

# Malaysian nation-making and Thai-speaking Buddhists in Kedah

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## Introduction

In this paper I set out to reconstruct something of the historical experience of Thai-speakers in the north Malaysian border state of Kedah during about a century. Although the large majority of the population in Kedah is Malay-speaking and Muslim, the proximity to Thailand means that many Thai-speakers were stranded when the borders were drawn.

Kedah had close political, economic, and cultural relations with the Kingdom of Siam (present-day Thailand). A history of the political diplomacy between Thai rulers and Kedah Sultans has been written [Kopkua 1989], however, grass-roots studies from a local perspective are still inadequate. Examination of local village history would show another side to the unique characteristics of this area and how the multicultural villagers interacted. Collecting and collating local oral history would contribute greatly to our understanding.

There has been a general awareness of the presence of Thai-speakers in the historical territory of Kedah but few have yet concentrated their attention on this minority. My own interest was stimulated by reports on the Sam Sam, a group predominantly consisting of Thai-speaking Muslims. They were covered by Archambault in 1957 [Archambault in 1957] and a later paper by David J.

Banks about the historical role of Thai-speaking Muslims of Kedah, who were called *the Sam Sam* [Banks 1980]. Bank's paper relied mainly on documentary research, including statistical data on Thailand and Malaysia and official British colonial documents in the 19th century. In 1990 and 1991, building on this base, I carried out fieldwork in Thai-speaking Muslim villages in north Kedah. This yielded a short paper concerning the history of these villagers and their present conditions [Kuroda 1992]. The situation of Thai-speaking Buddhists, another Thai-speaking minority in Kedah, however, was beyond the scope of that paper. In this paper, I will focus on the Thai-speaking Buddhists of Kedah.

Here in light of more recent data, including observations based on my own fieldwork, I will re-appraise old statistical data and historical records from either side of the Thai-Malay border. In addition, I have made use of some anthropological and historical studies concerning this frontier where Thai and Malay cultures mingle [Cheah 1988, Nishii 1989].

No account of Thai-speaking Buddhists in Kedah would be complete without comparing their situation with that of the Thai-speaking Muslims. After the border was agreed in 1909 the trials of both groups of people help to illuminate what was involved in the process of building both the nation states of Thailand and Malaysia.

## Historical Background

My account begins with a discussion of the political relation between Siam and Kedah. Located on the southern periphery of Siam, until 1909, Kedah was a Malay tributary state of Siam. From at least the 16th century, after Kedah was Islamized, the Siamese kingdom Ayutthaya demanded tribute, sometimes

applying military force. On the Malay Peninsula, Siam maintained similar tributary relations with Kedah, Patani, Kelantan and Trennganu, and sometimes with Phatthalung.

Home to Indian and Islamic merchants, as ports of call for Far Eastern junks and Indian Ocean dhows, these peninsular polities played an indispensable role for the trade of Siam, in which Ayutthaya was the central of node.

The Anglo-Siam Treaty of 1909 instituted a fixed modern-style border between the Kingdom of Siam and British Malaya. This border was agreed through negotiation between the Government of Siam and the colonial officials of British Malaya. Little attention was paid to the cultural affiliations of the people who lived in these Malay states that formerly had tributary relations with Siam. In the final outcome, Satun, historically a part of Kedah, and Patani remained in Siam territory. Meanwhile Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Trennganu became part of the British Empire.

One feature of the new order was the reduction in the area of influence of post-agreement Kedah. Before the treaty the Sultan had exercised maritime control over the archipelago that fringes the western coast of the peninsula up to near Phuket Island. Under the Siamese tributary system, as the paramount local naval power, Kedah had maintained *de facto* control. Within this large area, many foreign traders and traders local to Kedah had prospered by using sea routes and trade routes across the isthmus through to Patani and other places on the Gulf of Thailand.

Perhaps this was a factor in the second peculiarity of Kedah: unlike other Siamese tributary states on the eastern coast, there were many people in Kedah

who could understand and speak Thai. The strong Thai influence is apparent in both place names, extending inland, and in the forms of traditional entertainment. Even today there are clear minorities who speak Thai as their first language. These Thai speakers include both the Malay Muslim *Sam Sam* and Thai-speaking Buddhists.

### Thai speakers in Kedah

Muslims who speak the Kedah dialect of Malay comprise the major ethnic group in the population of Kedah. Even so, there are still people living here who use the Thai language. In the first half of the 20th century, however, almost half of the people in Kedah could understand and speak Thai language [informant in kg. Kota 1990]. The Population Census of Kedah and Perlis in 1911, includes the category of Thai-speakers, and includes *Sam Sam* as a subclassification of Malay [Cavendish 1911]\*<sup>1</sup>.

Here, the terms 'Thai-speaker' and '*Sam Sam*' are taken from the classifications of the 1911 census. For the purposes of comparison, it will be assumed that almost all *the Sam Sam* are Thai-speaking Muslims [Kuroda 1989]. If this were so, the census would provide statistical data that enables us to compare the situation of Thai-speaking Muslims with Thai-speaking Buddhists. Apart from the census, from the 19th century, cursory descriptions of Thai-speakers, especially the *Sam Sam*, occasionally turned up in fragmentary reports. Inconsistent and contradictory, these accounts do not allow for any kind of generalization. The inconsistency of these descriptions more likely provides evidence of diverse mixed-cultural characteristics. As such they flesh out the statistical data and give clues about what the area was like before modernization. Space precludes going into detail here.

With greater certainty, the census tells us that there were two general categories of Thai-speaker in Kedah. The Malay Muslim *Sam Sam* appeared as a Malay sub-classification. The term is also found in the journals of 19th century English explorers and later in the official annual reports issued by the colonial advisers of Kedah and Perlis. The census of 1911 provides the only reliable data for the *Sam Sam* population and distribution of residence. In 1911, 5% of the Malay population were *Sam Sam*. Most of them were paddy farmers and settlement was concentrated in villages in northern districts: Kubang Pasu, Padang Trap, and the central district of Kota Ster (including Pendang). Hardly any *Sam Sam* were living in the southern district, which was opened to cultivation comparatively later<sup>\*2</sup>.

Concentrated also in Pendang, Thai-speakers who were not included in the 'Malay' classification comprised another group of Thai speakers in Kedah. In all likelihood they were probably Theravada Buddhists. Using other sources, describing how they came to the area and their post-settlement history, I would like to discuss these Thai-speaking Buddhist migrants.

Lists of Siamese temples and monks in Kedah and Perlis in 1890 provide a source of information. The oldest official records I discovered for Thai-speaking Buddhists are lists of Siamese temples and registered monks of Kedah and Perlis in 1890, 1892 (National Archives of Kedah 1992). These lists are included in the collection of the letters and documents of Sultan Abdul Hamid of Kedah. The original lists are written in the Malay language with Jawi script.

The lists show that there were 13 Siamese temples mainly around Bukit Perak in Pendang. At Wat Lamdin, the largest temple, there were 22 registered monks. According to oral tradition and scant remaining documentary evidence, the

temple had been established several hundred years before and so was also the oldest. Because the documents concerning the origin of the temple were lost in a fire, however, there is no solid evidence for this temporal seniority.

It is reasonable to speculate that a settlement existed near the temple because temples are essential to the daily life of Thai Buddhists and temples generally require parishioners. The Siamese distribution in the census of 1911 does, in fact, show Thai-speaking settlement near the temple. It is likely that the largest Siamese communities were at Padang Peliang, Padang Kerbau in Pendang district and Tekai in Padang Trap district. In these areas *the Sam Sam* villages and the Thai-speaking Buddhist villages are very close.

The Thai-speaking Buddhist villages are almost exclusively in the inland area. This is likely due to the route of original migration. Settlements are largely found in the Muda River valley. Flowing from the watershed with the Patani River, the Muda meanders through the southern Kedah before discharging into the Strait of Malacca. Elsewhere, the list of 1890 shows a temple lower down the Muda valley in Baling district. In the early 19th century, Topping reported that numerous refugees from Patani fled from war and settled in the Muda River valley [Topping 1850]. In my personal observations of the residential environment of the Thai-speakers in Pendang district, I found a tendency for *Sam Sam* villages to be on lower-lying land and for Thai-speaking Buddhist villages to be higher up in tributary valleys. In these areas I also came across Malay-speaking Muslim villages in which the vernacular was the Patani dialect.

Some Thai-speaking *Sam Sam* informants (kg. Nawa and kg. Titi Akar) recall a lifetime of interaction at local markets and participating in local festivals and ceremonies, but they either have no opinions on their origin or insist that their

ancestors settled locally several hundred years ago. This account of origins is probably influenced by the oral traditions concerning the old Thai temples.

Compared with their Thai-speaking Buddhist neighbors in the northern villages of Kedah, Sam Sam villagers have very poor recollection of their Siamese connections. The Thai-speaking Muslim *Sam Sam* have maintained contact with Muslim relatives over the border in Thailand. Oral accounts of their origin largely concur that they came here, at around the beginning of the 19th century, from south of Songkhla or Patani to seek better land for wet-rice farming [Kuroda 1992].

The differences in these traditions offers food for thought about the origins of Thai-speakers in Kedah . It is possible that some settlements of Thai-speakers in Pendang originated from earlier migration than in the northern area.

### **Thai-speakers and the frontier 'Bandit Area' after fixing of the border**

After the border was drawn in 1909 people continued to flow freely between the countries, often as part of their everyday work. For example, to bring in harvests from Patani to Kedah, seasonal laborers would cross the border. Others carried out cross-border trade between Kedah and Songkhla and visits were also made to relatives across the new border. Unfortunately, cattle rustlers and bandits could now also take advantage by fleeing across the border to escape pursuit. The Kedah Police and border patrols could not effectively control security in the border area. That is why Kedah gained a reputation as the 'Bandit Area' in the 1920s-1930s.

Cheah Boon Kheng has analyzed the famous Kedah robber tales [Cheah 1988].

One of these concerned Saleh Tui who, because *tui* is from the local dialect of Satun (Satul), was probably a *Sam Sam* from Satun. Even the most notorious outlaw, Nayan, although a Malay Muslim, was mainly active in Pendang, the area where Thai-speakers were concentrated. Saleh Tui and Nayan were known as 'Kedah men.' In comics and books Nayan has been transmuted into a 'Malayan Robin Hood, and his name lives on still today.'<sup>3</sup>

Another outlaw, Din Prum crossed into Malaya from Patani. He was either Siamese or *Sam Sam*, but had Thai nationality. Working his way up from cattle rustling, he soon went on to carry out robberies in Baling. On the run after committing crimes, he would cross the border into Thailand, outside of the jurisdiction of the Kedah police. He was more typical of the criminals that took advantage of the political division of the modern border. In the end he was shot dead by the police of Kedah. This incident became an international incident, however, because the Kedah police did not get permission to pursue Din Prum over the border into Siamese territory. Diplomatic negotiations were required to resolve the issue.

Tunku Abdul Raman even wrote an essay which features a story about a *Sam Sam* man who, in the 1930s, converted from Islam to the Buddhism to marry a Buddhist woman [Tunku Abdul Rahman 1978]. This conformed with the general image of *Sam Sams* as Muslims who lacked piety. In Kedah, the 'Bandit Area' impression of the vicinity where Thai-speakers are concentrated has remained until recent years.

### **Choice of national identity in nation building**

After more generalized fear of plunder in the wake of the Japanese invasion, the



end of the war in 1945 paved the way to independence for the people in British Malaya. As elsewhere, on the way to, and after, independence, nationalist leaders emphasized national identity to establish the new country as one that could stand on its own internationally. In nascent Malaya, a country of ethnic diversity, some kind of unifying nation-state ideology that encompasses all citizens was needed express public identity in the nation as a whole.

During the war, an anti-Japanese movement gained strength in the Chinese community, leading the occupation forces of the Japanese army to suspect all Chinese people. Meanwhile, the Malaya Communist Party carried out guerrilla actions. In this border area there was cooperation between the communists and the many Chinese who were antipathetic to the Japanese. When the British returned, the colonial government kept a wary eye on both the activities of the Malaya Communist Party and the Chinese.

Looking beyond the solidarity of opposition, to build a new multi-ethnic nation, many ethnic groups came together to create what became Malaysia. During this period the groups created a sense of what it meant to be Malaysian. Individuals had to select and deal with pressure to conform with formal categories of Malaysian ethnicity. People could no longer simply follow local customary practices, they had to actively be Malaysian.

The *Sam Sam* found that 'Malay Muslim' most closely suited their aspirations, even though they spoke Thai and were not ashamed of their personal connections with Thai people. At the same time, they worked to repair the negative stereotype of the *Sam Sam* as lacking Muslim piety and former associations with the 'Bandit Area.' Until independence, shared language and familiarity with local cultural practices meant that the *Sam Sam* people married

largely among themselves with spouses coming from Thai-speaking villages. As Malaysians, *Sam Sams* learned the Malay language, and in the process became more completely assimilated with the majority of Malay-speaking Muslims. Although this enlarged the scope of their world they gave up festivals and customs in their own tradition that were abolished as 'unIslamic.' Through Malay education, willingly adopted after independence, the coming generation of Sam Sam were able to join the Malay Muslims mainstream [Kuroda 1992].

The Thai-speaking Buddhists Siamese, however, found themselves in a much worse situation. In a largely Muslim country, their religion as well as their language set them apart. Already they had suffered negative stereotyping in Kedah, where the Siamese had been regarded as 'cattle rustlers.'

In the immediate post-independence period, the toughest issue for the Malaysian government was to find a way for the Malay, Chinese, and Indians to coexist. In this context, the social status of ethnic Thai people in Kedah was a local problem that was worthy of little attention. When the problem of this minority in Kedah came to light in the 1950s, issues were posed in terms of poverty rather than cultural difference. In 1948, a report on the Siamese of Naka, warned that although the Siamese of Kedah had been natives of Kedah for several hundred years, they were almost completely ignored by the Malayan education system and excluded from administrative aid. The report concluded that the government should redress the situation immediately. [National Archives K/SUK/SEC 824/68].

### **Thai-speaking Buddhists as 'the Poor:' New Village resettlement**

In the 1950s, Kedah was troubled by unrest in the border area. Three groups

were of concern to the government: Bandits were still active; Islamic separatists of southern Thailand found refuge over the border, out of reach of Thai authorities; and guerillas of the Malaya Communist Party were engaged in an armed struggle. The border area remained an 'Alsatia.' The administration in Kedah was concerned that the Malaya Communist Party was widely supported by Chinese communities and that people living in poverty near the border area might be tempted to cooperate with the communists. A need was seen for urgent countermeasures.

The Malayan government enforced operations to suppress guerrilla activities. Restricting a wide area and putting it under surveillance, the main policy involved relocation of the inhabitants of the border area. Nothing would get in the way of border patrols in this no-go zone, which was intended to effectively cut off the military pipeline to the guerrillas. Villagers near the border were uprooted and resettled in so-called New Villages. Before and after Malayan independence, this program was enforced from 1952 to 1960. Altogether, about 400 New Villages were created nationwide. The people who were resettled were widely characterized as squatters and likely collaborators with the Communist Party of Malaya. Others saw discrimination in the fact that 85% of the New Villages were Chinese, saying that it was an official race policy.

The victims of the program were more diverse in Kedah. In 1953 there were plans for 50 New Villages: in the southern area 27 were Chinese villages; in the northern and central areas, New Villages at Sintok in the 'Bandit Area,' and Padang Senai in Pendang district, included seven Siamese Thai-speaking Buddhist and four *Sam Sam* resettlement projects [National Archives K/SUK 14/58/9].

Those Thai-speaking Buddhist villages near the border that were too small to have a temple of their own were amalgamated in New Villages together with the inhabitants of larger villages. Many people were forced to abandon most of their property. From 1955, the Kedah government provided agricultural education and other programs to encourage a more stable lifestyle for the Thai-speaking Buddhists in the New Villages [National Archives K/SUK 1915/72].

With the people out of the way, the border crossing at Durian Belung, along the old overland route connecting Patani and Kedah was sealed and put under the watch of the army. The route was still closed in 2001.

### **The Wat Lamdin incident**

Many villagers participated unwillingly in the resettlement program. They did not want to leave their ancestral homes or leave behind their livestock and investment of labor in the rice fields. Naturally, this led to trouble with the army. Farmers would return to their home village without permission and then had to flee further inland to escape the authorities.

Although, in September 1952, the Thai Government had secured an agreement that Thai temples in the area, such as Titi Akar, Pendang, and Lampan were to be excluded from the program, the most contentious incidents involved the torching of Thai temples by Malay soldiers. These events developed into a diplomatic issue between consular officials of Thailand and the government of Kedah.

Most prominently, the oldest Thai temple Wat Lamdin was burned along with

its precious artifacts and historical manuscripts said to date back several hundreds of years. In April 1953, soldiers came to the village on an operation to find and destroy a terrorist hideout. They found evidence of activity, which later investigation determined was that of villagers who had not complied with resettlement despite receiving orders to vacate the village three months previously. Coming across Wat Lamdin, Malay Security Forces found rice and kerosene in a building temple storehouse. Unfortunately, the Buddhist monks were not at the temple and, thinking that they had found a terrorist supply cache, Malay soldiers set fire to the building [K/SUK 1916/72].

A number of similar incidents occurred in the same general vicinity. Security forces burned Wat Chamdin on 26 March, Wat Lamdin and Wat Pakhla on 27 March, and Wat Kebang Kesom on 30 March. Each time, sacred manuscripts and documents chronicling the history of these old temples were destroyed by fire, along with precious items such as Buddhist statuary.

The Thai Buddhist society of Kedah and Perlis immediately made a complaint to the Thai consul at Penang. Through the official they demanded an apology and made claims for damages against the government of Kedah. Against this, the government of Kedah insisted that anyone who did crop work in areas subject to removal orders was a 'terrorism supporter.' The Thai consul and Thai Buddhist Society of Kedah insisted that viewing Thai temples as terrorist hideouts was an unfortunate misunderstanding because it was reasonable for a temple to store rice and oil to meet the daily necessities of the resident monks. Moreover, these actions violated the agreement of September 1952 that was intended to protect the temples. Failure to honor this agreement was deemed an insult to the Thai government. Eventually, the Government of Kedah issued an official apology to the Thai government for these incidents and paid MSD 8,000

in indemnities for the damage done.

One factor that may have influenced the actions of the soldiers was the close relations between the Chinese and Thai-speaking Buddhists in this area. Intermarriage between the groups was not unusual and Thai temples often became shared places of daily religious practice for Chinese people along with the Thai-speaking Buddhists. To the military mind of the day, it was easy to equate Buddhists with supporters of terrorism.

### **Thai-speaking Buddhists from the 1960s to the 1990s**

After the census of 1911, official censuses did not include the categories of Sam Sam and Thai speakers. This makes it difficult to assess demographic trends. In 1974, however, Thamrongsak Ayuwatthana, a genealogist of Thailand, visited Malaysia and left a detailed record of the population of the Siamese villages and the numbers of the temples. [Thamrong 1976]. According to his figures, in Kedah [excluding Perlis], there were 26 Thai temples, 27 Thai-speaking Buddhist villages, and about 3,500 households composed of 17,030 persons. The population was concentrated mainly in Pendang District, and there were villages of 1,200 persons in the Padang Peliang and Padang Pusing area. Smaller populations of 3,850 persons were found in the Sik area, 3,000 in the Baling area, and 2,600 in the Kuala Nerang area. The largest village of 2,000 people was Naka village in the Kuala Nerang area. Naka village, however, is a resettlement village that also brought together people from other smaller villages.

When the public order of Kedah improved, in some cases, people were allowed to return their former villages and resume farming. Often neglect and damage by wild elephants discouraged people from returning. In some villages,

Thai schools were newly established in the temples with aid from the Thai government.

In 1985, the Malaysian Thai Buddhism society published a list of all Thai temples in Malaysia [Wat Bodhiyarram 1985]. The 37 temples in Kedah formed the greatest concentration of Thai temples in Malaysia (see Table 1 and Fig.2). And there is a report of a visit to Padang Kerbau (*Thung Khwaai* in Thai name) village by a faculty member of Prince of Songkhla University Patani Campus in 1987 [Salatan 2529].

During the generation since resettlement in the 1950s, however, the environment surrounding Thai-speakers in Kedah has changed radically and they in turn have adapted to the changes. The emergence of the nation state has coincided with the explosion of the mass media and decreasing physical isolation of rural minorities. In this situation, the formerly easy cross-border relations of the ethnic Thai people in Kedah, which may have encouraged stronger Thai identity, have also been severed.

One example of diminishing ethnic identification in the villages of the Sam Sam and Thai-speaking Buddhists has been the decline of traditional entertainment. In the past village culture was influenced by thriving performance arts such as Manora, Mayong, and Wayan, in which Islam has little relevance. After independence Malay Islamic culture gained hegemonic sway in Kedah and fewer and fewer people were interested in non-Islamic entertainment. Even in the Buddhist villages, festival performances of Ramwong dances, a tradition imported from Thailand rather than rooted in local culture, gradually dropped out of favor.

Perhaps acting as a pressure toward gradual conformity is the mental distance that Muslims, including the *Sam Sam*, now keep from non-Muslims. Social interaction between Muslim and Buddhist neighbors, which in the past included cross-religious presence at wedding ceremonies, receptions, and other gatherings, has also decreased.

Since the Malaya Communist Party relinquished armed struggle in 1990, the changed political situation has eased regulations and freed public order restrictions in the Thai-Malaysia border area. Even so, the permeation of Malay education and Islamization has already wrought large changes to the lives of Thai-speakers.

The *Sam Sam* have assumed mainstream Malaysian identity and benefited economically by becoming part of the majority ethnic group. No longer viewed as lacking piety, they have assimilated as Malaysian Muslims. They formerly spoke a southern Thai dialect and had to make an effort to understand standard Thai and learn to write Thai. These days, fewer and fewer young people make this effort.

A Thai monk informant, who teaches writing at a school in a Thai Temple, said that the serious problem is the decreasing advantage for the ethnically Thai people of Kedah to learn the Thai language. Mastery of Thai writing is challenging for younger generations and Thai is far less useful now because of the general spread of Malay education. In Kedah a monk from Bangkok expressed concern that the Thai Buddhists in Malaysia would lose their Thai identity through loss of language.

In Kedah, despite being native to Kedah, Thai-speaking Buddhists are a



minority among non-Muslim minorities in Malaysia. In a modern nation state, their challenge is to maintain a Buddhist identity as Malaysians. The trend has been to strengthen ties with Chinese Buddhists.

## Conclusion

Thai-speaking Buddhists in Kedah are concentrated in an inland area centered on Padang Peliang. According to oral tradition, the core is a Thai temple that has existed for hundreds of years. The first extant record of the oldest temple dates from the end of the 19th century, but is certain that Thai-speaking communities have had a long-standing presence in this area. The predominant occupation is farming. Older settlements were likely created around the original Thai temple. Later Thai migrants, probably from Patani, may have populated newer villages in other places. Thai settlement has occurred in the valley of the Muda River whose source is near a pass leading to the headwaters of the Patani River in Thailand. This natural route was once an important trade road and a way well trudged by seasonal laborers. There is also a possibility that it was an escape route for war refugees, who then settled on the Malaysian side of the border.

The border remained permeable after it was fixed by negotiation between Siam and Britain in 1909. Migration and seasonal movement of people were not unusual. At that time, people in Kedah had more of a local identity and felt no need or pressure to define themselves in terms of a nation state. There was a greater intensity of interaction than at present between Thai-speaking Muslims, known as Sam Sam and the Thai-speaking Buddhists.

Since the 1950s, however, when both Malaysia and Thailand began to pursue

active nation-building policies, big changes have occurred in the lives of people in this area. First of all, control of the border area was strengthened. The border was closed and some villages were compelled to resettle. In Kedah, the main targets of resettlement were both Thai-speaking Buddhist villages and Chinese villages.

The *Sam Sam*, meanwhile, pursuing assimilation as Malay Muslims, abandoned non-Islamic customs. Although the Thai-speaking Buddhists were accepted as native of Malaysia, the *Sam Sam* preferred to emphasize interaction with other Muslims and relations between the two Thai-speaking groups grew tenuous.

During the making of a nation state, people have little choice but to become national citizens. Sitting on the fence, or in this case, straddling the border, is not tolerated.

Since the 1950s, generational changes have transformed the daily lives of Thai-speakers in Kedah. Some old people have actively abandoned their past and given up the practice of no longer relevant customs. Younger people respond to and are formed by the imperatives of living in the reality of a modern nation state. For them there is little motivation to learn Thai in Malaysia. Although Thai Buddhism is different to Chinese Buddhism, many Chinese Buddhists attend Thai temples for regular religious practice. There has been a growing trend for the Thai-speaking Buddhists to promote the exchanges with Chinese Malaysians.

## Notes

\*<sup>1</sup> Census results indicate that the total population of Kedah and Perlis was

278,732: Malays, 224,908 (81%); Chinese, 35,373 (13%); Siamese, 9,523 (3 %); and Indians 6,188 (2%).

\*<sup>2</sup> According to an oral account collected by the author at a Thai-speaking village in Kubang Pasu District in 1991, the Sam Sam were descended from people who migrated on Bukit Kayu Hitam=Sadao area (now is the Thailand-Malaysia border point) about 200 years ago. Before a Malay school was established in Kubang Pasu District, they had difficulty in understanding Malay language. This limited village community relations, such as attendance at wedding ceremonies, to other Thai-speaking villages. In the present day, they view themselves as Malay Muslim and regard the term Sam Sam as a thing of the past or an academic label. As of the year 2000, people under forty years old said that Thai language skills gradually diminished and that few people these days can speak it.

\*<sup>3</sup> The image of Nayan turned into a symbol of social protest [Cheah 1988: 82]

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\*This paper is a revision of the published manuscript at The First Inter-Dialogue Conference on Southern Thailand on June 2002 .

After the conference the publication plan to collect the relating theses is progressing. But, the manuscript for the announcement distributed in the conference had already been quoted . I thought that I had to make this revised edition public as soon as possible.