is the Chin Haw or Chinese Muslims whose population has been declining very fast. The second group is made up of the South Asian Muslims usually from either India, Pakistan or Afghanistan. The third group is made up of the Chams and basically constitute refugees who fled Cambodia during the civil war especially against the backdrop of their persecution by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouges. The fourth group is represented by any one of the indigenous ethnic groups in Laos who converted to Islam due to intermarriage with Muslims. Finally, there is also a very small population of other Muslims from a variety of countries.

In view of its geographical location Laos has been subjected to Islamic contacts or influence from a number of countries such as Thailand, China, India and Pakistan, Cambodia and Malaysia and the Middle East. But it is also geography that has insulated Muslim communities from each other. In view of the mountainous terrain of Laos and the difficulty of communication from one region to another, Muslim groups have tended to develop autonomously except in the urban areas where there is more interaction between the various groups. But even then, the two mosques in Vientiane, for example, the Azhar Mosque and the Jami' Mosque are polarized along ethnic lines, the former being basically a Cham mosque and the latter an Indian Mosque. The Azhar Mosque is also Sunni while the Jami' Mosque is Hanafi. The Indian/Pakistani Muslims in Vientiane, despite being a minute community, are also polarized further according to their nationalities as they are represented by the Indian and the Pakistani Association respectively. Because of its contiguity with Thailand, Laos has overlapping ties with it, be it commercial, trading, educational or family. It is within the context of this broader framework of Thai-Lao relations that Muslims from Thailand have tried to develop their own relations with the Laotians. The Thai-Lao connection has been the most developed historically and the Thai Muslims have used this channel to find their niche. Interestingly too, the South Asian and other Muslims, for reasons of convenience also use Thailand to enter Laos. This phenomenon has had the effect of constantly revitalizing the Islamic links not only between Laos and Thailand but also between South Asia and Laos through Thailand.

Notwithstanding the existence of the above channels of contacts between the Muslims in Laos and their counterparts in Thailand and beyond, in view of the political restrictions that have been in place in communist Laos for over three decades already, the development of Islam has simply been stifled. Even the Chinese Muslims who could be considered as closest to being indigenous in Laos, have seen their role being dislocated or undermined by political developments. They have not only declined in numbers but have become less visible. The Chams in Laos have mostly acquired Laotian nationality but are fully aware of their foreign origin and therefore tend to be very docile. There have been in the recent years a growing number of Laotian Muslim students who went to study abroad at the Islamic International University in Kuala Lumpur and it is possible that they may want to change the way Islam is organized in Laos but in as long as the contextual constraints remain in place, it is very unlikely that this is going to take place soon. It is more likely that for quite some time to come Islam in Laos will continue to be perceived and practiced as a minority tradition that needs to be constantly monitored by the state.

6. Conclusion.

It is obvious from the foregoing analysis that the vicissitudes of Islam in Cambodia and Laos have been primarily a function of the contexts it is in. It was the outbreak of civil war that had dislocated Islam from Cambodia. In fact the genocidal policies of the Khmer Rouges were intended to annihilate the Muslims completely from Cambodia in the name of pursuing national homogenization. It was the peaceful resolution of the Cambodian conflict that had not only restored the role of Islam in Cambodia but also given it new energy, dynamism and direction, which is unprecedented in its long history in Cambodia. Democratic rule which demands respect for fundamental human rights and the principles of participatory politics has also given the Muslims a tangible political role in the reconstructed Cambodian polity. The emphasis on market economy as well as the need to attract foreign assistance and investment has also impelled the leaders of Cambodia to be responsive to the wider implications of their policies on minorities. The Muslims, as the second largest religious community in Cambodia have benefited from this benevolent policy. The role of countries like Malaysia and Indonesia and the international Muslim community and organizations has also considerably helped the process of the social, economic and spiritual reconstruction of the Muslim communities in Cambodia. The commitment of the Cambodian Muslims to Islam became reinvigorated and there is visible evidence of a revival of Islam in Cambodia. The growing contacts between the Muslims in Cambodia and Malaysia in recent years have brought Malaysian influence to bear on Islam in Cambodia, making it increasingly indistinguishable from the orthodox Islam practised in Malaysia. The political, economic and educational empowerment of the Muslims in Cambodia have helped them greatly in their desire and efforts to reorganize Islam in a way that will make them respectable as a community. The emergence of Muslim civil society in Cambodia has facilitated the systematic development of Islam in the kingdom beyond mosques and schools. New Muslim NGOs and Islamic institutions like the office of the Mufti, the Islamic Centre of Cambodia, the Royal Advisory Committee for Islam have emerged to cater to the needs of the Cambodian Muslim community. As this whole process has its own political dynamics it is also inevitable that latent tensions and schisms will also surface as the Muslims acquire greater public visibility. In contrast, the role of Islam in Laos, is unlikely to change very much as long as the broader context within which it has to operate remains restrictive.

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The Chams and the Malay World

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Abstract

There has been a lot of interest on the Malay world in the recent years but there is still a lack of conceptual clarity as to what the term really means. This has fueled an interesting debate as to how it should be conceptualized and approached. In Japan, although different approaches have been attempted, the Southeast Asian maritime world perspective seems to be prevalent. This paper will try to examine the link between the Malay world and Indochina from the viewpoint of commercial activities. The first section will discuss the role of the Chams in the early modern Malay World. I would like to assess the profile of the Chams in this period. The second section of the paper will, in contrast, examine the activities of the Malays in Champa and Cambodia. In the final section, I would like to highlight some information on the Chams in contemporary Malaysia based on my preliminary survey, which seems to suggest a recurring theme in the history of the Malay world.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, scholarly concern with the Malay world has been growing. For Malay scholars in Malaysia, the Malay world is undoubtedly one of the most important subjects of study. While using the term *"dunia Melayu"*, they try to clarify the historical influence of Malay culture in Southeast Asia[1] Particularly, with regard to their imagined vision of the Malay world, Islam is given a definitive place as demonstrated in the book entitled *Islamic Civilization in the Malay world* (Mohd. Taib Osman 1997).

Although western scholars rather like to use such terms as *"alam Melayu"* and "Malayness", they also share an interest in the Malay world[2]. Nevertheless, their focus has been more to explain the political systems or political cultures of the pre-colonial period[3]. However, some recent studies have begun to focus attention on the developments in the Malay world and the shift in ethnic identity in the early modern period. Such a tendency, in particular, is clearly reflected in some of the articles contained in the book *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries* (Barnard 2004).[4].

Interest in the Malay world has also been growing in Japan, although scholars there approach the subject from different angles, that is mostly from the viewpoint of the Southeast Asian maritime world. The renowned Japanese anthropologist, Tachimoto Narifumi has discussed the culture of this maritime world in a case study of Bugis immigrant society in the Malay Peninsula. The *"Nusantara* culture" that he describes is characterized by migration of the diaspora type, commercial-orientation, and networking (Tachimoto 1998). Historians rather tend to focus attention on port-polity[5] in the early modern period. Consi-

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[1] As for a discussion of "dunia Melayu", see, for example, Mohd. Yusof Hasan 1991.
[2] As for "alam Melayu", see Milner 1982 and for further details of "Malayness", see Barnard 2004.
[3] See, for example, Reid & Castles 1975 and Milner, A.C. 1982.
[4] See, for example, Reid & Castles 1975 and Milner, A.C. 1982.
[5] The "port-polity" is a concept on pre-colonial states of Southeast Asia. Its main features are as follows: (1) Port and capital city merged into a single urban complex at the river mouth. (2) Agrarian and trade activities should be viewed as complementary features of inter-regional cohesion and regional integration rather than as internally and

dering the coastal port-inland and local-international relations, Hirosue Masashi points out the roles played by rulers and immigrants as mediators either connecting or separating two different societies (Hirosue 1996, Hirosue 1999; Hirosue 2004). Nishio Kanji discusses the historical developments of the political culture of the maritime people, in particular their idea of contract, in the early modern Malay world (Nishio 1995, Nishio 2001a, Nishio 2001b, Nishio 2003, Nishio 2004). Hayase Shinzo, on the other hand, discusses the differences within maritime Southeast Asia by examining specific cases in its eastern region (Hayase 2003).

As stated above, contemporary scholars have been concerned with the Malay world even though they have been looking at it from many different aspects. The growing interest in maritime activities, in particular, presents us with a chance to consider the interactions and similarities between mainland and insular Southeast Asia. New concepts like "maritime Southeast Asia" and "port-polity" have encouraged us to pursue those subjects of study. However, it seems that the potential of the studies in those directions have not really been fully realized yet. For example, as far as Malay studies is concerned, only few scholars have tried to understand the links between the Malay world and that of Indochina although some Malay scholars in Malaysia have often argued that the concept of the Malay world naturally includes some parts of Indochina. Hitherto, to some extent, the cultural and the political exchanges between Indochina and the Malay world have already been discussed, in several studies[6]. Notwithstanding this development, very little is actually known about the other, and perhaps more significant aspects of their interactions.

This paper will approach the link between the Malay world and Indochina from the viewpoint of commercial activities. The first section will discuss a few points on the Chams in the early modern Malay World. The second section will consider the Malay activities in Champa and Cambodia. In the final section, based on my preliminary survey, I would like to present some information on the Chams in contemporary Malaysia.

1. The Chams in the Malay World

The Malay equivalent for Cham is "*Cam*" and for Champa is "*Campa*." I checked these terms in the Malay court histories (hikayat). These terms are not present in most of the Malay court histories. For example, the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* underlines his relations with foreign states or people from places such as Jawa, Siam, China, India and the Middle East (HRP: 12-17, 21, 23-24, 26-29, 36, 37, 40, 43, 46, 47, 50, 59), but this work does not mention either the Chams or Champa.

In contrast, the *Sejarah Melayu* contains some stories on the Chams and Champa. The *Sejarah Melayu* suggests that the Cham sea captains from Champa (*nakhoda Campa*) had high standing in Melaka as important traders (SM: 124; Brown 1970: 45, 217). Moreover, the *Sejarah Melayu* describes the origin of the Cham community in Melaka. According to this work, after the defeat of Champa by the King of Kuci (Vietnamese), two Cham princes escaped from Champa with their followers. These two princes were known as *Indera Berma Syah* and *Syah Palembang*. While *Syah Palembang* went to Aceh, *Indera Berma Syah* reached Melaka. *Indera Berma Syah* was well treated by Sultan Mansur Syah who asked him to convert to Islam. *Indera Berma Syah* consented and he was appointed a minister (*Menteri*). The *Sejarah Melayu* says that all the Champa Melaka (the Chams in Melaka)

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externally oriented divergent forces. (3) Rulers take active part in prosperity of port-polities (Kathirithamby-Wells & Villiers 1990: 1-13).
[6] See, for example, Ismail Hussein, Lafont & Po Dharma 1995.

were his descendants (SM: 193-95; Brown 1970: 101-03). In short, this story states that the Cham community in Melaka dates back to the reign of Sultan Mansur Syah (r. 1459-77).

Considering the history of the Cham-Malay relations, Danny Wong Tze Ken states that the fall of Vijaya in 1471 marked the beginning of the change in the relations between the Chams and the Malay world. He goes on to suggest that the period from 1471 to 1693 was characterized by the exodus of Chams from Champa following the occupation of their homeland (Wong 2006: 6)[7]. Therefore, there is considerable validity in the story on the origin of the Cham community in Melaka. As mentioned above, the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* does not mention either the Chams or Champa. However, the main reason for this is likely that the migration of the Chams to the Melaka Strait area occurred from 1471 onward.

It should be noted that the Cham exodus was an event that occurred almost during the same period as the "Age of Commerce (1450-1680)", which is claimed by A. Reid (Reid 1988 & 1993). It is quite likely that the Cham diaspora played a very important role in establishing trade links between the Melaka Strait area and Indochina. In fact, as I have already mentioned earlier that the Cham sea captains were well treated in Melaka. The *Sejarah Melayu* mentions a Cham sea captain called Saidi Ahmad who stayed in Pahang. After reaching Pahang, Hang Nadim of Melaka made great friends with Saidi Ahmad. Saidi Ahmad gave all the details of Pahang to Hang Nadim. Then, Saidi Ahmad helped Hang Nadim to carry out his secret mission there. At last, Saidi Ahmad sailed off for Melaka to send Hang Nadim (SM: 238-41; Brown 1970: 139-41).

An interesting point is that the Cham sea captain was much more informed about the vassal state of Melaka than any Malay subject of Melaka was at that point of time. This story suggests that the Cham sea captain took an active part in trade between the Malay states and Indochina. This view is supported by the Portuguese record that states that the trade network between the Malay Peninsula and Cambodia developed in the latter half of the 15th century (Pires 1966: 223). Therefore, it is not unreasonable to think that the Cham diaspora had a close connection with the development of Melaka in "the Age of Commerce."

Finally, I would like to add that we could find many traces of the Cham-Malay relations in the northern Malay state, Kelantan. Names of places such as *Pengkalan Chepa* (Cham jetty) and *Kampung Chepa* (Cham village) can be found there. The term "Champa" was also associated with various products such as costume, textile, hair decoration, weapon, and paddy[8]. It was believed that a mosque in *Kampung Laut* was built by the Cham sailors who frequented Kelantan. Furthermore, according to the *Hikayat Kelantan*, the royal family of the present-day Kelantan sultanate originated from a state known as Kebayat Negara or Kembayat Negara, which is believed to be Champa (Wong 2006: 13).

2. The Malays in Indochina
2.1 Champa

As the 13th century Venetian, Marco Polo states in his travels, Champa was famous for its forest products like agalloch (or eaglewood) (Polo 1971 vol.2: 144). On his way from Pasai to China, the 14th century traveler, Ibn Battuta stopped at a state called *Tawalisi*, which was considered to be Champa (Ibn Battuta 2001: 410, 427-29). According to his tra-

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[7] Danny Wong Tze Ken divides the historical links between the Chams and the Malays into four phases as follows: (1) Early Links Before 1471, (2) Between Fall of Vijaya in 1471 and Defeat of 1692, (3) From 1693 to 1835 when Champa was a Tributary State of Vietnam, (4) From 1835 to Present Day (Wong 2006: 2).

[8] There were costume named *tanjak Chepa* and textile named *sutra Chepa* and *kain Chepa*. Moreover, there were *keris Chepa* (Cham dagger), *padi Chepa* (Cham paddy) and *sanggul Chepa* (Cham hair decoration) in Kelantan.

vels, the ruler of Champa exerted great power like Chinese emperors and had many junks. He states that people of Champa were not Muslim (Ibn Battuta 2001: 410).

However, Ibn Battuta describes a few interesting points about a charming Cham princess. This Cham princess was familiar with both the Arabic and the Turkish language. She spoke to Ibn Battuta in the Arabic and the Turkish language and she could write in the Arabic language. When Ibn Battuta announced that he came from India, the Cham princess said that India was famous for pepper (Ibn Battuta 2001: 413). It is noteworthy that although she was not a Muslim, the Cham princess mastered the languages of West Asia and had a knowledge of Indian products. Her story reveals that the rulers of port-polities in Southeast Asia paid much attention in establishing trans-regional trade networks (See footnote 4).

French missionary records mentioned that during thirty years prior to the fall of Champa to the Nguyen in 1692, there were many Malay scribes in the court of Champa. Several French missionaries wrote letters saying that the Malay missionaries were also there and their main task was to propagate the Islamic faith to the Chams. It is likely that these Malays were involved in the Cham struggle against the Vietnamese encroachments into Cham territories, resulting in several anti-Vietnamese movements (Wong 2006: 12).

French records show that *bahasa Melayu* (the Malay language) functioned as a lingua franca even in mainland Southeast Asia. Another important point is that French records suggest that the Malays played an important role in the Islamization of the Chams in Champa[9]. These facts also suggest the close links between the Malays and the Chams of Champa.

2.2 Cambodia

The flow of the Chams from Champa into Cambodia occurred after the fall of Vijaya in 1471. As mentioned in the previous section, trade links between the Malay world and Cambodia grew from the latter half of the 15th century. A French traveler, G. Tachard states that the Malay migration to Cambodia increased during this period. Moreover, his record shows that the Malay set-up close cooperation with the Chams (Choisy & Tachard 1991: 430-34).

Spanish records also contain interesting information on the Malay activities in Cambodia. According to A. Morga, in the late 16th century, the Malays grew to be a powerful military force in Cambodia. The Malay force went to Champa and carried out military operations there. A Malay leader who had a title of Laksamana (admiral) extended his power with the support of the ruler's mother and court dignitaries. Then, he banished foreign people such as the Spanish, Portuguese, and Japanese from the state. This Malay *Laksamana* came to exercise great power and he coped with every matter of the state (Morga 1966: 138-39, 144, 176, 247-49). A. Reid points out that the Malay *Laksamana* was a nobleman (*orang kaya*) from Johor (Reid 1993: 188).

On the other hand, the Dutch documented that the Malays were engaged in trade activities. In the early 17th century, Intse [Encik] Lanagh Patanee [Patani] from Patani worked as a guide and interpreter in Cambodia. He led the Dutch to Laos (Kersten 2003: 6). Moreover, F. Valentijn states that by the early 18th century, the Malay language was used in the Cambodian court (Valentijn 1724: 44). These facts show the following two points. First, the contact between Cambodia and the Malay world became much closer in the 17th century.

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[9] The Cham classic entitled *Nai Mai Mang Makah* (The Princess from Kelantan) tells of the story of a princess from Kelantan who was trying to convert the Cham ruler to Islam. Although the event was not dated, Po Dharma and Gerard Moussay assume that the event took place between the fall of Champa to the Vietnamese in 1692 and 1771 when the Tayson rebellion occurred (Po Dharma, Moussary & Abdul Karim 2000: 29-30).

Second, the Malay world had already extended its trade network to Laos in the early 17th century. In fact, Malay shippers were the principle rivals of the VOC (the Dutch East India Company) in providing Indian cloth to Cambodia in exchange for benzoin, deer skin, and lacquer (Reid 1993: 189).

We should note that the Cambodian ruler allowed the Malays to enter its inland area. This is quite different from the case of the Malay port-polities, because the Malay rulers prohibited foreign merchants from making direct contacts with the inland people who were engaged in producing and collecting trading items (Hirosue 1996). On this point, Endo stresses the significance of the Malay- Cham links in Cambodia. He states that the Malay were able to approach the inland area with the help of the Chams who kept in close contact with the people there (Endo 2006: 2). Endo also points out that the Malays played a similar role with the Chams. He adds that the *Cambodia Chronicle* (*Brah Raj Bansavatar*) does not make a clear distinction between the Malays and the Chams (Endo 2006: 2).

In 1644, the ruler of Cambodia, Ramadhipati embraced Islam and adopted the title of Sultan Ibrahim. He established a replica of a Malay court on the Mekong. The reason for this dramatic event is that the ruler needed allies against the Dutch. As a result, Sultan Ibrahim retained the throne of Cambodia longer than any of his Buddhist predecessors since the previous century (Reid 1993: 189, 190). His conversion shows that the Malays were an influential group in 17th century Cambodia. Such a close connection between Cambodia and the Malay world is reflected in the story of Daeng Kamboja (the 3rd Bugis *Yang Dipertuan Muda* [vice-ruler] of Johor-Riau), which is described in the 19th century Malay history, the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (Hooker 1991: 182-83; Raja Ali Haji ibn Ahmad 1982: 45-46).

3. The Case of Contemporary Kuala Lumpur

Recently, Malaysia seems to be spotlighted as a major tourist destination by the Arab people. Many Arab tourists can be seen in the numerous shopping districts of Kuala Lumpur. The period from July to September, in particular, may be said to be "*musim Arab*" (the season of the Arabs).

With reference to this trend, new restaurants and shops have made their debut and opened. One example is *kedai minyak wangi* (perfume shop) which deals with *kayu gaharu* (agalloch or eaglewood). Last year, there were several *kedai minyak wangi* along Bukit Bintang Street in Kuala Lumpur. However, the number of *kedai minyak wangi* has increased during this span of one year. Now, more than ten shops can be found there.

Most of the above shops seem to be managed by Arabs. However, I found one shop, which is managed by a Cham Muslim family. This Cham family moved from Cambodia to Malaysia about twenty years ago. According to this Cham family, their *kedai minyak wangi* deals with eaglewood from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Cambodia.

We may say that recently the tradition of *nakhoda Campa* is being revived in a new style. The link between the Cham and the Malay world is not only an event in the remote past but also an ongoing event up to the present-day.

Conclusion

So far, this paper has considered trade links between the Malay world and Indochina by focusing attention on the activities of the Chams and the Malays. The discussion of this paper can be summed up as follows.

(1) The Cham diaspora after 1471 A.D. took an active part in establishing trade links between the Melaka Strait area and Indochina. They had a close connection with the development of Melaka in the "Age of Commerce."

(2) In the early modern period, the Malays established close links with Champa. The Malay language functioned as a lingua franca in both courts of Champa and Cambodia. It is probable that the Malays played an important role in the Islamization of the Chams of Champa.

(3) In Cambodia, the Malay- Cham link dates back to the latter half of the 15th century. In the 17th century, commercial relations between Cambodia and the Malay world became much closer and the Malay trade network extended to Laos with the support of the Chams. The Malays also played a prominent role in military affairs.

(4) The role of the Chams to connect Indochina with the Malay world continues to be relevant today and can certainly be seen in present-day Malaysia.

Abbreviations

DBP: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka

HRP: Jones, R. (ed.) 1987 *Hikayat Raja Pasai*. Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti.

JMBRAS: Journal of the Malayan/Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society

JSEAS: Journal of Southeast Asian Studies

KL: Kuala Lumpur

MBRAS: The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society

OUP: Oxford University Press

SM: Cheah, Boon Kheng (ed.) & Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail (transcribed.) 1998 *Sejarah Melayu, the Malay Annals*. KL: MBRAS.

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Notes on the Contributors

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MOHAMAD ZAIN Bin Musa was born in 1951 in Cambodia of Cham descent. He is now a Malaysian national and is an Associate Professor in History at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. He is a graduate of the EPHE (IVth Section), Sorbonne and is fluent in Cham, Khmer, Malay, French and English. He is a Cham specialist and has published many articles, ranging from the early history of the Kingdom of Champa through the recent history of the Cham displacement caused by the Communist victory in Indochina in 1975. His two books, *Masyarakat Cam Sepanjang Zaman* and *The Cham Community Through the Ages*, were recently published as a joint-work with Prof. Dato' Dr. Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abd Rahman. His works also include translations from French articles which were published Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka of Malaysia. He is now working on a book on the Chams in Malaysia and carrying out a research on the Socio-economic conditions of the Chams in Cambodia.

Rie Nakamura

Dr. NAKAMURA is one of the pioneering Japanese scholars in the field of Cham studies in Vietnam. She has done extensive research on the Chams in Vietnam. She holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Anthropology, University of Washington. Her doctoral dissertation was on the Chams of Vietnam. She has also written many academic articles on the subject and presented papers at numerous academic conferences. She worked as a program officer at the Toyota Foundation in Japan before assuming the post of a regional coordinator at the Open Society Institute in Thailand. She is currently a lecturer at the College of Law, Government and International Studies in Universiti Utara Malaysia., Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia.

Kanji Nishio

Dr. NISHIO is a professor at the Department of Humanities, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Defense Academy, Japan. He obtained his Ph.D in History from the University of Tokyo. He has been doing field research in the Malay world of Southeast Asia since the late 1980s. He has been associated with several universities in Malaysia, such as the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur and Universiti Malaysia Sabah and Japan in various capacities. A prolific researcher, he has published many articles on various aspects of the Malay world and is now acknowledged as a leading authority in that field in Japan.

Omar Farouk

Dr. OMAR FAROUK graduated with a First Class Honours in History from the University of Malaya in 1975 and subsequently obtained a Ph.D degree in Politics and Government from the University of Kent in Canterbury, England. He taught for many years at the University of Malaya before his appointment as a full professor at Hiroshima City University in Japan in 1994. He has also held visiting positions at Kyoto University and Leiden University, and has been associated with a number of other foreign universities in various capacities. He has been doing research on Islam in Southeast Asia for over thirty years and has published extensively on the subject. Since 1995 he has been particularly focusing his research on the Muslims in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

Ba Trung PHU
Dr. PHU is the Curator of the Museum of Vietnam History in Ho Chi Minh City while concurrently holding the post of the Director, Center for Research and Promotion of Ethnic Minority Cultures, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He has a Ph.D in Anthropology from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City Vietnam. The title of his Ph.D. thesis is "The Cham's marriage and family." A Bani Islam Cham himself, he is known by his Muslim name as Ibrahim Phu. He is Vietnamese by nationality and Cham by ethnicity. Dr. PHU has been lecturing on the various aspects of Cham culture and the art history of Champa for more than 18 years. He has also published a major work on Cham marriage and family in Vietnamese.

Malte STOKHOF
Mr. STOKHOF, a Dutch national, is a PhD candidate at the Vrije University in Amsterdam, working on the little-known Bawean diaspora in Vietnam. He has mapped the Austronesian /Muslim communities in southern Vietnam during his 12 months stay there in 2001. Because of his linguistic skills (fluency in Vietnamese and Indonesian) he was able to do research among these bi-lingual groups in Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand. He lived in Indonesia for thirteen years, and studied Indonesian at the University of Leiden for 1 year. He has also studied Vietnamese for 2 years (University of Leiden 1 year and National University of Hanoi 1 year). He has conducted fieldwork interviews among Muslims in Northern and in Southern Vietnam. During fieldwork he developed contacts with Cham and Bawean communities and has become very familiar with the religious life and daily practices among Vietnam's Muslims.

Hiroyuki YAMAMOTO
Dr. YAMAMOTO holds a Ph.D in Arts and Sciences (Area Studies) from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, University of Tokyo, where he graduated in 2003. He specializes on the modern history of Sabah, Malaysia and its neighboring areas. Prior to his current appointment as Associate Professor at the Center for Integrated Area Studies (CIAS), Kyoto University, he had held various appointments including Visiting Research Associate at the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) in Sabah, Malaysia; Lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia; Research Associate at the University of Tokyo and Associate Professor at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan. He has done a lot of field research in Sabah and other areas in Malaysia and has published numerous works.

Kyoto University
Center for Integrated Area Studies
International Workshop on the theme:
Islam at the Margins: The Muslims of Indochina.
20 May 2007.

Venue – Center for Integrated Area Studies, Kyoto University

9:00 – 9:10 a.m. –   Registration and administrative briefing

9:10 – 9:20 a.m. –   Welcoming remarks by Professor Hiroyuki YAMAMOTO

9:20 – 9:30 a.m. –   Introduction of participants

Session 1 – Moderator: OMAR FAROUK

9:30 – 10:10 a.m. –   Rie NAKAMURA, "The Cham Muslims in Ninh Thuan Province, Vietnam"

10:10 – 10:30 a.m. – Coffee-break

10:30 – 11:10 a.m. – Ba Trung PHU, "Bani Islam Cham in Vietnam"

11:10 – 11:50 a.m. – Malte STOKHOF, "The Baweans of Ho Chi Minh City"

11:50 – 12:30 p.m. – Discussion

Session 2 – Moderator: Hiroyuki YAMAMOTO

2:00 – 2:40p.m. –   MOHAMAD ZAIN Bin Musa, "Dynamics of Faith: Imam Musa in the Revival of Islamic Teaching in Cambodia"

2:40 – 3:20 p.m. –   OMAR FAROUK, "The Re-organization of Islam in Cambodia and Laos"

3:20 – 3:40 p.m. –   Coffee-break

4:00 – 4.40 p.m. –   Kanji NISHIO "The Chams and the Malay World"

4.40 – 6.00p.m. –   Discussion