

THE CONSTRUCTION OF MUSLIM MINORITY IDENTITY IN THE ASHURA PORRIDGE TRADITION: A CASE STUDY OF PATTANI AND SOUTHERN THAILAND

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Abstract

This research examines how Muslim minority communities in Pattani and Southern Thailand construct and maintain their identity through the Ashura porridge tradition within a complex socio-political context. Through an interdisciplinary approach combining historical and anthropological analysis with Gramscian hegemony theory, this study reveals how a religio-culinary tradition serves as both a medium for identity construction and an arena for cultural negotiation. Using qualitative methods that combine Hadith literature studies, literature review, and online interviews with informants from various regions of Southern Thailand, this research identifies three main findings. First, the construction of minority Muslim identity through the Ashura tradition demonstrates how cultural practices can transcend theological divisions, creating unique forms of local expression. Second, the practice of making and distributing Ashura porridge functions as a mechanism for reinforcing collective identity and cultural resistance against assimilation policies. Third, while this tradition strengthens internal group identity, it simultaneously serves as a potential bridge for inter-group dialogue, though it can also become a catalyst for political tensions.

Keywords: Ashura porridge; Muslim minority identity; cultural resistance; Southern Thailand; interfaith dialogue

INTRODUCTION

In Southeast Asia's religious and socio-political landscape, culinary traditions often reflect the complexity of Muslim communities' ethno-religious identities. The case of Pattani in Southern Thailand presents an interesting example of how a culinary tradition—in this case, Ashura porridge—can transform into a symbol of cultural resistance and identity assertion amid intense assimilation pressures (Harish, 2006; Liow, 20).

Pattani, formerly an independent Malay sultanate, is now part of Thailand through a tumultuous historical process. The annexation of Pattani by Siam in the early 20th century has given birth to a long narrative of identity struggle and cultural resistance.

The 'Thaification' policy implemented by the central government, with systematic efforts to suppress the use of the Malay language and restrict Islamic religious practices, has created an ongoing tension gap (Liow, 2004; McCargo, 2008).

In this context, the Ashura porridge tradition offers a unique lens for understanding the dynamics of identity and resistance in Pattani. Although theologically the Pattani community is dominated by Sunni Muslims of the Shafi'i school—which in practice is not political as in the Shia theological school—the Ashura celebration in this region has undergone a transformation of meaning. From merely a religious commemoration, Ashura has now become an important moment in Pattani's socio-political calendar and a vessel for expressing communal solidarity and resistance against Thai cultural hegemony (Fibiger, 2010).

This phenomenon is interesting to examine through Antonio Gramsci's theoretical framework of hegemony. From a Gramscian perspective, 'Thaification' efforts can be seen as a form of cultural hegemony, where the state attempts to impose a homogeneous worldview on minority groups. However, the response of the Pattani community through the Ashura porridge tradition shows that the hegemonic process never proceeds without resistance. This tradition becomes an arena of contestation where local Malay-Muslim identity is negotiated and maintained in the face of assimilation pressure (Arismunandar et al., 2019; Chinda et al., 2023).

Interestingly, the Ashura celebration in Pattani is not only a moment for internal reflection within the Muslim community but often becomes a catalyst for increased political tension. Recent studies show a correlation between the celebration of Islamic holidays, including Ashura, and increased incidents of violence in Southern Thailand (Chinda et al., 2023). This phenomenon underscores the complexity of the relationship between religious identity, cultural resistance, and conflict dynamics in the region..

Nevertheless, it would be too simplistic to view the Ashura porridge tradition merely as an expression of antagonism toward the Thai state. In practice, this celebration also provides space for cross-community dialogue, even involving non-Muslim participation on several occasions. This demonstrates the tradition's potential as a bridge

for intercultural understanding, an aspect often overlooked in conflict analysis in Pattani (Panae et al., 2021).

In an era where issues of identity and pluralism are becoming increasingly crucial in global discourse, studying the Ashura porridge tradition in Pattani offers valuable insights into how minority communities negotiate their identity within the context of the modern nation-state. More than just an analysis of a local tradition, this research hopes to contribute to a broader understanding of the dynamics of identity, cultural resistance, and reconciliation potential in ethno-religious conflict areas.

To explore these themes in greater depth, the research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, utilizing multiple data collection methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Ashura porridge tradition. The first method involves a Hadith literature study, which examines Hadiths related to Ashura in both Sunni and Shia authoritative texts. The focus was on the keyword "Ashura" and its variations. Sunni sources included Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, while Shia sources encompassed *al-Kāfi* by Kulayni, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām* by Tusi, and *Tafshil Wasail al-Shia fi Tahsili Masail al-Sharia* by al-Hurr al-‘Āmili. The purpose of this study was to record and analyze the differences in interpretations of Ashura between the two sectarian religious traditions, Sunni and Shia. The dichotomy of interpretations found in this Hadith study was then used as an analytical framework to understand Ashura practices in the context of the Muslim minority community in Southern Thailand.

The second method involved a literature review, which covered academic literature on the Ashura tradition, the history of Southern Thailand, and the socio-political dynamics of the region. Academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and local institutional repositories were utilized to gather relevant sources. The literature search focused on publications from 2000 to 2024, with exceptions made for certain older historical primary sources.

The third method of data collection involved two approaches: online interviews and the distribution of a Google Form survey. Online interviews were conducted with four informants who are students from Southern Thailand currently pursuing education

in Indonesia. The selection of informants was based on the following criteria: (1) originating from Southern Thailand, (2) possessing knowledge about the Ashura tradition, and (3) being willing to share information openly. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, focusing on three main themes: (1) the practice of the Ashura porridge tradition in the informants' regions of origin, (2) the socio-cultural significance of the tradition, and (3) the relationship between the Ashura tradition and identity and political dynamics in Southern Thailand.

In addition to the interviews, a Google Form survey was distributed to gather data from the Muslim minority community in Thailand. The survey aimed to collect broader insights into the views and experiences related to the Ashura porridge tradition, expanding the scope of responses. Data from both the interviews and the survey were analyzed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the practices and meaning of the Ashura tradition in this context.

The data collected through these three methods were then analyzed using an interpretive approach within Gramsci's theoretical framework of hegemony. Data triangulation was performed by comparing the findings from the Hadith study, literature review, and interviews/surveys to ensure the credibility and reliability of the research results.

Ashura in the Sectarian-Religious Framework: Sunni and Shia Perspectives

The commemoration of Ashura, which falls on the 10th of Muharram in the Hijri calendar, represents a significant moment in Islamic tradition that reflects the complexity of Muslim history and theology. The significance of Ashura lies not only in its ritual dimension but also in its role in shaping and reflecting sectarian identities within Islam, particularly between Sunni and Shia communities. Understanding these differences becomes crucial, especially when analyzing Ashura practices in Muslim minority contexts such as Pattani, Southern Thailand.

In the Shia tradition, Ashura holds deep meaning intrinsically connected to the tragic events at Karbala in 680 CE. This day marks the martyrdom of Imam Husain bin Ali, grandson of Prophet Muhammad, along with his family and followers in the battle

against Yazid bin Muawiyah's forces. This event is not merely historical record for the Shia community but a moment that is continuously reactualized in their spiritual and social life (Khairuddin, M.Ag, 2017).

The commemoration of Ashura in the Shia tradition involves a complex series of emotionally charged rituals. These rituals include ta'ziyah (reenactment of the Karbala event), recitation of lamentations (marthiya), and even self-flagellation practices such as tatbir in some communities. Through these rituals, the Shia community not only commemorates the suffering of Imam Husain and his family but also affirms their commitment to the values upheld by the Ahlul Bait (Scharbrodt, 2023).

On the other hand, the Sunni tradition maintains a different interpretation of Ashura. For the majority of Sunni Muslims, Ashura is more closely associated with pre-Islamic events, particularly the salvation of Prophet Moses and his followers from Pharaoh's pursuit. This is based on a Hadith narrated by Ibn Abbas, where Prophet Muhammad, upon seeing the Jews of Medina fasting on the day of Ashura, declared that Muslims had more right to celebrate this day (Khairuddin, M.Ag, 2017).

These interpretative differences ultimately result in varying Ashura commemoration practices between Sunni and Shia communities. While the Shia community tends to commemorate Ashura with an atmosphere of mourning and contemplation, the Sunni tradition emphasizes aspects of gratitude and worship, primarily through voluntary fasting. These differences reflect not only theological variations but also fundamental differences in historical narratives and identity construction between the two communities (Fibiger, 2010).

However, it is important to note that the Sunni-Shia dichotomy in the context of Ashura is not always rigid and absolute. In some regions, particularly in Southeast Asia, interesting processes of acculturation and hybridization of traditions have occurred. In Indonesia, for instance, the Ashura tradition manifests in various forms such as porridge-making, prayer recitations, and cultural celebrations like Tabut in Bengkulu. In Madura, for example, the tradition of bubur suro with red and white porridge still displays mourning nuances as a symbol of commemorating that day (Japarudin, 2017).

In the context of Pattani, where the Muslim population is predominantly Sunni of the Shafi'i school, the Ashura tradition has undergone interesting adaptations. Although theologically closer to Sunni interpretation, the Ashura commemoration in Pattani has evolved into a unique socio-cultural phenomenon. The tradition of making and distributing Ashura porridge, for instance, has become a practice with not only religious but also significant social and cultural dimensions (Panae et al., 2021).

The uniqueness of the Ashura tradition in Pattani is also reflected in how the local community combines elements of Sunni tradition with regional influences. While not adopting rituals commonly associated with Shia tradition, such as ta'ziah or tatbir, the Pattani community has developed local practices that reflect their own understanding of Ashura's significance. This demonstrates the flexibility of Islamic tradition in adapting to local contexts while maintaining its spiritual essence (Fibiger, 2010; Parkes, 2021).

The differences in interpretation and practice of Ashura between Sunni and Shia traditions, as well as their contextualization in Pattani society, provide an important background for understanding the theological doctrine underlying this tradition. In the following sub-section, we will explore more deeply the doctrinal foundations of the Ashura tradition, focusing on relevant Hadiths in both Sunni and Shia traditions. This analysis will help us understand not only the theological roots of different Ashura practices but also how these doctrines are interpreted and adapted in local contexts such as Pattani.

Understanding the sectarian and contextual complexity of the Ashura tradition provides insight into how these doctrines influence the practice and meaning of Ashura in various contexts, including Pattani. This will give us a solid foundation for analyzing the socio-political and cultural dynamics that shape and are shaped by the Ashura porridge tradition in Pattani in subsequent sections of this research.

The Theological Doctrine of Ashura between Sunni and Shia

The differences in Ashura interpretation between Sunni and Shia traditions are rooted in theological understandings based on Hadiths considered authoritative by each group. Analysis of these Hadiths is essential for understanding the doctrinal basis of varying Ashura practices and how these interpretations influence the formation of identity and religious practices in various contexts, including Pattani.

From the Shia perspective, the commemoration of Ashura has meaning deeply intertwined with the historical construction of the Karbala event. This is reflected in Hadiths narrated in authoritative Shia texts such as *al-Kāfī* and *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*. One key Hadith in the Shia tradition is the narration from Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, which emphasizes that Ashura is a day of sadness and mourning, not a day for fasting or celebration. In a Hadith narrated by Abdul Malik, Imam Ṣādiq explains:

"The day of Tasu'a is the day when Husain and his companions were besieged in Karbala and the cavalry from Syria gathered against them... The day of Ashura is the day when Husain was killed along with his companions, and his body lay naked on the ground. This is a day of sorrow and calamity for the inhabitants of heaven and earth and all believers... If you wish to fast, then fast on the ninth and tenth days, from Asr until night, and do not fast the entire day..." (Kulaynī, 1984)

Furthermore, in *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, there is a Hadith narrated from Imam Riḍā that explicitly rejects the practice of fasting on Ashura:

"Fasting on the day of Ashura is a fast practiced by the deceivers from the family of Ziyad... That day is a day of misfortune for the family of Muhammad and all believers. Whoever fasts on that day or makes it a day of blessing will be resurrected with the family of Ziyad, and whoever stores food in their house on that day, Allah will not bless their home and family." (Ṭūsī, 1986)

Additionally, the practice of pilgrimage to Imam Husain's tomb on Ashura holds special significance in Shia tradition. As stated in a Hadith from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir: "Whoever visits Husain's tomb on the day of Ashura and stays there while weeping will meet Allah on the Day of Judgment with rewards equivalent to two thousand pilgrimages, two thousand umrahs, and two thousand holy wars, with each worship's

reward equal to performing it alongside the Prophet and the guided Imams." (Hurr al-
‘Āmilī, 1995)

These Hadiths not only form the theological basis for Ashura commemoration in Shia tradition but also become the foundation for Shia identity construction closely tied to the narrative of Ahlul Bait's suffering and resistance. Conversely, the Sunni tradition maintains a different interpretation of Ashura, based on Hadiths narrated in Sunni Hadith collections. One key Hadith in Sunni understanding of Ashura is the narration from Ibn Abbas in Sahih al-Bukhari:

"When Prophet Muhammad arrived in Medina, he found the Jews fasting on the day of Ashura. He asked, 'What is this?' They answered, 'This is a blessed day, the day when Allah saved the Children of Israel from their enemy, so Moses fasted on this day.' The Prophet said, 'I have more right to Moses than you do.' So he fasted on that day and ordered (his followers) to fast." (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Additionally, there is a Hadith narrated by Aisha r.a. that explains the evolution of Ashura fasting practice in Islam:

"The Quraysh used to fast on the day of Ashura during the pre-Islamic period. The Messenger of Allah also fasted on that day. When he arrived in Medina, he fasted on that day and ordered others to fast. When fasting in Ramadan was made obligatory, he left the fast of Ashura. Whoever wished to fast, did so, and whoever wished to leave it, did so." (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Furthermore, in Sunni tradition, there is a Hadith emphasizing the virtue of fasting on Ashura. Prophet Muhammad said:

"Fasting on the day of Ashura, I hope from Allah that it will expiate the sins of the previous year." (Sahih Muslim)

These doctrinal differences have significant implications for Ashura commemoration practices in various Muslim contexts. In Pattani, where the population is predominantly Sunni Muslim, the understanding of Ashura tends to align more closely

with Sunni interpretation. However, as discussed previously, local practices often show interesting adaptations and hybridization.

Although there is no concrete evidence of direct Shia doctrinal influence in Ashura commemoration in Pattani, the tradition of making Ashura porridge shows elements that may originate from broader regional influences. This reflects the flexibility of Islamic tradition in adapting to local contexts while maintaining its spiritual essence.

Understanding these doctrinal differences is important for analyzing how the Pattani Muslim community negotiates their identity in a broader context. On one hand, they maintain their theological affiliation with Sunni tradition, while on the other hand, they have developed unique local practices that may not always align with strict Sunni interpretation.

Furthermore, these doctrinal differences also provide insight into Ashura's potential as a moment for intra-Islamic and even interfaith dialogue. Although rooted in different theological interpretations, Ashura commemoration in various contexts, including Pattani, often becomes a moment to strengthen communal solidarity and even create space for cross-community interaction.

Thus, understanding the theological doctrine of Ashura is important not only for comprehending the root differences in practice between Sunni and Shia but also for analyzing how this tradition is adapted and interpreted in local contexts like Pattani. This provides a strong foundation for further exploring how the Ashura porridge tradition in Pattani functions as a medium for identity negotiation, cultural resistance, and even as a potential bridge for inter-community understanding.

The Ashura Porridge Tradition in Pattani Muslim Society

The tradition of serving Ashura/Suro porridge on the day of Ashura represents a cultural practice with historical traces in Islamic civilization. Etymologically, the term "Ashura" refers not only to the 10th day of Muharram but also signifies the combination or mixing of many ingredients into one component (Anīs et al., 2011). This correlates with the diverse composition of ingredients used in preparing Ashura porridge, reflecting

local culinary distinctiveness across various Muslim regions. This tradition, particularly for the Shia community, is rooted in commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Husayn at the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE, which became a significant moment in the Islamic calendar (Fibiger, 2010).

The Ashura porridge tradition in Pattani Muslim society is closely linked to the history of Islam's arrival in the region. Pattani, formerly a kingdom with its own sultanate, consisted of Malay communities who practiced Islam following the Shafi'i school. The Islamization of Pattani was influenced by its close relationship with the Samudera Pasai Sultanate in Aceh. This sultanate played a crucial role in spreading Islam throughout Southeast Asia, including Pattani (Manan et al., 2022). Sheikh Said, a scholar from Pasai, played a key role in converting the King of Pattani, Phya Tu Nakpa, who later changed his name to Sultan Ismail Shah Zillullah Fil-Alam after embracing Islam. This Islamization process not only transformed the religious beliefs of Pattani's inhabitants but also brought religious traditions such as Ashura celebration, which were then adapted into local culture.

Archaeological evidence, such as the presence of gravestones in Pattani royal tombs resembling those from Aceh, further confirms the strong influence of the Samudera Pasai Sultanate. Given Samudera Pasai's position as a center of Islamic studies in Southeast Asia during the 13th century, it is highly probable that various Islamic aspects including teachers, educational facilities, Quran, religious texts, and other guidelines were brought from Pasai to Pattani (Manan et al., 2022).

With the advent of Islam, the Hijri calendar began to be used as a time marker for various religious activities in Pattani. This calendar, based on the lunar system, became an important tool for Muslims in determining significant dates such as Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and certainly Ashura. The reform of the Hijri calendar in Pattani reflects the importance of adjusting methods and criteria for determining the beginning of Hijri months, a topic that has been debated among scholars (Setiarini et al., 2022). In the Pattani context, the adoption of the Hijri calendar also became a symbol of Islamic identity

assertion, especially amid the dominance of the Gregorian calendar used by the Siamese kingdom and later the Thai government.

The use of this Hijri calendar then became key in implementing Ashura rituals. With a calendar that had been adopted and locally adjusted, the Pattani Muslim community could celebrate Ashura on the 10th of Muharram, a sacred date in the Hijri calendar. Calendar reforms carried out by Pattani rulers, such as Sultan Ismail Shah Zillullah Fil-Alam, ensured that this celebration not only aligned with Islamic teachings but also became an integral part of local culture (Setiarini et al., 2022). A similar approach was also taken by Sultan Agung of the Mataram Kingdom. This step impacted not only administrative aspects but also the religious practices and traditions of Pattani society, including the Ashura celebration falling on the 10th of Muharram.

In Aceh, for example, the Ashura celebration tradition, as explained by Aboebakar Atjeh in his book "Seputar Masuknya Islam Ke Indonesia," notes that the Tabut Hasan Husein celebration in his village, Kedah, was pioneered by Tuanku Raja Keumala, a family member from India. The community at that time cooked porridge mixed with fruits as a tribute to the Karbala tragedy and distributed it to people passing by (Atjeh, 1985). Through this exposition, it appears that Acehnese influence had penetrated the culture and daily life of Pattani Muslim society, with the Ashura porridge tradition that persists to this day becoming one of the legacies of Pattani rulers' and scholars' efforts to adopt and adapt Islamic teachings according to the local context of Malay society.

The Ashura celebration in Pattani, Southern Thailand, is an annual ritual conducted throughout the month of Muharram. This tradition focuses on the preparation and distribution of Ashura porridge, a cultural practice that holds not only religious but also social importance. In this research, interviews with several Pattani Muslim students provide insights into how this tradition is maintained and interpreted by the local community, as well as its role in political mobilization and resistance against state authority.

Technically, the preparation of Ashura porridge in Pattani involves the entire community, who gather at mosques or schools to collectively prepare and cook this porridge. Ashura porridge in Pattani has a distinctive sweet taste, different from the Bubur Suro in Indonesia, which tends to be savory and spicy. The ingredients used in making this porridge include rice, coconut milk, fried coconut, corn, beans, pumpkin, raw banana, cassava, and palm sugar, all of which are cooked in large pots for 6-7 hours. Once cooked, this porridge is served in traditional containers, often using coconut shells (Panae et al., 2021).

Informant SU added that in the Songkhla area, although there is no tradition of making Ashura porridge identical to that in Pattani, the community still celebrates Ashura by making a dessert called "Asuror" or "Buborsuror." This tradition demonstrates how values of unity and togetherness are maintained through local variations in Ashura celebration. Village residents work together cooperatively in the process of making this dessert and distribute it to the community upon completion, strengthening the sense of togetherness and solidarity in the Muslim community (Informant 3).

The Ashura tradition in Pattani holds importance not only religiously and socially but also has political dimensions. According to FM, this tradition can serve as a means of strengthening Malay Islamic identity in Pattani. Although this celebration is not always intended as a form of resistance, FM acknowledges that this tradition could potentially trigger militancy in facing pressure from Thai authorities. Thus, the Ashura celebration functions not only as a community unifying tool but also as a symbol of cultural resistance against assimilation efforts by the central government (Informant 1).

HC from Nakhon Si Thammarat added that every year the Muslim community in Pattani makes Ashura porridge and distributes it to the community as an expression of their religious identity. HC noted that although there is Thai government support for the Muslim community through the appointment of Muslim ministers, suspicion may still exist. The Ashura celebration, therefore, remains an important tool in maintaining Malay Islamic religious and cultural identity amid complex political dynamics (Informant 4).

Interestingly, while the Ashura celebration in Pattani is often viewed as a manifestation of Malay religious and cultural identity, this tradition also contains inclusive dimensions. Several informants, including FM and RC, explained that in some cases, non-Muslims participate in this celebration. Their involvement is not only accepted but also appreciated, demonstrating that this tradition can serve as a means for interfaith dialogue and cooperation. This aligns with HC's view that the Thai government, with all its pro-Muslim community policies, supports this celebration as part of the religious freedom protected by the state (Informant 4).

The Ashura tradition thus functions as a platform for strengthening broader social relationships, involving various groups in society, and supporting interfaith dialogue. This indicates that although the Ashura tradition is deeply rooted in Islamic identity, it can also be adapted as a tool for building religious harmony in Pattani.

Ashura Porridge and Contemporary Identity Dynamics of Pattani Muslim Society

The Ashura porridge tradition in Pattani represents a complex reflection of identity dynamics and political struggles within the Muslim community in Southern Thailand. To understand the significance of this tradition, we need to examine it through the lens of Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, which offers an analytical framework for understanding how power is maintained not only through coercion but also through cultural consensus.

The history of Pattani as a former Malay sultanate annexed by Siam in the early 20th century marks the beginning of ongoing tensions. The Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 unilaterally incorporated Pattani into Thai territory, severing the historical and cultural ties of the Malay-Muslim community with the broader Malay world (Ahmad et al., 2019). The "Thaification" policy subsequently implemented by the Thai government can be viewed as an attempt to establish cultural hegemony, where Thai-Buddhist identity is positioned as the dominant norm.

Within the Gramscian framework, the Thaification policy represents what Gramsci termed as a "war of position"—a sustained effort to instill dominant ideology through social and cultural institutions. The prohibition of the Malay language, the

imposition of Thai language in education, and restrictions on Islamic religious practices are manifestations of this hegemonic strategy (Eum, 2008; Ockey, 2021). However, as Gramsci emphasized, hegemony is never total and always faces resistance.

In this context, the Ashura porridge tradition in Pattani becomes a significant form of "counter-hegemony." More than just a religious ritual, the Ashura celebration becomes an arena where the Pattani Muslim community symbolically and culturally challenges state hegemony. Through the preservation of this tradition, the Pattani community not only maintains their Malay-Muslim identity but also actively negotiates their position within the broader power structure.

The political dimension of the Ashura tradition becomes increasingly apparent when we observe the increase in violent incidents during Islamic holy days in this region. Research shows that violence levels increase significantly during Islamic religious celebrations while decreasing during Thai national holidays or Buddhist festivals (Chinda et al., 2023). This phenomenon demonstrates how religious moments can become catalysts for expressions of political resistance.

However, it would be overly simplistic to view the Ashura porridge tradition merely as a tool of resistance. In practice, this celebration also provides space for cross-community dialogue. The involvement of non-Muslims in the making and distribution of Ashura porridge demonstrates this tradition's potential as a bridge for intercultural understanding (Panae et al., 2021). This aligns with Gramsci's concept of "progressive folklore"—cultural elements that possess transformative potential within society.

The Thai government's efforts to address conflict in Pattani through development programs and dialogue have not yet been fully successful. Policies that often fail to consider local cultural sensitivities have instead deepened Pattani society's distrust toward state authorities (Arismunandar et al., 2019; Manan et al., 2022; Ockey, 2021). This situation is exacerbated by the militarization policy in the region, which only adds to tensions between local communities and the central government (Chachavalpongpon, 2023).

The complexity of the situation in Pattani reflects the challenges faced by many minority communities worldwide in maintaining their identity amid homogenization pressures. The assimilation policies implemented by the Thai government, although aimed at integrating Pattani into the Thai state, are often perceived as demeaning and threatening to the religious and cultural identity of Pattani society (Arismunandar et al., 2019).

The Ashura porridge tradition thus becomes a microcosm of the broader dynamics between the state and minority communities in Southern Thailand. On one hand, it serves as a symbol of resistance and identity preservation. On the other hand, it offers potential as a space for dialogue and reconciliation. How this tradition will evolve in the future will greatly depend on how the Thai government and Pattani society manage existing tensions.

Finally, understanding the complexity of the Ashura porridge tradition in Pattani requires a perspective that transcends the simple dichotomy between assimilation and resistance. As Gramsci reminded us, culture is not merely a passive superstructure but an active arena where identity and power are continuously negotiated. In this context, maintaining traditions like Ashura porridge is not just about preserving cultural heritage but also about imagining and struggling for a more inclusive and just future for the Pattani Muslim community within the broader context of the Thai state.

CONCLUSIONS

The Ashura porridge tradition in Pattani has evolved far beyond its original meaning as a religious ritual. Within the context of prolonged conflict in Southern Thailand, this tradition has transformed into a powerful symbol of cultural resistance and assertion of Malay-Muslim identity. Through the preservation and adaptation of this tradition, the Pattani community actively challenges Thai state hegemony, proving that culture is not merely a passive heritage but a dynamic arena where identity and power are continuously negotiated.

However, it would be erroneous to view the Ashura porridge tradition solely as a tool of resistance. The involvement of various elements of society, including non-

Muslims, in this celebration demonstrates its potential as a bridge for inter-group dialogue. Amid dominant conflict narratives, this tradition offers an opening for building mutual understanding and broader social cohesion.

The struggle of the Pattani community in maintaining the Ashura porridge tradition reflects the dilemma faced by many minority communities in the modern era: how to maintain their distinctive identity amid homogenization pressures from the nation-state. The failure of the Thai government's assimilation policies in Pattani demonstrates that a 'one size fits all' approach to managing cultural diversity is no longer relevant in an increasingly complex world.

Finally, the study of Ashura porridge in Pattani provides an important lesson that sustainable conflict resolution must be built upon understanding and appreciation of each community's cultural uniqueness. For the Thai government, and many other multiethnic states, the challenge lies in how to accommodate this diversity within the framework of national unity. Only by recognizing and appreciating traditions like Ashura porridge as an integral part of the national cultural mosaic can we hope to build a truly inclusive and just society.

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