Cham Muslims in Malaysia and Thailand: Then and Now

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Introduction

Motivated by my curiosity about the situation of Cham Muslims[1] in Southeast Asia and my future plan to establish a Center for Women and Minority Studies (CWMS) at the Sleuk Rith Institute which will focus on Cham and other ethnic minority groups in Cambodia and in Southeast Asia, I took the opportunity to conduct this research on Cambodia's Cham Muslim in Malaysia and Thailand, former political refugees of wars and instability in Cambodia (see also Nik Din 1977; Nik Abd. and Zain 2006; Idris 2011). Some Cham diasporas in Thailand are historically known as voluntary soldiers (*kang asar Cham*) of the Ayutthaya period (see also Scupin 1978; Kongchana and Sripong 2013).

The purpose of this study is to explore identity transformation and the Cham Muslims' experiences in other Southeast Asian countries, as opposed to Cambodia, and whether they find it important to connect with their fellows back in Cambodia and former Champa territories after they left Cambodia in different time periods. This research will contribute to three areas of theoretical framework and empirical analysis: i) Cham studies, including ethnicity, history, and culture; ii) refugees and immigration relative to cultural and social adaptation, citizenship, and belonging; and iii) Islamic religion reflecting spirituality, transnational network, and collective identity.

This research will address three main questions: How has the identity of Cham Muslims in Malaysia and Thailand been defined from the past to the present? Given that Cham Muslims possess multiple identities, how do they make sense of the identities so that they can co-exist, harmonize, and strive in the wider society? What other factors, other than a sense of belonging and collective Muslim identity, enable them to connect with their native or predecessor's country?

This research examines the Cham Muslims' identity construction and intergenerational relations among Cham Muslim immigrant families in Malaysia and Thailand[2] whose immigrant status is different, given their different lengths of residence in both countries and citizenship statuses. In this study, most of the Cham Muslims in Malaysia are "long-term noncitizens" and "naturalized citizens" because their immigration occurred approximately three decades ago, while almost all of the Chams in Thailand are "natives" since their predecessors migrated to the country approximately two centuries ago.
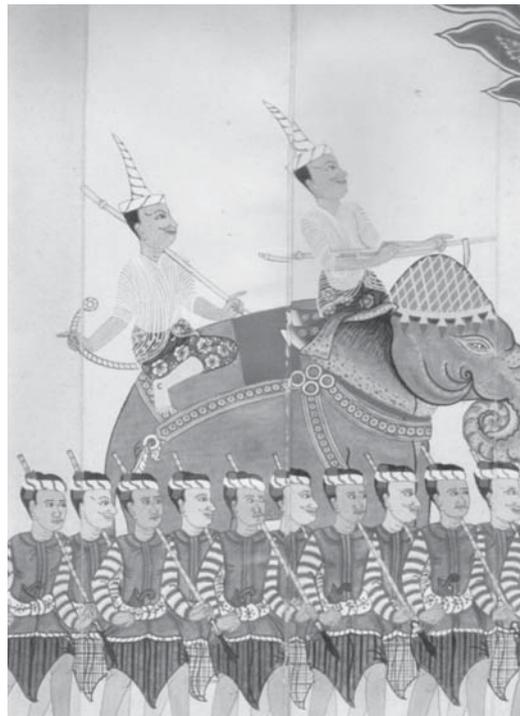
Cham Military Volunteers in Royal Thai Army in Ayutthaya Period. Taken from Wat Yom's Thai long book made of pulp, Urticaceae (the nettle family) by Dr. Plubpleung Kongchana.

Based on anthropological and historical approaches, this research finds that the religious (Muslim) identity becomes salient and a shared identity because spirituality is emphasized. The decision to choose this particular identity is motivated by an imagined good life for both worlds, now and thereafter. However, there is an appeal from the majority of Cham Muslims that this kind of identity be put in the context of both ethnic (Cham) and national (Thai or Malaysian) identities, so that it co-exists and harmonizes with the mainstream culture. This research clarifies that multiple identities (social, cultural, national, political) are also embraced and integrated, despite moral conflict and tension. Although the sense of belonging of Cham Muslims in Malaysia with Cambodia is stronger than that of those in Thailand as a result of different lengths of residency and citizenship statuses, globalization and the ASEAN

Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC)[3] increase the sense of this collective identity and networking with other Muslims and non-Muslims within their native or predecessor's country. This phenomenon also enables Cham Muslims to maintain some forms of their cultural identity while integrating into the wider society.

To address the questions, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed. These methods include desk research, interviews, focus group discussions, participant observations, and surveys. Data gathering involved site selection and the conduct of a number of interviews and surveys. Prior to field research, I obtained a research permit from the Economic Planning Unit of Malaysia, the Malaysian Islamic Welfare Organization (PERKIM), the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT), and local authorities in those selected sites.

Conceptual Framework

This review will examine some theoretical issues related to a particular identity, how it is expressed or asserted, and why. It will further find whether the ethnic and religious identities of a particular ethnic group compromise with national identity.

Identity identifies someone in relation to others. An ethnic group is not simply a collectivity within a larger society bearing common ancestry, language, nationality, or physical appearance, but a cultural identity and a product of inter-group interactions (Barth 1969). Joanne Nagel (1994) adds that "ethnic identities are the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external options and processes, as well as the individual's self-identification and outsiders' ethnic designations."

Each ethnic group creates its own boundaries to differentiate itself from others. Although ethnic boundaries shift through constant social interactions, the core element of each group's identity remains. Despite any tension and conflict, multiple identities, including the core religious identity embraced, co-exist and harmonize with the wider society. The research findings are organized into four main themes. The empirical analysis of each theme will reflect the conceptual framework and theoretical issues discussed.

1. Self-Identification and Shared Identity

A sense of "who we are" as perceived by ourselves (self-identification) might be different from what a wider society might perceive of us. So a sense of how Cham Muslims perceive themselves in relation to others, how are they perceived, and how they maintain their cultural identity and negotiate multiple identities is discussed in this section.

Cham Muslims in Thailand are known as Cham or "*ka-ek* (guest)",[4] or Thai Muslim, which has some derogatory connotation, while those in Malaysia are known as "*melayu-champa*" meaning "Cham speaking Malay" or "*orang kemboja*" (Muslims from Cambodia). Those in Malaysia and Thailand acknowledge that they are Chams, born either in Cambodia, Malaysia, or Thailand, but not Cham from the former kingdom of Champa, a once powerful nation, which is now Southern and Central Vietnam.[5]
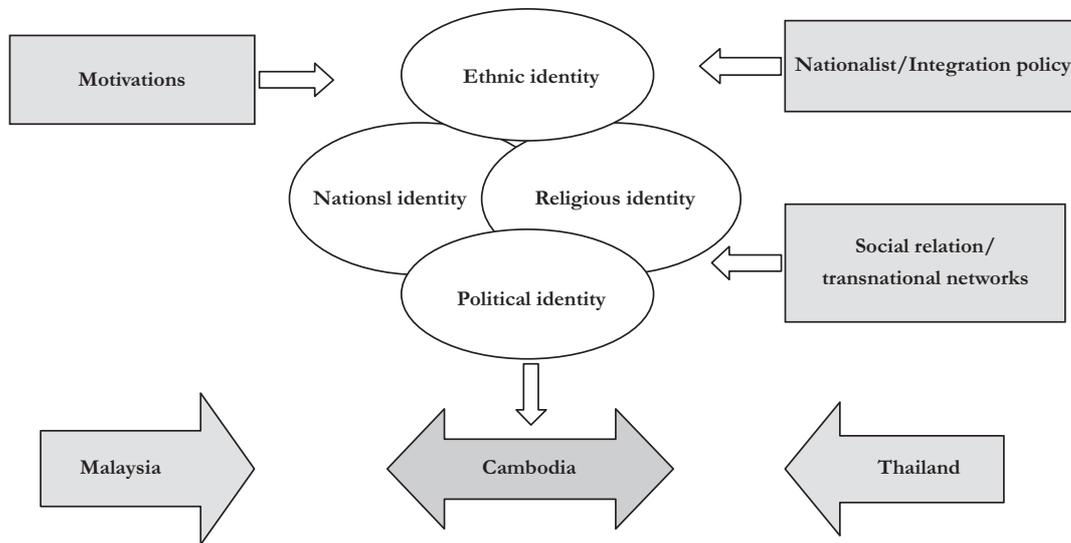
Cham Muslims in the designated countries even classify and rate their identity. When asked how they identify themselves, most of the respondents in Thailand and Malaysia embrace all three at the same time: Muslim, Thai and Cham or *Kemboja*, Malay and Cham. However, the motivation and ability to assert their ethnic identity or translate their identity into action varies among Cham Muslims in Malaysia and Thailand. While the motivation and ability to do so is strong among long-term noncitizens and naturalized Thai or Malay, it is less so among second generation and natives. This expression is even less among those in Thailand, except when they realize that asserting and living out their ethnic identity (Cham) is beneficial to their cultural survival. Chams in Ban Krua community opposed to the transport minister's intention to construct a short expressway section that will cut through their neighborhood may explain this claim. Ban Krua, now known as Charoenpon, is a historical Cham settlement entrusted to the Chams by the King of Siam (Thailand) about 200 years ago (Scupin 1998). In objecting to the expressway plan, Chams in the community conducted a research and published a book on the origin of ethnic Chams in the area, to stop the government from demolishing their sanctuary.

It is obvious that "Muslim" quickly comes to mind when recalling their identity. Those in Malaysia declare that they chose Malaysia as a third country because it is a Muslim country. The fact that the Muslim (religious) identity comes first because it is considered a collective identity embracing all people, regardless of ethnicity and class, as long as they practice Islam. Spirituality is strengthened because it is considered important to both worlds, this life and the thereafter. In that they feel that they would be able to connect with the rest of the Muslim *ummah*. This perception is also seen as a form of social capital because they expect to receive some financial support to build a mosque or pursue Islamic studies inside or outside their country. After all, they believe this attitude is a merit in the thereafter.

The community shares the same vision and faith, and undertakes similar practices of the Islamic religion. This reflects in modest dress and *hijab* (black uniform), the practice of the five pillars of Islam, pursuit of religious knowledge (local, regional, and Middle Eastern), and the dissemination of Islamic teachings (*Dakwah*).

However, a sense of community which derives from faith and practice is necessarily interpreted

and shaped in distinct ways in differing places, times, and societies (Eickelman and Piscatorial 1990). Although Cham Muslims are more spiritual, their practice is not identical because of self-localization and different Islamic ideologies. They are localized since they combine it with the local and their ethnic cultures. This is apparent in language use, food, and the styles of the mosque and Islamic school. In a 2013 interview with Fareedah, a Cham Muslim woman of Ban Krua, she suggested that "although we are Muslims and share common values, we should be contextualized—which national and ethnic group we belong." She believes that self-localization is important because it will help Muslims retain their ethnic and national cultures.

Like in Cambodia and other Southeast Asian countries, there are some conflicting ideas over religious practices and religious boundaries among followers of Wahabhism, Tabligh Jamaat (TJ) and the Old Group in Thailand and Malaysia, and other places. Religious movement and division occurred in Saudia Arab and then spread all over the world. The Wahabhism also stresses on Qur'an and *sunnah* (Prophet Muhammad's path) but condemns historical sites or beliefs associated with early Islam. In their views, those are not approved and need to be eliminated on the ground that only God (Allah) must be worshipped. The TJ stresses the practice of *sunnah* and piety. The Old Group is marginalized by these ideologies because of their conservative practices such as visiting their ancestors' graves during religious events, dedicating an offering to their dead ancestors, and so forth (So 2012). Nonetheless, adopting the Muslim identity is still the Cham Muslims' appeal as they feel that this makes them feel comfortable for now and thereafter.

The challenge and struggle of Cham Muslims in retaining their ethnic/cultural identity can be seen in ethnic language preservation where the first or second generation of immigrants struggles to maintain their mother tongue and memories of the past at some levels. In Malaysia, Cham Muslims, especially women, negotiate their use of their native and ethnic languages (Khmer and Cham) at home or in their communities with their offspring; but this is rarely seen among Cham Muslims in Thailand because all of them speak Thai fluently, both at home and in public space as a result of the Thai nationalist policy. Although some senior people still know a few Khmer or Cham words, they rarely use them with their children. However, according to my interviews some of them have expressed their interest in preserving these languages.

Given their fear of losing their languages and their full assimilation in the host society, most of the first generation in Malaysia try to speak or even command their offspring to practice Cham or Khmer at home. They say that young people already practice Malay or other languages with their friends at schools; so they should practice their native language at home and in the community. "Your native language is important; it is your wealth," said *Hajah* Hassanah Sulaiman in an interview in 2012.

In addition to language preservation, they also shared their experience with their children and community members. Some Cham Muslims recalled their anecdotes of their experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime and their journey to Malaysia on some occasions. Some Cham Muslims like Hassan, Mei Yai,[6] Wim, and Narong (Kareem) told their children about their origin and journey from Cambodia to Thailand. Despite a greater or a lower degree of immersion into a wider society, Cham Muslims share the Muslim identity, which is more assertive than other identities because of strong religious, political, and economic motivations. However, their religious practices are localized. Their struggle to maintain some forms of their cultural and ethnic identities both in the assertive form and practice indicates that ethnic identity is not static.

2. Integration Process: Integration Policy, Immigration Ties, and Group Relations

Integration requires a two-way process—integration policy and the immigrants' social and cultural adaptation. The policy needs to be integrative but not in the form of forced assimilation. The adaptation lies in the ideas of "acculturation" and "enculturation", or as Ming Zhou (2009) calls them, "exit" and "reception": to what extent should one immerse oneself or hold back? A few main areas of the integration policy toward Cham Muslims exercised by the Malaysian and Thai governments, challenges in adaption, and immigration ties are discussed in this section.

The process and degree of integration of Cham Muslims in Malaysia and Thailand are slightly different. Cham Muslims like other ethnic minorities in Thailand lived by the nationalist policy which had contained a policy of assimilation since 1939. As a consequence of these policies, the vast majority of the population of the country accepted that their national identity superseded whatever other linguistic and cultural heritage they might have (Keyes 2002; Scupin 1998). The National Act of 1939 demands the following of the minorities: 1) speaking Thai; 2) cutting their allegiance from their native or their predecessor's country and becoming Thai; 3) changing their names from Cham or Khmer to Thai; 4) sending their children to Thai schools; and 6) speaking the Thai language (Disaphol 2008). For these reasons, it is hard to find any Cham knowledgeable about Cham or the Khmer language.

In Malaysia, all the people are obliged to follow the rules and social norms of the country in order for them to be accommodated in society. Most of the Cham Muslims send their children to Indian schools or to state schools where the medium of instruction is Malay rather than vernacular Chinese. Very few people choose the Chinese school. One of the main advantages of their decision to send their children to Malay schools is that the school offers both secular and religious education.

Training Cham Muslims in *bahasa melayu*, the official and national language of Malaysia, was already being done when the Cham Muslims were still refugees living in the camp from 1975 to 1990. But this was insufficient to make the old generation understand the language; although some of them could already speak Malay since they settled in Cambodia. Thus, most of them tried to learn the language themselves through interactions with the local people.

Ethnic and Immigration Ties

This sub-theme will discuss how ethnic and immigration ties help immigrant families in cultural and social adaptation through language, ethnic skills, adjustment, eating habits, and growth, while maintaining their cultural identity. There are three basic kinds of support in the enclave: 1) settlement and enclave 2) financial and technical support; 3) moral and spiritual support.

New immigrants need this kind of environment where they can assert some forms of ethnic identity such as language, eating habits, ethnic skill for job or business opportunities, and even coping mechanisms for their painful experiences, while adjusting themselves to new environments in a given society. The surrounding environment shared by their ethnic group members would accommodate new immigrants more easily than other environments (Portes and Zhou 1993).

In Thailand, a few Chams represent in the Navy, academic, and fishery. A few Cham families still continue to conserve these ethnic skills. Chams in Ban Krua taught each other handicraft skills, which were later promoted by Jim Thompson who has since organized what is now known as the Jim Thompson Foundation.[7]

There are many enclaves in Malaysia where people can communicate in Khmer, Cham, or Malay. They help each other with petty trade of fresh water fish, clothing, and groceries. Fresh water fish trade is found along Pahang and Perak, while

clothing and groceries are traded everywhere. These products contribute to the national products of Malaysia.[8]

Facilitated by the gender policy and motivated by economic benefit, many Cham Muslim women have become very active in petty trade and small business. At most times, they are at the forefront of these affairs. In most of the clothing stalls and grocery stores owned by Cham Muslims in Malaysia, women are the leading actors. Some of the women known as successful businesswomen include Aminah of Kajang, Selangor; Kamariah of Kemaman, Terrengganu; Romlah Omar of Kuala Lumpur.

The ethnic and immigration ties provide a lot of advantages, but the downside is they could prolong the integration process because of the Cham Muslims' preference to hold on to their ethnic culture. However, this matter depends on individual preference and ability.

Group Relations and Intermarriage

Group relations are based on the values and differences assigned to each group. Despite their differences, they respect each other because they are each other's co-ethnic, co-religionists, countrymen and neighbors.

The most frequent meeting point in terms of public space includes the Islamic Center and mosques for those in Thailand, and coffee shops or mosques for those in Malaysia. In the public space there is a wide range of affairs beyond religion-related activities such as weddings, businesses, seminars, or recollections of the past.[9]

Group relations and integration are strengthened by intermarriages. An intermarriage is often considered one of the most important signs of assimilation. Marriage between a person with a migrant background and a native-born may be considered an indicator of the social integration between an immigrant community and the wider society. As Bean and Stevens put it, "the incorporation of immigrants groups into the host society can also be hastened by marriage between the immigrants and native-born. On the other hand, a low degree of intermarriage is indicative of a strong ethnic identity" (Bean and Stevens, 2003).

Therefore, in addition to the integration policy, ethnic capital and immigration ties are helpful to new immigrant families. All kinds of support provided by the enclave not only help them deal with past atrocities, but adjust to new life and grow. The intermarriage of co-religionists and non co-religionists in a wider society strengthens their relations. But assimilation is not pervasive because ethnic identity preservation still persists. Thus far, despite the unfavorable integration policy imposed by the Thai central government, there has been no physical confrontation between Cham Muslims and the government, except for the protest against the expressway plan. However, although Thailand is a democratic country and Malaysia is a multi-racial and Muslim country, civil obedience would help accommodate them well.

3. Belonging, Citizenship Status and Issues

"When I am out of the country, I identify myself as a Thai from Thailand. But when I am in the country I sometimes call myself Cham and sometimes Thai."—Fareedah, Ban Krua

"When I am outside the country, I call myself a Malay from Malaysia. However, when I am in the country, I call myself *orang kemboja* (Muslim)."—Rashidah Safi-i, Terrengganu[10]

Making sense of their identity is not an easy task, especially when ethnic identity and national identity collide as the epigraphs above described. In some cases, it may even put the ethnic minority in a

dilemma. Asked which group they would support if there were a football or boxing match between Cambodian (Cham) and Malay, some said they would go for Malay However, some would go for Cambodian while others said they did not know which one they should choose. Although it is clear for Isra Sarnthisat that he would go for a Thai if a Cambodian and a Thai went into a match, he would rather support the Cambodian if the Cambodian competed with other nationals.

Cham Muslims in Malaysia and Thailand have an emotional attachment to their host country, but their degrees of their patriotism vary. Those in Thailand have higher levels of patriotism than most of the foreign-born and second-generation Cham Muslims in Malaysia, but not of the native-borns due to their differing lengths of residence and citizenship statuses in a given society. They still have some levels of attachment to their native country, Cambodia, and their ethnicity, which translate to the fact that their assimilation into the host society is not pervasive. This, to some extent, would affect their immigrant status.

There are some paradoxes of citizenship and one's understanding of his/her citizenship rights and status. To date, not all of the first-generation Cham Muslims resettled in Malaysia are citizens because they still hold red ID cards (thereafter, red card). This phenomenon is due to the processes involved Cham Muslims in applying for citizenship and how to acquire a card.[11]

Applying for citizenship is neither difficult nor easy for them. To process the paper work, they have to go to the PERKIM office with their letter from a local authority, specifying their local residence and stating that they were resettled by the Malaysian government at the time they entered the country. They will then need to bring this letter together with other required paper work to the Ministry of Home Affairs Malaysia (KDN) where they will be called to take a test (written and interview format). They will be required to answer questions related to their personal

information, general knowledge about Malaysia, and so forth, so literacy and the ability to speak the Malay language are key. However, in some exceptional cases this application is rather loose, thereby enabling the illiterate to get through the test.[12] As a result, most of the first generation received their green cards through this process in their first attempt in a short or long period of time; some got it after several attempts. Mostly men received their green cards ahead of their partners because they usually submitted their applications before their spouses did. Other people whose applications were rejected on their first or second attempts, or even the third, decided to give up. Finally, a very small number of them did not apply at all.

Paradoxically, while most people need a green card, some elders said that they do not want to get it or become a citizen. First, they feel that when they become full citizens, they are obliged to comply with all the rules, laws, and regulations. Second, if they became citizens, they would be punished without exception if they do not follow the law or if they break it, even if they are not yet familiar with all the laws and regulations. So, staying on the margin would lessen their responsibility and, in some cases, would spare them from being punished if found guilty of a minor mistake, due to the fact that they are ignorant of the law. They just decide to live with the red card given to them in the camp when they first entered the country.

Furthermore, some who have or do not have a green card still fear that they would be deported to Cambodia one day, while those settled in Thailand do not have this fear at all. This is due to their recent migration, the trauma of the KR atrocities that continue to haunt them, and their lack of understanding of their citizenship.

As a consequence, those who live without a green card face several challenges, one of which is to obtain educational and financial opportunities for their children. Green card

holders and Malaysian Citizens enjoy free education at public schools. Those who were born in the country receive an ID card at the age of 12. If they receive good grades and pass the entrance exam to tertiary education and show their parents' good record, their education will be fully funded or they will be given a loan. If the parents are still red card holders, this opportunity would not happen, with the exception of a few cases only.

Those who do not hold either a red or a green card due to their late arrival or because of their status as illegal immigrants need to send their children to either *pondok* (Islamic school) or a private school near their settlement or in other places. Some of them may even face charges and imprisonment, if reported to the police.[13]

Apparently, all Cham Muslims have a sense of belonging to their host country, overtly expressing their feeling of patriotism to a lower or higher degree. Given their residency, national policy, and citizen status, there is no doubt that the level of national pride of the Cham Muslims in Thailand and the native Chams in Malaysia is higher than that of their predecessors. Their chosen political identity is associated with indebtedness to the one who saved them, but this has been waning due to the changing quality of the leadership. Some issues pertaining to the citizenship status of Cham Muslims in Malaysia are the moral responsibility of both the government and the local authorities that need to inform and educate them about this issue, and to encourage them to apply citizenship for the sake of their individual interests and good citizenship.

4. Perception of and Relations with the Community of Origin and Beyond in the Context of Globalization

As discussed in the previous section, most Cham Muslims in Malaysia still have a stronger attachment to Cambodia than their fellows in Thailand. This research finds that the sense of Muslims brother and sister, and their reunion with relatives promoted by ASCC and globalization, are conducive to humanitarian or charitable work, religious support work, economic and educational exchange, and marriage. In turn, this sense of connection is promoting the concept of ASCC because people become closer for a shared culture and destiny.

One of the ASCC objectives is to promote ASEAN cultures and languages in order to bring about solidarity and unity among the people and member states of ASEAN. This people-to-people approach will enable them to learn and benefit from each other's culture. Many interviewees for this research said that learning Khmer or Cham not only enables them to communicate with their relatives or the Cambodian people in Cambodia, but also facilitates their business and cultural exchanges. Many Cham Muslims in Cambodia are knowledgeable about *bahasa* Malay, but fewer are so in Thai because the medium of religious studies in most parts of the country's Muslim communities are in Arabic and *jawi* or *rumi* script, while other places also include Cham script.

This is more obvious for Cham Muslims in Malaysia than those in Thailand because the generational gap is smaller: i) their migration is more recent; ii) many relatives in their home country are still recognized and identified; and iii) the relationship between the Cambodian government and the Malaysian government is good. This connection is facilitated by modes of transportation, better economic conditions, and security.
Many old Cham Muslims still consider Cambodia their home country; only a few feel reluctant to make such a claim because of their long separation from Cambodia and because their relatives are gone or have already reunited in Malaysia. And only a small proportion of native-borns view Cambodia to be like their own country because it used to belong to their predecessors.

Whereas those in Thailand have less sense of belonging, still many of them remember that Cambodia was their predecessor's native country. A very small number of them have visited Cambodia, and even fewer could locate their great-grandparents' hometown. However, Cham Muslims in Malaysia, Thailand, and Cambodia have the least sense of attachment to the former Kingdom of Champa.

The activities do not only involve the Cham Muslims, but also some Malay, Thai, and Chinese people in Malaysia and Thailand. This happened long before the 1990s, but grew even more remarkably starting 1993 and became dynamic in the 2000s. The activities can be divided as follows: humanitarian or charitable work, visiting families or genocide sites, religious education and mosque construction, business or trade relations, and marriages across countries.

The most visible forms of relationships are those established through humanitarian or charitable work, especially through *korban* (sacrifice),[14] religious sacrifice feasts and donations in the form of money, food, and medicines during *ramadan* (fasting month) from Cham Muslims in both countries to Muslims in their native country or their predecessor's country.

In addition, marriages across the countries have increasingly been taking place. Many Cham Muslim women from Cambodia have gotten engaged with native Malay men or their fellows in Malaysia. Most of them are brought there to wed and, in some cases, the men go to marry the girls in Cambodia. However, only one or two cases of marriages have happened between Cham Muslims in Cambodia and Thailand.

In short, this thorough examination establishes an understanding of the immigrants' perception and attitude toward their native or their predecessor's country, relatives, and people as a whole. It also enables us to consider how dynamic the connection is and what costs and benefits are associated with it. A look at the broader picture elucidates how this connection will impact Asean Community.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that to the Cham Muslims in Malaysia and Thailand, the imagined "good life" and the Muslim identity are synonymous, thus making them salient alongside other identities adopted. Rather than merely exploring or preserving Cham architectural design, dance, songs, music, and folklore, this identity is more assertive in their everyday life, thus increasing faith and practices which they feel they will bestow rewards (from God) on them thereafter. Furthermore, this kind of identity enables them to connect with the Arab world and other Muslim majorities and minorities in Asia, Africa, America, and Europe, to which religious and material support can be channeled through this link.

Although the Islamic identity becomes the dominant force and, most of the time, prompts them to act, their memories of the past and their expression of ethnic identity are still valued. As a man in Klong Khoo Cham puts it, "If we forget our roots, life is not meaningful." This can also be seen through ethnic language preservation among many Cham Muslims in Malaysia and some Cham Muslims in Ban Nam Chiao, Ban Krua, and Klong Khoo Cham. It can be concluded that they have the desire to grow as the majority, without letting go of their ethnic and cultural identities considerably.

Their appeal for a sense of collectiveness together with their ethnic roots is increasing their attachment to the native or predecessor's country, enabling them to reconnect with their relatives and beyond. As a result, this line of communication during this era of globalization is more about religion, humanitarianism, trade, research, and marriage than it is about politics.

Compromising multiple identities (ethnic, national, political, religious, and social), despite some challenges, enables people to survive, harmonize, and thrive. The fact is that while it is important to maintain Cham ethnic culture, integration into mainstream society is indispensible to accommodating them in a new environment. The integration policy, socialization, and immigration

ties are helping Cham Muslims in the acculturation and enculturation processes. This study does not suggest that the experience of Cham Muslim immigrants is unique; but since their predecessor's kingdom (Champa) has disappeared, it sheds additional light on the study of Cham in Southeast Asia.

Cham Muslims in both countries express their sense of belonging and have the national pride toward their host society. However, the issue of citizenship among Cham Muslims in Malaysia should not be ignored; it needs to be addressed for the good of both the state and the people. The following measures which can be taken by the Malaysian state should be able to contribute to addressing the issue.

   i.   Local authorities need to convene a meeting with all Cham Muslims in their locales to identify red card holders who wish to obtain a green card or become naturalized;

   ii.   PERKIM must be contacted to issue reference letters so their application can be forwarded to KDN(spell out);

   iii.   Inform KDN about the application and the problem facing the applicants; and

   iv.   Educate the applicants on citizenship rights and responsibilities.

Similarly, the Thai government and the local authorities should consider preserving the Cham language, so that Cham Muslims can benefit from the move. In addition, it may promote and strengthen the concept of Asean Economic Community.

However, this study may not be generalisable as the purpose of this research is to understand the informants' experiences in two different countries and the sampling size is small. This study neither includes Cham Muslims in Southern Thailand because the majority of them are students. To the best of my knowledge, there isn't any particular Cham community established. Nonetheless, future research should account for their experience in the South and other parts of Southeast Asia.

NOTES

[1] Cham diasporas are now found everywhere in Southeast Asia, Europe, and the US after the fall of the Champa Kingdom, and subsequent political unrest and economic problems in their host countries. The majority of them, approximately 600,000 people who make up about 4 percent of the total population, live in Cambodia. Cambodia's Muslims consist of three majority groups: Chams, Malays or Chvea, and Cham *Jahed*. The Malays or Chvea (Javanese) practice Islam like the Cham, but they do not speak Cham. They speak Khmer mixed with a little Malay. The term "Cham Muslim" refers to both the Cham and the Chvea, but there is a small group of the Cham called Cham *Jahed*. This group is well known for maintaining Cham customs and traditions. Chvea, Javanese descendants or Malays, are also known as "Khmer Islam", a term coined by the late King Sihanouk in the 1960s. The late King aimed at creating a nationalist policy embracing all ethnic minorities and hill tribes. The term "Khmer-Leu" was assigned to hill tribes and "Khmer Krom" to Kampuchea Krom people in southern Cambodia.

[2] Cham Muslims in Malaysia are scattered across Malaysia Peninsular; most of them have their own community called "*kampong kemboja*." Cham Muslims of Thailand used to live in their historical villages such as Ban Nam Chiao, Ban Krua, and Klong Khoo Cham; now, many of them have moved out to other places within Bangkok and various provinces.

[3] www.aseansec.org/asean-socio-cultural-community

[4] Interview with Wim Abdullah and Srawut Aree, Ban Krua, 8 February 2013. See also Raymond Scupin's Thai Muslims in Bangkok February 8, 2013.

[5] Although Hassan Karlibam, history teacher at Ayutthaya secondary school, claimed that Chams originally came from India and then settled in Cambodia before building a Kingdom in today's central and Southern Vietnam, and that many Chams in Ayutthaya originally came from India, there is no evidence to corroborate the claim. He provides that his research method is based on archeological remnants. Several interviewees from the area said that their predecessors came from Cambodia and still know a little Khmer and Cham words.

6 Mei Yai, Ban Krua resident, used to help several dozens of Cham Muslim refugees settle in her village before they were resettled in Malaysia in the 1980s.

7 Interview with Niphon Manuthas, Cham silk weaver, Ban Krua, 22 February 2013.

8 See also Awang 2010.

9 It is open to all people regardless of their ethnicity. Some Cham people recalled their past experience with each other.

10 Interview with Rashidah Safi-i, age 20, female, Dungun, Terrengganu, Malaysia, November 11, 2012.

11 At least 20% of all the people interviewed still held a red ID card at the time of the interview from July 2012 to January 2013.

12 Interview with Cik Van Halim at PERKIM office on September 2012; Ismael Ahmad (Sophat) in 2012; and 10 Cham Muslims who hold both red and green cards.

13 Interview with Cham Muslims in Johor, Kelantan, Pahang, and Selangor, and those who were repatriated to Cambodia in 2012 and 2013.

14 The *korban* takes place about two months after the *hari raya* Eid-il Fitr. Those are the weddings of young men in Ban Nam Chiao with young women from Cambodia.

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