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Hybrid Processes of Modernization and Globalization: the making of consumers in South Thailand.

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Introduction:

The major interest of this study concerns the consequences of globalization and marketization on the social structure of Southern Thailand, bordering Northern Malaysia. Furthermore, this study is concerned with the increasing homogenisation of the nation-state and the "Hybrid" new identities which emerge as a result of these sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory processes.[2]

More particular, the approach of lifestyling is introduced as a way to conceptualise the emerging middle-classes and their interaction with the wider, global context.

Styles of life focus on the practices which social actors employ for access to various resources. Leaving the passive perspective of an immobile class, the notion of practice consistently look at the women and men in urban settings of Southern Thailand from an action perspective. From this angle, actors are the lifestyle agents, culture builders and architects who select specific 'building' materials from the cultural 'supermarket' of goods, ideas and images for the construction of social identifications.[3]

The central research question concerns the re-conceptualization of the person in Southern Thailand (and elsewhere) through "the dramatically widening horizon of reference, mimesis and commitment within which the person relates to the world" (Wim van Binsbergen, p.3-4) which is made possible by globalising flows and connections of communication.[4]

Focusing on forms of 'spectacular' consumption aims to understand both the collective niveau of class structuration and the level of individualization in

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[2]On the social transformation in Southern Thailand as a result of nation-state building and marketization I have written in my Ph.D. thesis in more detail (Horstmann, forthcoming). On the subject of Malay nationalism in Southern Thailand, see Surin Pitsuwan's Islam and Malay nationalism (1985) and Wan Kadir Che Man's important Ph.D. thesis which compares the Moros of the Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand (Che Man 1990). See Worawit Baru for a cultural background of the Patani Region (1995). The material culture and the everyday life of the Jawi (Malays of Southern Thailand) rural majority has been documented best by Pierre Le Roux (1994).

[3]I have written elsewhere on styles of life as strategies for empowerment (Horstmann 1997)

[4]I refer to the key note address by Wim van Binsbergen: Globalisation, consumption, and development.

contemporary society. We will see that for the families concerned their style of life points to processes of collective identity constructions and imagination as well as to a level of individualization so indicative for the emerging middle-class.

Depending on my ethnographic field-notes, I attempt to outline the material culture and social life of the new rich in urban settings of Southern Thailand, thereby providing a portrait of the making of consumers.

The social transformation in time and space holds building materials and identity offers transcending the regional context. Looking at Thai, Chinese and Malay families, we are interested in their life organization and life projects against a background of rapid social change.

Southern Thailand is the cosmological frontier and meeting-point of the main cultures of SouthEast Asia- namely the Malay-Islamic World and Thai-Buddhist world. The actors have to put themselves into a relationship to globalization, mass consumption and the increasing presence of the nation-state, if they like it or not. As a result, "Thainess" emerges as a new ideological battlefield between competing segments of the new middle classes which formulate their shifting identifications in relation with each other.

Problems and Conceptual issues in defining the new middle class:

The very idea of a middle class is now being given serious consideration in SouthEast Asia and Thailand itself.[5] Scholars of SouthEast Asia now recognize the sheer fact of a new class-based element in South East Asian Society. The same scholars miss the appropriate analytical tools to comprehend the character and significance of the middle class (Tanter and Young 1990: 8).

In fact, the problem is a clear definition what middle class really means. As Daniel Lev said:

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[5]For an excellent overview on the middle class in Thailand, including the role of the Thai middle class in the crisis of May 1992: Sungsidh Piriyarangsan and Pasuk Phongpaichit (eds.) (1993): Chon chan klang bon krasae prachathippatai thai (The Middle Class and Thai Democracy), Bangkok: Political Economy Centre, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University. On the conceptualization of the Middle Class by Thai scholars, see: Siriporn Yodkamonsat: Social Thoughts on The Middle Class in Thailand. Unpublished Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University, Faculty of Economics, 1995.

"Now, suddenly, when they appear to be making some difference, or anyway are substantial enough to compel notice, we are at a loss to figure out who exactly they are, why they are important, and what difference they actually make" (Lev 1990: 25).

However, the new middle class has become a common category in political discourse. From the prudent start of explorations into the new middle class, an explosion on the subject at hand marks the necessity to debate the grouping's character. The new interest in the research of the middle class has not resulted in answers which rely on adequate empirical data. Moreover, growing expectations in the political role of the new middle class must not be mingled with objective research.

It is argued here that the research findings for a large scale depend on the approach to the middle class and the conceptualization chosen. One reason for the growing frustration with the "new middle class" is the limitation to apply class theory in changing SouthEast Asian Societies without imposing an orthodox or static model of social class (Evers 1988).

New approaches to life styling, consumerism and social inequality help to break new ground for understanding how people think about themselves and those around them. Solvay Gerke's seminal discussion of middle-class lifestyle, lifestyling and lifestylization in an innovative way catches class consciousness in action (Gerke 1994, 1997). Gerke is drawing on the growing literature on lifestyle. Stressing the symbolic value of commodities, Gerke argues that the new bureaucratic middle class in Indonesia is involved in symbolic consumption as a way of life. This over-emphasis on the symbolic is captured by turning the noun lifestyle into a verb "lifestyling" (Gerke 1994, 1997, Chua 1997). She further differentiated lifestyle from "lifestylization". While "lifestyling" allows for social classification, "lifestylization" is a process by which the new middle class is distinguishing itself from the poor "other".

In the following monograph, the new middle class will be studied from three interwoven perspectives: A social formation, a political project, and a cultural image.

Where does the new middle class come from? This crucial question on the social formation points to the importance of social mobility in dynamic SouthEast Asian societies (Evers/Gerke 1994). Evers has warned us against rigid, static formations:

"Wir wollen also keine festen Formationen betrachten, sondern Gruppen in Prozessen des Entstehens, Wachsens, aber auch des Zerfalls und der Neukonstituierung, also Gruppen im Wandel, ..." (Evers 1988: 64).

In fact, the new middle class in Malaysia and Indonesia for a large part is a result of the expansion of state bureaucracies and a product of the latest stage of nation-state formation (Kahn 1995, Gerke 1997). Second, the expansion of tertiary education was instrumental in bringing about the emergence of an educated new middle class (Mulder 1994). Third, middle class formations are foremost products of market expansion.[6] Evers has conceptualised the social and cultural dimensions of market expansion (Evers 1994). Fourth, as Kahn shows (1995), the new recruits to the middle classes are urban based and urban oriented.

Globalization and mass consumption make available a large range of expensive, but mass produced consumer items. The new middle-class is involved in drawing the new boundaries of a fluent and diffuse social structure. The widening gap between upwardly mobile middle classes and impoverishing peasantries on the one hand and the impact of state-driven development on the other hand generate increasing political tension. Through the active demonstration and display of selected consumer goods, the new middle-class signals its membership in a loose middle-class image. This cultural image is perpetuated in TV, advertizing and department stores. Therefore, the new middle class has been called consumption class (Dick 1985) or class of affluent consumers of cultural products (Horstmann 1997). A theoretical framework on consumerism is thus a promising approach to the new middle class or the new rich (Chua 1997). However, in favour of a more complex analysis of culture and cultural representations by members of the new middle-classes it seems necessary for me to go beyond mere caricatures of "Mobile Phones, McDonalds and Middle-Class Revolutions" (Robinson and Goodman 1996).

Improved material life has also served in many countries of Asia as a sublation for political participation. As Chua Beng Huat puts it:

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[6]The dramatic fall of the Thai Baht currency in 1997 shows the fragility, dependence and vulnerability of the Thai economy on the world-market. High import taxes and high interest rates mean a decrease in investment, social mobilty and consumption of luxury goods.

"Indeed, the exchange of expanded material well being for reduced political freedom seems to be an apparent quid pro quo between the peoples and the states of many East and Southeast Asian nations;" (Chua 1997: 1).

The growing middle classes form thus a core of current new formations and political ambitions of developmentalist regimes. Thus, a consumer-driven identity is binding the new middle classes to the government. More, the governments of Asia are legitimising themselves in bringing about new opportunities of economic accumulation. In fact, the creation of the middle-class is a political project of the new nation-states from the 1960's on. For example, Field Marshall Sarit declared that development would create an (opportunistic) middle class which would end the rise of communism in Thailand (cf Thak Chaloemtiarana 1978).

Doing research in urban settings of Southern Thailand meant that I had the unique opportunity to study 3 segments of the new middle classes and their identification in relation to each other: A Chinese, Thai and Melayu (Melayu of Southern Thailand) component. The extreme ambivalent nature of "Thainess" is highlighted. "Thainess" is understood as a site of social struggle between antagonistic segments of the new middle class.[7]

The "Protestant Ethic" in Southern Thailand:

Social formations in the changing markets of Southern Thailand include entrepreneurs of different type and scale who constantly seek to get access to new opportunities of economic accumulation and who therefore integrate themselves tightly into a more and more market-driven society. In addition, the same entrepreneurs put foward refined cultural strategies and thus make contributions towards constructing the view of the social world, or more precisely, "towards constructing this world by means of the *work of representation* (in all senses of the word) that they constantly perform in order to impose their view of the world or the view of their own position in this world- their social identity." (Bourdieu 1987).

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[7]While carrying out field research in Southern Thailand, the network approach was chosen to tease out the flow of communication among a set of middle-class families arbitrarely or on structural criteria alone. Following persons into their networks and moving within the networks meant to carry out mobile field research across urban centers of the region and even across the frontiers of Thailand to Kelantan and Trengganu in Northern Malaysia. There was no way to restrict or limit myself to one location only.

In my semi-structured, open interviews with entrepreneurs, a typical discursive pattern characterises a cultural "ethic" underpinning modern attitudes towards work and money-making. The marker of this cultural ethic is an extremely moralising and puritanistic lifestyle which explicitly manifests a strong rejection of "Western" forms of globalization and mass consumption. However, this does not mean that the entrepreneurial middle classes do not consume. In fact, there consumption points towards a homogenization of middle-class lifesyling-demonstrating "Success". Yet, their elaborate vision is packaged in the box of "Asian Values" simultaneously contradicting and justifying their profit-oriented economic behaviour. Although it comes in different discourses, this cultural 'ethic' characterises both Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs.

The emergence of a cultural 'ethic' as value, attitude, or more precisely, motivation towards economic activities parallels and is discussed here in comparison with Weber's *Protestant Ethic*. Weber's famous study on Protestantism led him to prove the significance of a rationalisation and systematization of everyday life for the motivation of social and economic action:

"Kultursoziologie in Webers Sinne zielt dagegen auf solche Kulturmuster, welche den Handlungen des Menschen als innere Ordnung Sinn verleihen und für seine Lebensführung fundamentale Bedeutung besitzen."

In SouthEast Asia, studies on new Buddhist movements in Thailand (Apinya 1993) and new developements in reformist Islam (Geertz 1960) have shown that outerworldly religions hold the ability to transform in Weber's sense and constitute an important foundation for a growing religious legitimating and sanctioning of innerworldly economic activity.

Thus, a new generation of Malay entrepreneurs emphasises its moral 'Lebensführung' as a basis for the sanctioning and legitimating of money-making. A modern, reformist interpretation of Islam is emphasised. Using Islamic economics and ethics as a basis, Malay entrepreneurs push forward a moralising discourse. Islamic economics in their understanding provide a framework in which the exploitative aspects of economic action can be minimised. The first rule of Islam is the prohibition of interest. Second, the entrepreneurs underline the ritual of the *Zakat*, a financial donation to the poor, which is delivered after Ramadan. *Zakat* is a religious duty of every Muslim. The population accepts *Zakat* as liberation from material possession. In Southern Thailand, Malay entrepreneurs decided to take the ritual in their own

hands and do not leave the ritual to the religious scholars (Ummah). They are proud to raise what they call a "trading"*Zakat*, which is spent after Ramadan on mosques or Islamic elementary schools in the countryside. In short, Muslim entrepreneurs draw the picture of an ideal, humanised (Muslim) society where co-operation and solidarity prevail.

Likewise, Chinese entrepreneurs painted the image of a hectic, materialistic, miserable society. They question the term 'progress' which, from their point of view, has caused a crisis in Thai society. This crisis is characterised by the deterioration of core values: As a result, families are broken, traditions are not respected and ancestors not taken care of. The current crisis is compared to a glorious past where the institution of the Buddhist temple (Wat) was the guarantee of a harmonious, peaceful life. Chinese entrepreneurs thus believe that it is their religious duty to re-establish ascetic, inner worldly values such as discipline, respect and hard work. The Chinese entrepreneurs point to their contributions to society. Many take benevolent roles in society, serve as special teachers at the university or participate as consultants in the local government or courts. Moreover, similar to their Malay counterparts, Chinese entrepreneurs stress their donations and charity. They give donations to primary schools, are involved in the funding of sports or support the activities of Non-Governmental Organisations. In short, the egoistic, consumption-driven society is contrasted with an ideal past society where the natural Thai village, the gentle Thai character and the harmonious family prevail.

As James Scott (1988) illustrates, the *Zakat* donation is not limited to the religious sphere, but has a political, constructive function in the constitution of power differentials as well. As in Scott's example, the donors (entrepreneurs) decide on the amount of money, the purpose of the donation and the addressee of the donation. A *Zakat* donor is powerful, wealthy and influential. Through the *Zakat* ritual, the entrepreneurs is able to make visible the patron-client relationship of the new middle class in the town with the poor in the countryside. Moreover, the action of the *Zakat* donation is religiously legitimised and can not be refused by the addressee. Entrepreneurs compensate the lacking of any religious education. The Zakat donation elegantly serves as a sure legitimating of "selfish" economic activities.

Second, the insistence on Islamic business ethics aims to distinguish the Malay Muslim entrepreneurs from Chinese entrepreneurs. The Chinese are said to "exploit the Malay peasantry without mercy." According to Malay entrepreneurs, the Chinese "would sell their grandmother". The Chinese are

said to be "cheating". The construction of a cultural ethic underpinning economic behaviour in the long run is seen as a strategy against the Chinese. As one Malay businessman puts it:" If the Malay peasantry sells their products only to their Muslim 'brethren', the Chinese middlemen would be obsolete."

Likewise, the charity and donation of Chinese entrepreneurs as a moral action enhances the social reputation of the entrepreneurs and is liberating them from the exploitative aspects of business. It is facilitating official permissions and titles and protects against harassment. As a result, Chinese entrepreneurs present themselves as generous patrons. They also show their influence and political power. As one Chinese businessman from Betong puts it: "The community expects us to make generous contributions." Moreover, the Chinese "have the responsibility to create work", and "help the poor." The charity of Chinese entrepreneurs again make visible their power differentials to the poor. Their rituals in part illustrate their benevolence towards the poor.

The insistence on Chinese core values distinguishes the Chinese from the Malay. The Malays are said to "be illiterate", "dirty", "fanatic". One Chinese businessman finds the emergence of Malay entrepreneurs "dangerous", since the Malays are "fanatically religious" and think about "separatism" and "autonomy".

In summary, both Malay and Chinese entrepreneurs in urban settings of Southern Thailand urge a cultural 'ethic' in order to demonstrate their social spending of money. As Heru Nugroho has pointed out that money is not only a mean of economic exchange, but has a important social meaning (Nugroho 1996). The use of money for religious or social purposes is not only an act of social welfare, but asserts the spender with power and social prestige. The religious reward can be measured by the amount of money given[8] Thus, there is an objectification process of money through which entrepreneur are able to show their power and build cultural capital.

Interestingly, Malay and Chinese not only share very similar values and attitudes towards economic life and cultural benevolence, or more precisely, cultural capital formation, but also feel attracted by a rational, transformative and reformist religion in Buddhism or Islam to paint a social vision of a simple,

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[8]Nugroho is citing Georg Simmel's *Philosophie des Geldes* to ague that the process of monetarization is the transformation of money from a primitive medium of exchange to a symbolic or sacred marker of social status through objectification (Hugroho 1996: 318, footnote 27).

moderate and ascetic lifestyle contrasting the pattern of globalization and mass consumption from the West.[9]

Therefore, Chinese entrepreneurs associate themselves with religious movements such as Buddhadat Bhikku, fundamentalist Buddhist sects like Santi Asoka or moralising political parties like Phalang Tham of Chamlong Srimuang. Malay entrepreneurs identify with Islamization movements in Northern Malaysia and Southern Thailand like PAS of Nik Aziz Nik Mat, the Dakwah movement and Darul Arqam. There is an interesting parallel between the 'fundamentalist' religious leaders of Chamlong Srimuang and Nik Aziz Nik Mat who become the stars or leading public figures for the entrepreneurial middle class. Both leaders appeal to the new middle classes in their lifestyle and social vision (on Chamlong, see McCargo 97). Both Chamlong and Nik Aziz base their movements on moral and religious ethics of Asian values to "clean" politics of corruption. They both demonstrate a simple, moderate, puritanistic lifestyle and a work ethic which consists of hard work and discipline. Chinese and Malay entrepreneurs in Southern Thailand add a puritanistic, "clean" lifestyle to underline the cultural ethic described above.

The Malay entrepreneurs are leading a puritanistic lifestyle basing on religious 'duty'. Dressing in expansive, tailored suits, clothing is demonstrating both 'success' and 'tidiness'. Malay entrepreneurs demonstrate 'Muslimness' and 'modernity'. Moreover, their economic career and achievement is displayed. Stressing a puritanistic lifestyle, Malay entrepreneurs make visible their avoidance of the 'hell world' of drugs, alcohol and "loose" women. Only men are allowed to appear in the public worlds. Malay men consider the night clubs and cinemas other 'evil worlds'.

The Chinese entrepreneurs display wealth, in particular in automobiles, to show 'success' and achievement. The Chinese entrepreneurs interviewed avoid the world of hotels and entertainment. One wealthy businessman remained in his home without electricity to underline his modesty and association with tradition and nature.

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[9]The ascethic Lebensführung of Max Weber has a second cucial aspect: The refusal of consumerism and the reinvestment of profit. Max Weber said: "Mit voller Gewalt wendet sich die Askese vor allem gegen eins: das unbefangene Genießen des Daseins und dessen, was es an Freuden zu bieten hat. (Max Weber, Bd. 1, 1988: 183)

In stressing an exemplary lifestyle, Muslim entrepreneurs distinguish from the lower class urban Malay migrants, who are addicted to drugs and/or alcohol in the city and are seen as 'bad' Muslims. Second, Malay entrepreneurs stigmatise Thai civil servants, who associate with women, low night life and alcohol. Malay entrepreneurs complain that they have to play the game and pay "tea money" or invite officers to elaborate lunches in the restaurants.

Likewise, the Chinese entrepreneurs want to demonstrate their distinction to the uneducated lower classes. They show their cultivation and moral superiority.

Hard work, discipline and asceticism add to donation and charity underpinning economic activities of the entrepreneurial middle class to form a 'Professionalism' similar to Max Weber's thesis on the emergence of a religious ethic. However, it is possible from this material to engage Weber in a critical discussion and to point out that the entrepreneurial middle classes show worldlymindedness in other religions than Protestantism, such as Islam and Buddhism.[10] Weber could not foresee the globalization of markets.

Ambitions of Child-Rearing:

Sino-Thai families
Besides material well-being, children are considered to be a key to social prestige and happiness (kwamsuk). Middle-classes constitute willing consumers of a large variety of new commodities which develop around the adored children (luuk).

Women and men are looking for new day-care arrangements for their children. More families turn away from the employment of live-in domestic maids. Live-in domestic maids consume a substantial quantum of disposable incomes. In addition, live-in domestic maids disturb the emergent private sphere of the couple. Therefore, mothers prefer to give their child to a child-minder in her house and pick the child up after work.

From the very beginning, parents are keen to provide the best education available for their children. Children have to compete from a very early age with other children. From 3 years on, children are sent to nursery schools. For

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[10]Weber was aiming to prove the emergence of capitalism in Western Europe and its absence in other territories. His sociology of religion has been discussed critically in this light by for example Schluchter, Wolfgang (1987): Max Webers Sicht des Islams: Interpretation und Kritik. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp and Turner, Bryan S. (1996): For Weber: Essays on the Sociology of Fate. London: Sage.

the parents, the preparation for the university examination begins. The children have to pass an examination before entering the nursery school.

The examination includes an extended interview with the parents as well as a test of the child's abilities. The child has to show some skills to demonstrate its intellectual capacity, e.g. the drawing of a picture. In the nursery school, children learn from a very early age the ABC, to sing the national anthem or to do educational games.

The nursery school from a very early age is an expensive, long-term investment. For the parents desires, it combines conveniently day-care with education. The entrance-examination, however, adds a feeling of competition for the parent, who is always afraid of the failure of their offsprings. One mother, for example, felt very depressed when she learned that her child was not admitted to the nursery school.

This feeling of anxiety starts with pregnancy and birth-giving. One mother told me that she had several nightmares that her child could be abnormal, handicapped. At the same time, she could not share her fears with her friends. Many mothers preferred the caesarean delivery to natural birth, although the doctor recommended natural birth. Asked about her motivation to choose so, she answered that she feared the complications of child-birth and the pain which birth will necessarily involve. The caesarean delivery for her signified security compared to the insecurity of natural birth. Some mothers spoke to me about their feelings of anxiety and dread. However, they could not share feelings of dread with their female friends. They always wanted to give the aura of a perfect, successful mother.

All parents observe the development of their children and constantly monitor their behaviour. Literature on post-natal child-rearing is readily available in local bookstores in Thai language. Yet, in sharp contrast to these consultancies on children and mother's happiness along Western standards, the social infrastructure for a children-related world is largely absent. As a consequence, families retreat from the real to the 'fantasy' world of huge multi-functional department stores. The social environment is perceived as hostile to the children's security. The parent feel an intense need to protect their children from the streets and bring them to safe or supervised places, like nursery school, department store and supermarket, and naturally, the home.[11]

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[11]The emerging midddle classes' separation of their children from the lower classes gives strong empirical support for Mark Hobart's original eidos-argument about the retreat from the real.

Malay families

Malay families prefer government and Christian schools to the Pondoks for the education of their children. While they hesitate on the subject of religion, they are convinced, that Christian schools beat the niveau of the Pondoks in secular education by large. The fact that Muslim academics or entrepreneurs turn away from the Pondok system expresses a crisis of confidence for the Pondok system as a whole.

The children of Malay families have an all-day program. In a way, the children have to compensate for their neglect of religious education. Therefore, they will visit a traditional type of Pondoks in the afternoon to read the Qur'an and to learn Arabic. In the evenings, some entrepreneurs would hire private Thai Buddhist teachers to teach additional Thai language. The exhaustion of these children illustrates the ambition which the parents put into their children.

The Malay parents ask their children to become competitive Thai citizen and good Muslims at the same time, but ignore the tension which this double demand may have for overloaded children. The daughter from a very early age is also accustomed to do house work and generally educated in a much stricter way than her brother.

The strict separation of gender is a key dimension of the public discourses of Islamic resurgents. As a result, while men are engaged both in professional matters and public engagement, women symbolise the Veblenesque leisure class and afford to stay at home. Yet, although the women adopt the canon of dominant male religious discourses, many women consciously extend their economic security in private spheres and intellectual independence in public spheres.

Looking to the new generation of Malay families, the nuclear family is prevalent. New families do not correspond to the discourse of Islamic resurgents in several ways. First, women do not limit themselves to the housewife role. Although they try to fulfil their female qualities and subscribe to the female, modest behaviour, they benefit from a tertiary education and typically choose female occupations, e.g. nurse, secretary, etc. Certainly, their income is needed to build a modern family. Moreover, men would increasingly ask for education and jobs as precondition for marriage. Women and men prefer to marry within their class. Second, women do not deliver many children as propagated by male Islamic discourses. Children are considered a gift of god

and many children is a distinctive pattern of Lebensführung, social status and prestige of Malay families. A Malay entrepreneur told me that a Muslim is allowed to have more than one wife for religious reasons "in the case of war and when his first wife is unable to deliver a child." As pointed out by the women themselves, having less children gives Malay women control on their body and life-project. Family-planning is an important aspect of individualization and emancipation for Malay women in opposition to a male religious discourse attacking family planning as a Thai policy against Malay customs. However, women have to be cautious to confirm at least in words the impression of submission to male discourse in the presence of men.

Ecstatic Entertainment: The Media:

Malay families
A survey among young Malay students revealed that media practices play a central role in structuring their everyday life. The consumption of Muslim media (audiotapes, books, video) for young Malay students has a function of learning. As young Malay students reported, media play a central role in their trajectories from a secular student to a modern, competent and orthodox Muslim. Media practices support an Islamic education and play a role in their trajectories from rural lower class to an educated (lower) urban middle class, too. The survey revealed that Malay students combine a consumption of Muslim media with Thai news, Thai television serials (Lakhorn) and videocassettes or video-discs. Students felt free to combine various media situations and experiences, but differed in their selection of social relations and media choices. The survey, however, revealed a high level of media syncretism. For example, students immediately switched on a Thai pop concert after I had accompanied them for Friday prayer to a nearby local mosque. Asked about their changing codes between a religious prayer and a Thai pop concert, they answered that they felt need of relaxation and a break after the serious meditation in the mosque. Sharing leisure time with young Malay, I always encountered this sort of media syncretism. Young professionals felt that media helped them in their life-orientation and life-planning. They felt that media helped the individual to "feel near to God". The same professionals enjoy enormously watching American or Hongkong made action films on television or video. Young Malay women spend much time with Qur'an and Sunna recitations, books on Islamic consultancies, on subjects like veiling (hijab) or sexuality. The women enjoy reading Thai lifestyle magazines on house and garden, cuisine and fashion, where the cultural image of modern life is created. During Ramadan, young Malay men join for everyday prayer in the evenings at

the college of Islamic Studies and afterwards enjoy Western pop music or a video-disc on role models in music and sports.

The field research by Karin Werner on new media and new religion and the impact of religious media on the social practice of Egyptian fundamentalists indicates a global production, distribution and consumption of Islamist media. Her field research invites us to compare the social uses or tactics of women and men in Southern Thailand and Cairo. Werner discovered that Egyptian middle-class women attempt to enter a sacralized atmosphere "near to God" with the assistance of auditative media. She describes how the women select auditative recordings of Qur'an recitations and while listening they let themselves go, become weak, and enter another world of transcendental experience (Werner 1996:26). Young Malay women and men in Southern Thailand followed the same social pattern. During Ramadan, they used audiotapes to associate themselves with a religious atmosphere. Their concentrated listening to Qur'an recitations or sermons alone, in circles of friends or with family members served to "approach God". The practice of fasting only intensified the deep emotions which are associated with the media discourses. The trajectory on the way to become "good Muslims" for Egyptian women included the abstinence from television serials or disco music. While young Egyptian and Malay Islamists are using books and audiotapes to achieve a total integration of everyday life into a religious programme (Werner 1996:27). But although some young Malay in Southern Thailand go clearly in the direction which Karin characterises as a "methodology" which schematically orders the social environment into "heaven" and "hell" worlds, the syncretism and eclecticism of media combinations distinguishes Malay women and men from their Egyptian counterparts.

The practice of combining a variety of media describes the situation in which young Malay students find themselves. The media offer imaginary, desires, fantasies and representations. The young women and men associate themselves with media images to help defining their social identity, their place in the world. Socially upwardly, media images provide imageneries of different modernities. By consuming Muslim media, audiotapes imported from Malaysia or Indonesia, young women and men join the global Muslim world. By watching a Thai pop concert, they like to join Thai modernity. By listening to a famous sheikh, they consume an imaginary Saudi-Arabia, by going to the cinema, they consume an imaginary America. Thus, through media it is possible to participate in different modernities without ever being to distant places. Being a minority in a Buddhist nation-state, young Malay like to

dissociate themselves from the rural background of their parents and with a combination and melange of books, tapes, video and television they express their social aspiration to join modernity.

Collective Remembrance as Identity Politics:

Collective Remembrance as "Building" Material:

The story of Patani as a heroic historical heritage provides rich "building material" for the formation of a "we-group".[12] The rapid modernization of Southern Thailand and the continuing impact of the Thai nation-state on the moral economy of the Malays constitute the framework in which intense nostalgia politics are flourishing. The appropriation of expressive symbols and their social representation in urban sites presents a key work of identification of respective local groups. The new middle classes, who are responsible for the establishment of a public sphere, participate in this struggle over the appropriation and commodification of expressive symbols- "a contest to destabilize and eliminate certain meanings while asserting another." (Thongchai: 171). The past is interpreted, re-modelled and re-invented along the selection of respective groups and the historical material is integrated into public discourses.

Patani has been regarded as one of the "cradles of Islam" in SouthEast Asia. The Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani by Ibrahim Syukri (or Shukri) or History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani, written in 1949, was banned in Thailand and Malaysia. This book does not fall in the *hikayat* tradition. Rather, it is "the People's Tribune version of history" because it was "written by a person who had an active relationship with the past (Talib 1986: 902). Teeuw and Wyatt argue that the primary aim of the authors of *Hikayat Patani* "was clearly not to give a factual account of historical events, but to provide readers with a political pattern as seen from the viewpoint of Patani" (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970: 292, Chaiwat: 1-2). Likewise, Ibrahim Syukri intended to give a subjective appreciation of "their" (the Malay-Muslim's) history. His historical anger on the incorporation of the Malays is described at the end of the book:

"If studied in depth, since the fall of Patani in the 18th century until this day, it is clear that the government of Siam has misgoverned during this whole period of time. No progress has been made in Patani to provide well-being for the

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[12]I have used Pattani to refer to the present province and town of Pattani in modern Thailand and "Patani" with one "t" for the ancient Malay kingdom once under Malay control.

Malays. In matters of health, education, association and the economy, Patani has lagged far behind the progress of its neighbors in Malaya. The actions of the Siamese government, which allows the Malays to live in backwardness, definitely gives a large profit to them, but this has grieved the hearts of the Malays." (Ibid.: 75-76).

The exact date of the Islamic conversion of the Patani region has not yet been established (Teeuw and Wyatt 1970: 4). The exact date of the Islamic conversion is a politicum in itself. Intensified communication during the seventeenth century between Arabia and SouthEast Asia, which was served by Patani as its trading center, prepared the ground for Islamic Learning. One Patani scholar, Daud ibn Abdillah Ibn Idris al-Fatani was recognised as one of the foremost authorities of Islamic sciences in SouthEast Asia. Currently, the original scripts provide the wisdom of a foundation in Kualar Lumpur which I visited during my fieldwork in March 1996. The foundation of al-Fatani is reprinting the body of his work on Islamic theology and jurisprudence. The foundation appeals to middle-class Malays who aims to re-discover the Islamic heritage of Patani.

Wayne Bougas' research on the Kingdom of Patani is significant because it emphasises the multi-civilizational origin of Pattani. Bougas' focus on Islamic cemeteries shows that indigenous and pre-Islamic elements did survive on structure and items such as pavilions and tombstones and influence the form cemeteries took. In fact, Islamic concepts were realised and expressed in indigenous forms, derived from Hinduism and Buddhism (Bougas 1988, 1994).

From the classical perspective of geography and archaeology space, place and landscape was regarded neutral and divorced from meaning or any consideration of power and domination (Tilley 1994: 9). The alternative view starts from the conviction that space is socially produced. These spaces, as social productions, are always centred in relation to human agency. "What space is", Tilley writes, "depends on who is experiencing it and how." (Tilley: 11). Furthermore, Tilley points to the conflictory appropriation of space by social agents:

"Spatial experience is not innocent and neutral, but invested with power relating to age, gender, social position and relationships with others. Because space is differentially understood and experienced it forms a contradictory and conflict-ridden medium through which individuals act and are acted upon. The experience of space is always shot through with temporalities, as spaces are

always created, reproduced and transformed in relation to previously constructed spaces provided and established from the past. Spaces are intimately related to the formation of biographies and social relationships." (ibid.: 11).

The archaeological sites of Patani and the way different actors act upon them, illustrate the Politics of Space in the framework of Tilley. <u>The new middle classes are keen architects in the creation, reproduction and transformation of archaeology, urban symbols, rituals and traditions</u>.

The Politics of Space: Meaning-laden Urban symbols

The mosque of Kampong *kerisik* (in Thai: Ban *Kru Se*)[13] became a theatre of Islamic activities and the symbolic center of an emergent religious public sphere (Le Roux 1996: 21). Chaiwat Satha-Anand explains that the myth of Kru Se has to be related to local factors and the transitional influence of the Islamic resurgence (Chaiwat 1995: 201). The myth of Kru Se is inseparable from the story of Lim Kun Yew and the establishment of a shrine in her honour. The story of Lim Kun Yew is told by Syukri (1985: 31):

"with a broken heart she hanged herself from a cashew tree. Before taking her life, she issued a curse that the construction of Kru Se mosque would never be completed. The Chinese of Patani took her corpse and buried it according to the customs of their religion. They took the cashew tree and made an image of Lim Kun Yew which was then prayed to as a respected holy idol."

Every year on the fifteenth day after Chinese New Year, the image of Lim Kun Yew is taken out of the temple and paraded through Patani (Bougas 1994: 47). The festivities of Chao Mae Lim Khao Niaw is one of the most important Chinese events of contemporary Thailand. During the 1996 festivities, a deputy prime minister was flown in for the opening ceremony (representing the prime minister Banharn), a fact which enhanced the importance of the Chinese New Year in Pattani considerably. In his speech, the deputy prime minister acknowledged the loyalty of the Chinese, pointing to the historic alliance of Chinese tax-farmers and the Siamese monarchy. He continued to address the majority of Patani: "the Thai-Muslims", pointing to the evils of religious fundamentalism and separatism. In the "Visit Thailand" Year, the Tok Pek

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[13]Kru Se, Ku Se or Kru Sae is only an official, arbitrarily translation found on governmental mapping of the standard malais word kerisik or the equivalent keruse of the Patani Malay dialect and means "royal palace" (personal communication with Pierre Le Roux, 26.07.97).

Kong temple was packaged as a prime tourist spot to Malaysian and Singaporian Chinese.

The curse has become louder because of the physical proximity of Tok Pek Kong temple to Kru Se mosque. The assertion of a Muslim identity through public religious activities in Kru Se mosque countered the increasing commodification of the mosque. By revoking the historical status of Kru Se in manifestations, the Muslims attempted to challenge the curse (Chaiwat 1995). On the other hand, Chao Mae Lim Khao Niaw, the story, the shrine and the cemeteries become a place for identity assertion of Chinese Diaspora in SouthEast Asia. Moreover, the godness of Lim Kun Yew becomes a place of pilgrimage for SouthEast Asian Chinese in a time when Chinese have to severely compromise their identity in Malaysia.

Nostalgia Politics:

Although middle-class families are looking towards the future, I noticed a constant preoccupation with the past. This is a typical aspect of middle class lifestyling. In Southern Thailand, the construction of tradition has a political dimension. Günther Schlee prefers the metaphor of construction to the term invention. He argues that:

"Konstruktion nämlich erfolgt nicht aus dem Nichts, sondern sie braucht Material. Und wie im Bauwesen gebraucht man auch bei der Konstruktion sozialer Identitäten vorzugsweise lokale Materialien, Dinge, die im lokalen Kontext vorhanden sind und denen Realität nicht abgesprochen werden kann." (Schlee/Werner 1996: 14)

I want to show the one-dimensional preoccupation with a) the history of the Chinese and b) the history of the Malay in this light.

The "nurture" of Chinese tradition in Pattani:

The *Khunanurak* family has seen better days. Only the interiors of their luxurious home in the old Chinese market of Pattani town resemble the good old times when their forefather (*Tragun*) was the Lord of the community. As Captain China, *Luang Samrejkitjakornjangwang* had been the representative of the governor of Songklah in Pattani, he combined administrative, millitary and legal functions. Captain China had been the tax collector, shipping master,

magistrate, owner of the mines and opium farmer. As a recompense for his service for the Thai monarchy, Captain China was entitled to exploit the tin mines of the lower South on which the family founded its wealth.

Nowadays, the *luuk jin* (children of the Chinese) of the *Khunanurak* family are engaged in middle-class occupations, such as commerce (fishing, marble and granite quarrying), university lecturer, lawyer (solicitor) and doctor. Their social position is based on a solid tertiary education. However, all succeeding families wish to build on the rich cultural capital which their forefathers provided.

Thus, they are engaged in serious research on their family history. Their efforts to document the family history resulted in a beautiful funeral book, which has become a bestseller among the Chinese of Southern Thailand. The book is a particularly rich documentation of the family tree and a glorious farewell to the *Tragun*. Moreover, the book entails stories of Pattani, extracts from the dairy of King Chulalongkorn and his visits to Pattani, the legend of Lim Khao Niaw and a commentary on the famous monk *Luang Por Tuad* of *Wat ChangHai*. Thus, the book constitutes a memorial of the *Khunanurak* family and embeds it in an elegant way within the story of Pattani.[14]

Moreover, the successors established a charity association, namely the *Luang Samrejkitjakornjangwang* Association. The function of the association is as follows: a) The association provides the *Khunanaurak* family base b) the association members take care of the family documentation, c) the association members organise a merit making one day before the *Chao Mae Lim Khao Niaw* celebrations and d) the association members take the responsibility for the shrine of the *Tragun* to which they pay respect on every April, the Fifth.

As a result, the successors and their families are equipped with high symbolic capital. This enhances their leadership and prestige in their communities and networks considerably. The family heritage provides a rich building material for construction of a new identity.

Rediscovering Islamic traditions of Patani in Malaysia:

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[14]I was able to buy this funeral book from the Khunanurak family in Pattani town. I had the permission to visit the shrine and their beautiful home in Pattani town. Besides the luxurious Chinese furniture, I noticed photographs on the wall showing the symbolic visits of the Thai king to the K. family and to Lim Khun Yew shrine.

A. is visiting Pattani regularly. She comes from Khota Baru, the capital of Kelantan sultanate. Here, she is working in the shop of the national museum in the heart of Khota Baru. She is married to a Malay Muslim businessman who has just opened a Thai seafood restaurant in the museum, catering for a high-class clientele. He travels often to Hat Yai in order to purchase cheap food utensils for his restaurant and Thai handicrafts for sale on the bazaar. The couple had a "born-again" excitement, turning closer to religion. A. likes to intensify her religious experience and knowledge. As part of her "rebirth", A. is preoccupied with Patani old manuscripts and Islamic literature (*Kitab Jawi*), stories and legends of Patani/Kelantan sultanates. She is doing tours to neighbouring Southern Thailand to visit her relatives and to study old historical sites like the *surds* (old "mosques) of Talo Mano (Bacho district, Narathiwat), Kru Se (Kru Se, Pattani). A. believes that Patani region is a treasure of Islam. A. shares this excitement on Islamic traditions in Patani with a number of middle-class Malays who visit Southern Thailand as part of their trajectories to "good" Muslims. They believe that the roots of Islam in Southeast Asia can be found in Patani. Healers come from as far as Malacca to discuss on Islamic ethics and morals in a religious circle in Yala. Students from the International Islamic University in Kualar Lumpur arrive on organised tours to visit Pattani.

The reconstruction of Malay identity in an Islamic framework on both sides of the border includes the studying of historical traditions and sites. The monuments and museums provide the building material for a new identity.

Time, place and social memory:

In Southern Thailand, space is socially produced and history socially contested. Local urban symbols are cultural domains which are laden with meaning and provide rich "building" material for the construction of identity. The middle classes are bound to the emergence of a public sphere in a dialectical way. In the politics of identifications, respective local groups are engaged in the appropriation of history in their interest. Doing so, they are engaged in an ideological battle which not only concerns the interpretation of the past, but also concerns the projection of the future.[15]

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[15]Prof. Günther Schlee has explicitly spoken about the Islamization of the past. For a more elaborate discussion, see his: Schlee, Günther (1989): Identities on the move. Clanship and pastoralism in Northern Kenia. Manchester: Manchester University Press. I would like to argue that the Thai government likewise tries to emphasize the Hinduist and in particular Buddhist past in order to claim a legitimate occupation of the territory.

The middle classes are more interested in publicness than other groups. Through the construction of narratives and their import into public discourses the very heterogeneous middle classes emerge as a "collective identity" at all. I would like to suggest that the middle classes use history to empower themselves. Through their association with conspicuous places or historical heroes, the middle classes manifest their presence in publicness.

A large number of the middle classes are civil servants. The Thai nation-state is a central actor in the construction of social reality in Southern Thailand. Let's take the example of archaeology to illustrate the argument. The government is very reluctant to explore and conserve the archaeological sites of Patani. I had the chance to meet *Khun Pia*[16] from Silapakorn University in the Müang (City) Yarang Complex. She is the only archaeologist supported by the Thai government and responsible for 3 archaeological sites! As a result, the sites can not be sufficiently protected and valuable items are stolen. All sites prove the presence of a Hinduist and Buddhist civilization before the conversion to Islam.[17] As *Khun Pia* confirms, archaeology in Patani is not an innocent practice, but necessarily highly politicised and a matter of debate and contest. The findings of Buddhist images in particular are potentially disturbing to the Malay majority. At the same time, the Thai government neglects the numerous archaeological sites of the Malay sultanate and until now there is no systematic exhibition of Malay culture in Thailand. This is not due to the ignorance of the Thai government alone, but also to the unwillingness of Malay intellectuals to cooperate with the Thai government on a very sensitive subject.

On the other hand, the Thai government is developing the lower South for tourism. Hereby, they present a multicultural society in which Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims live harmoniously together and where Buddhist temples, Muslim mosques and Chinese temples can be admired. Chinese tourists come on package tours from Singapore, Kualar Lumpur, Penang and Hongkong to participate in the Chao Mae Lim Khao Niaw celebrations or to do shopping in Hat Yai during the Chinese New Year. Malay Muslim tourists come to study the places of the Patani sultanate or to visit relatives in Southern Thailand. Thai Buddhist tourists come from Bangkok to visit *Wat ChangHai* to make merit to

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[16]All informants stay anonymous. I have called my informant *Pia*.

[17]Wayne Bougas (1994: 7) writes that Patani occupied a transitional zone between mainland and island SouthEast Asia: "Patani was often forced to play a delicate balancing act between much larger and powerful kingdoms to the north and south in order to survive. Both states ultimately adopted religious ideas, political concepts and artistic forms from their more powerful and influential neighbors and combined and reinterpreted them to form their own unique cultures."

Luang Por Tuad and to buy Buddhists amulets of this renown monk for his spiritual powers. When the tourists began to come in large number, they reinforced a social dynamic on the local level. The large number of tourists upgraded for a large scale the importance of urban symbols (*Lim Kun Yew, Kru Se, Wat Chang Hai*) for the local actors and their identity politics. The commercialization of the Chao Mae Lim Khao Niaw celebrations as a prime tourist spot induced large scale protest and manifestations of the Malay people in Southern Thailand.

Concluding Remarks:

As in other local contexts of the non-western world, the cultural re-orientation in Southern Thailand is intimately linked up with mass consumption and life styles (Wim van Binsbergen: 7). The articulate middle classes in Southern Thailand and elsewhere are truly culture-builders: they are centrally involved in transforming of pre-existing cultural idioms and the creation of new identities and new boundaries. The Thai, Chinese and Malay segments of the new middle classes in Southern Thailand illustrate well the different strategies with which local actors mediate global ideas and images.

The very similar imagination of a middle class culture and life style points to the construction of collective identities. Consumption includes material objects as well as non-material ideas, images and cultural products. The rediscovering of Chineseness and the Islamic resurgence describe the new identities in Southern Thailand.

The middle classes are constructing the political spectacle. In the storm of identity politics, the local actors opt for the secure "strategic" essentialisms (Spivak). Their spectacle and dramatization of "ethnizised modernities" expresses the social struggle fought out between the Thai government, Chinese and Malay people in Southern Thailand. Being without major resources of economic wealth and bureaucratic power, the articulate middle class has a profound interest in publicness and public discourse.[18] Power is thus expressed in symbolic action.

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[18]In our field research we discovered the emergence of a public sphere. The individuals who come together in the public sphere form strategic groups and carry out strategic action. The established Thai middle class in Songklah organizes a political public in allience with the local government. The ousider- Malay middle class is organizing in a competitive religious public sphere. Here, I do not have the space to elaborate on this important social action of the new middle classes in Southern Thailand, however.

This study was highlighting the symbolic processes and material culture in Southern Thailand in order to underline the "building" materials which the new consumers pick up from the cultural supermarket of ideas, images and meanings to re-model their cultures. In their social practices and material culture, the new middle classes seek to draw boundaries to the lower classes and to their "Intimate Enemy".

However, this study did not want to overstress the rationality of practice, life style and consumption of the new middle classes. On the contrary, it aims to shed light on the "inner life" of the middle classes. Preoccupied with the mobilization of the little resources they have, they always have the "Fear of Falling" (Ehrenreich 1989). Their embededness in the social networks of essentialist, uncompromising cultures provided security against the fluctuation and risk of social change. The new consumers wish to empower themselves by drawing on the identity-offers from extra-local flows and contexts. The new consumers are in a process of "Learning" to get access to what they regard a "modern life-project". Thus, the new consumers construct a cultural ethic, draw moral boundaries to the ethnic and poor "other", put their social ambition into their children, consume a variety of media, re-interpret and re-construct the historical material in their interest. Their participation in modern, global life is perhaps more desired, imagined and constructed than real. That does not mean, however, that processes and shifts in consumption pattern and life styling are not important. This study underlines the efforts of the new middle classes in consumption and cultural production which are shaping the new urban society of Southern Thailand.

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