

BOOK REVIEWS

Islam and Violence: A Case Study of Violent Events in the Four Southern Provinces, Thailand, 1976–1981. By Chaiwat Satha-Anand. USF Monographs in Religion and Public Policy, no. 2. Tampa: Department of Religious Studies, University of South Florida, 1986. Pp. iii, 54.

Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand. By Surin Pitsuwan. Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, 1985. Pp. xviii, 297.

Both these books aim to show how the ideology of Islam has been used in the cause of Malay separatism in the southern border provinces of Thailand. While Surin Pitsuwan gives a historical account from the late nineteenth century to the early 1980s, Chaiwat Satha-Anand focuses on a particular set of events in the period 1976–81. Because of the brevity of Chaiwat Satha-Anand's work, he is more concerned with summarizing empirical data in order to raise a series of important analytical issues. Surin Pitsuwan, on the other hand, provides a detailed and scholarly account of the course of separatist history in the south.

Chaiwat Satha-Anand's monograph is divided into three main parts. The first defines political violence and looks at its portrayal in the Thai media, focusing on a series of violent incidents reported in the Thai press. The Muslim groups involved are discussed, but the issue of press distortion and media manufacture of a "separatist threat" is not taken up. Internal problems and lack of cohesion in separatist groups are only briefly mentioned, and the relations of the groups with Malay villagers are not explored at all.

Part two surveys economic problems in the south, Malay culture, and history. Some comment here on the Thai Government's policy of promoting economic development and Thai language use to improve the situation would have been appropriate. The final part distinguishes conflict and violence, and looks at how Muslim groups use Islam to justify

the latter. The author then argues for an interpretation of Islamic *jihad* that includes non-violence. The book's conclusion summarizes the main arguments and contends that "Truth can replace the use of violence" (p. 42), but does not clarify how this would be done in practice.

Surin Pitsuwan's "Introduction" sets the theoretical framework for his book, and gives a brief overview of economic and social life in southern Thailand. He depicts the basic conflict as being between a traditional Malay society, which fuses state and Islamic religion, and the Thai state, which is "based on a Buddhist cosmology" (p. 8). The notion of the modern secular state which separates state and religion is also introduced, but does not really fit into the analysis here. Surin Pitsuwan's approach, emphasizing Buddhism to characterize the Thai state, seems insufficient given that military rule and hierarchy are also important, but it does allow him to focus on Islam in opposition to it.

Chapters 2-6 detail the history of separatism in the south, from the events surrounding the incorporation of the Muslim border provinces into the Thai state in 1909, through early rebellions by the old Malay aristocracy. Attacks by the Phibun administration are detailed, and the Malays' support of, and betrayal by, Britain in the Second World War period are explained. Accounts of rebellions under religious leaders such as Haji Sulong in the 1940s and 1950s depict perhaps the high point of the resistance movement's profile on the international scene. Also described are the Thai Government's increased efforts in integration from the early 1960s, and attacks on Malay education and religion which provided the environment for the upsurge of violence that occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Surin Pitsuwan closes with a survey of various separatist groups and the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, and concludes that separatism will be perpetuated and sustained by ethnicity and religion, though neither concept is fully explained and it is not clear how he distinguishes the two.

Unlike Chaiwat Satha-Anand, Surin Pitsuwan points to some of the foreign policy considerations that have formed the Malay situation in the south. Relations between Britain, the United States, and Thailand, and more recently that between Thailand and Malaysia, are seen as important, and the point has been expanded in an excellent analysis by Surin Pitsuwan elsewhere.

However, both books share some defects that have plagued other

authors on the same topic. Neither really brings out the multicultural character of Thailand — beyond the central region, Thailand reveals itself as very much a heterogeneous society, and the government's promotion of a monocultural vision of Thailand is a problem that needs to be addressed, both in the case of the Malays and the numerous other groups in Thailand. The Malay struggle could then be seen as part of a more general problem in Thailand, along with having its own individual themes.

Both writers assume that the Malays in the south are part of a "Malay cultural world of Southeast Asia", without delineating the very real differences in local culture and the shift of focus in recent years to inspiration from the Middle East rather than Southeast Asia. Also, while the authors both state that separatist groups in the south seek "autonomy", there is no strong questioning of what this means, either to the separatists themselves, or to Malays in general. It could be argued that the lack of cohesive aims has been a clear cause in the current inertia of Malay separatism, leaving Malay villagers discouraged as a result.

There is a clear need for more research at village level in the south to give us a better picture of how villagers interpret Islam and develop political attitudes. The two authors here rely on secondary sources and interviews with members of Malay élites in the south to paint their pictures, and Surin Pitsuwan is thus unable to explain his own observation that "the masses are still passive and not responding to the call of 'liberation'" (p. 225). Furthermore, neither author addresses the case of the largely Thai-speaking Malays in Satun province and how they relate to the three eastern provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat; it seems that we need some detailed ethnography before a comprehensive portrayal can emerge.

The two books are well-produced, and Surin Pitsuwan's style in particular is highly readable. Chaiwat Satha-Anand's book contains some minor typographical errors, and the references on pages 15, 31, and 38 are either incomplete, vague, or not reproduced in the "Bibliography". Surin Pitsuwan's book is obviously well proof-read, but some Malay terms used, for example, *To' Khru*, are questionable, and some of the Malay names of locations on the map of south Thailand are incorrect. His book bears a 1985 publication date, but it is in fact his Harvard doctoral thesis, and the material has not been updated from 1982.

Compared with other areas of Thailand, relatively little research work has been done on the south, and on the Malays in particular. These Malays are in an unenviable situation. They have been oppressed or ignored by the Thai administration, separatist groups have failed to give them long-term cohesive leadership or a sense of purpose, and their Muslim brothers on the world stage have not pursued their cause effectively in international forums. This is the real tragedy of the Malays in southern Thailand today — they live in a situation that drains their hope, with no clear sense of a way out of their predicament. While these two studies contribute to our understanding of that predicament, they do not indicate a way out of it. Chaiwat Satha-Anand is a highly placed academic in Thailand, and Surin Pitsuwan a member of the ruling parliamentary coalition there, so both are in a position to take their studies forward into action. If they do, their activities, like their books, will provide interest for those concerned with the issues they raise.

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