

CISMOR Workshop by Research Fellow – Islam Studies Section

Perspectives of the Structural Problems in the Deep South of Thailand

- Conflict Resolutions, Gender, and Migration Networks -

October 9, 2021, 14:30-16:30

(via ZOOM)

The Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions (CISMOR) is organizing a workshop titled “Perspectives of the Structural Problems in the Deep South of Thailand: Conflict Resolutions, Gender, and Migrant Networks” to be held on October 9, 2021 with the participation of scholars from Thailand and Japan.

Abstract:

The area of the former Patani sultanate, currently Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and part of Songkla Provinces called also the Deep South – a region where Malay Muslims comprise the majority of the population – has been experiencing separatist movements for decades. Especially after conflicts between the Thai government and militants intensified in 2004, the Deep South of Thailand has been attracting the attention of both within and outside the country.

In this workshop, we have invited scholars and students from the fields of sociology, political science, and international relations to present case studies with the aim to explore the structural problems in the Deep South.

This workshop will raise the following questions: firstly what do the debates over the Deep South show us about the problems that this region is facing? Reciprocally, how can the results of our analysis help us tackle the country’s structural problem?

Objectives

- Scientific debates on the structural problem of the Deep South of Thailand
- Promotion of early career scholars, and creating a network of academics working on these fields

Timetable

Session I

Chair: Ada Tagar Cohen

14:30 (12:30 Thailand)

Opening Remarks by the chair, Director of CISMOR

Introduction by Naomi Nishi (Doshisha University)

14:40- Presentation 1

Tanapat Jundittawong (University of Ryukyus)

“The Communication Spaces for the US Military Bases Issue Resolutions in Okinawa: Modeled on the Deep South of Thailand”

15:00- Presentation 2

Ruengrin Pratippornkul, (Osaka University)

“When Girls Become Wives: The patterns of early marriage among Muslim girls in Thailand's Deep South”

Session II

Chair: Tetsu Kitamura

15:20- Presentation 3

Naomi Nishi (Doshisha University)

“Women’s Autonomy and Islam: A Case of Nanyu Female Workers in Malaysia”

15:40- Comments and Discussion

Fareeda Panjor (Prince of Songkla University)

16:00- Q&A Session

16:20- Closing Remark

Prof. Dr. Ada Taggar-Cohen

Presenters

- ✧ Tanapat Jundittawong, PhD. (Visiting Researcher, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ryukyus, Japan)
- ✧ Ruengrin Pratippornkul (Doctoral Student, Department of Comparative Public Policy, School of International Public Policy, University of Osaka, Japan)

Commentators

- ✧ Fareeda Panjor (Lecturer at the Center for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand)

Chairs

Ada Taggar Cohen (Professor at the Graduate School of Theology, Director of CISMOR, Doshisha University, Japan)

Tetsu Kitamura (Part Time lecturer School of Theology, CISMOR PD)

Coordinator

- ✧ Naomi Nishi (Part time Lecturer, Faculty of Law, CISMOR Research Fellow- Islam Studies Section, Doshisha University, Japan)

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Abstracts

The Communication Spaces for the US Military Bases Issue Resolutions in Okinawa: Modeled on the Deep South of Thailand

Tanapat Jundittawong

Visiting Researcher,

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,

University of the Ryukyus

This research is an experimental research, applying Habermas's concept of "public sphere" to focus on the creation of the communication spaces for conflict resolution in Thailand's Deep South and Okinawa, Japan. The conflict in Thailand's Deep South is the ongoing violent insurgency caused by armed fighting between active independence movements and the Thai government, while the conflict in Okinawa is the ongoing disagreements between the local and the Japanese government about US military bases presence.

In the Thailand' Deep South, after the 2006 coup d'etat, de-democratic politics by the military government has begun, while the security and the martial laws limited to the region are still be enforced. Under such circumstances, a communication space for conflict resolutions was created in which researchers took the lead to involve citizens gathered for free discussions, and the number of participants expanded through the media. Nowadays, efforts have been made to the stage where a negotiation table between independence movements and Thai government was set up. Public opinion from the space also balances power of both conflict parties.

Using literature research method, the research, aims to find out that, even in the political context of Japan, which is more democratized and decentralized compared to Thailand, why does Okinawa still not have a common space like the Thailand' deep South? In addition, an interview research method targeting Okinawan researchers and media will be conducted to clarify if it is possible to create a communication space in Okinawa modeled on the Thailand's Deep South, where researchers play a central role and media are side supports. Furthermore, action research method will be used to gather the persons involved in the conflict and try to build and create a communication space for the conflict resolutions in Okinawa.

沖縄の米軍基地問題解決のためのコミュニケーション空間：タイ深南部をモデルに

琉球大学人文社会学部

客員研究員

チャンディッタウォン・タナパット

本研究では、タイ深南部三県と日本の沖縄を取り上げる。両地域は、国民国家の周辺に位置し、近代国民国家の創造の過程で、周辺としてマージナル化された構造的類似性を有し、地域のコンフリクトを抱えている。タイ深南部三県のコンフリクトとは、政府への抵抗・独立を求める反乱であり、沖縄の場合は、米軍基地をめぐる対立や反対運動である。この両地域が、コンフリクト解決のためにどのように相互に学び合えるかを、ハーバーマスの「公共圏」の概念を応用し、コンフリクト・問題解決のためのコミュニケーション空間の構築と創造を試みる。

タイ深南部三県では、2006年のクーデター後、軍事政権による脱民主的政治が始まり、当該地域に限定された安全保障法が施行され戒厳令が発令された。その状況下で、研究者が中心となり、市民が集まり議論する共通空間（「公共圏」）が生み出され、メディアを通して参加者は広がっていった。そして現在では、政府と抵抗・独立運動派の交渉テーブルが設けられる段階までに取り組みが進み、コンフリクトの両者のバランスを取る空間となっている。

本研究では、タイと比べて民主化が進み、地方分権が行われている日本の政治的文脈の中で、なぜ沖縄にはタイ深南部三県のような共通空間が未だに存在していないのかを明らかにしたい。研究手法は、文献調査と、沖縄の反米軍基地問題の関係者へのインタビュー調査である。また、沖縄で深南部三県のような、研究者が中心となりメディアがそれをサポートする形でのコミュニケーション空間のモデルが構築可能であるのかを、沖縄の研究者とメディアを対象としたインタビュー調査で明らかにしたい。さらにコンフリクトの関係者を集め、コンフリクトの問題解決のためのコミュニケーション空間の構築・創造を試みたい。

**When Girls Become Wives:
Exploring the Early Marriage Among Muslim Girls in Thailand's Deep South**

Ruengrin Pratippornkul

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Osaka School Of International Public Policy, Osaka University

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Child marriage is recognized as a violation of human rights and ending its practice is listed in the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thailand generally prohibits minor marriage but the practice continues in rural areas to legitimize teenage couples dating outside marriage. The media claims that the Islamic background informs the trend when it happens in the southernmost Muslim-majority provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. However, this issue in these provinces is still understudied and poorly documented. Therefore, this study aims to (1) examine how child marriage is proliferated in the southernmost provinces; and (2) explore the extent to which Muslim early marriage in the southernmost provinces is unique from other religious groups. This paper argues that marrying under 18 but over 15 is not always the issue because the status of being an adult depends on the community an individual belongs to. However, there should be an option for younger girls to escape, especially those who are forced to marry, such as in the cases of rape and human trafficking. The survey finds that while marriage under 18 is practiced by both Muslim and Non-Muslim communities in the southernmost provinces, marriage before the age of 15 occurs only in Muslim communities. This study found that Muslim girls who married as a second wife in polygamous marriage are younger and have wider gap age between her husband than girls who married in monogamy. Legal loopholes and some collective rules also seem to perpetuate the vulnerability and exposure of Muslim girls to child predators. The study is heavily based on focus group discussions among 19 Muslim women who got married below 18, 13 key informant interviews, and questionnaire surveys on 545 women in the southernmost provinces.

Women's Autonomy and Islam: A Case of Nanyu Female Workers in Malaysia

Naomi Nishi

Research Fellow

Center for Interdisciplinary Study for Monotheistic Religion

This presentation provides an overview of the general characteristics of Malay speaking female migrant workers from Thailand's Southern Border Provinces (Nanyu) to Malaysia, and examines how Islamic teaching influence decision making. Data come from interviews conducted between February and March 2021 with 100 women ages 18 to 52 who have average 10-years histories of migration to Malaysia. Among the 100 women, 77 percent were the employees of a Thai restaurant called "tomyum restaurant" in Malaysia. Other common occupations included maids, employees at rubber plantations, and company workers. Including the restaurant owners, the majority of women (75) did not have work permits but held tourist visas to cross the border. Most women have completed either primary or early secondary education but have no confidence in the command of Thai language. Most women identified a desire to support their families, as their main reason for their migration. Other common reasons included gaining experiences, earning money that they can use freely, or desire to escape from their problems in Thailand. Given the number of migrant workers in Malaysia has increased dramatically, social media networks have developed to provide information for the potential workers as well as the workers who are already working in Malaysia.

Islam is often criticized for teaching women to follow primary men in their lives (her father/husband/brother) and to seek their permission in their decision making process. Thus, there is a common assumption that women are deprived of autonomy in their decision-making. In fact, most of the interviewees agreed that it is a recommended practice as a Muslim woman, but also consider that a woman's "asking permission" serves as a form of respect to their family, or to avoid dangers and secure their safety in foreign country. For migrant women who are married to the male workers at the tomyum restaurant, asking permission is not perceived as "problematic" because they always work together. At the same time, some women use the tomyum network to escape from their marital or family problems in Thailand. The "tomyum networks" serve as a new community that provides Muslim migrant women in the Southern Thailand-Malaysia migration corridor a choice for their economic and social empowerment.