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Some Indicators of Living Space Adaptation of Thai Malay Muslim Students in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study indicated that geographical features play an integral part in leading the relationship among individuals of different areas to the state of great complexity. This complexity of the relationship among the individuals was evident in the Malay world as its geographical feature is called 'borderland' where the complexity of the relationship between ethnicities was embedded, particularly when it comes to the levels of the relationship among the individuals of different ethnicities. With regard to the context of the Deep South provinces of Thailand, the study aimed to note that the academic sphere in the three southern border provinces of Thailand attached more importance to the unrest which occurred than the individuals. Therefore, it can be assumed that this may give rise to a significant gap in research on Malayness in the three southern border provinces. Additionally, the study also aimed to disclose that Thai Malay Muslim students in Malaysia had adapted themselves. As a minority group living in Malaysia, the students needed to struggle to successfully survive living their lives abroad where they experienced several dimensions of various challenges in this country. These issues were illustrated and discussed based on a case study of Thai Muslim students studying in Malaysia.

Keywords: Adaptation, Malaysia, Melayu, Muslim, Youths.

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1. Introduction

According to the 15-year experiences of the author who had been involved with Thai Malay Muslim youths during and before his undergraduate time at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, academics as well as society have raised various issues regarding Malayness in various dimensions. In relation to this, the author has seen that the life and culture of the people were full of stories, experiences, and memories evoked through cultural experiences between the people themselves, ethnicities, and even through bargaining power with Thai state. Therefore, Malayness of Thai Malay Muslims, who reside in the three southernmost provinces, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat

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cannot be considered based on unstoppable features, but it can be considered as based on creating a meaningful process which shows the dignity of human being. Moreover, without this process, being Malayness could mean 'violence', 'division', and 'negotiation' (Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, 2008).

There has been unrest happening in the three provinces for the last ten years. The unrest has affected people's daily routines and cultural identity. Apart from the unrest, economic and social conditions, and consumerism and modern technology have also affected the people's daily routines and cultural identity. These gradually may cause their daily routines and cultural identity to vanish. Importantly, when talking about Malay Muslims, the general public may think of Islam, religious conflict, violence, insurgents, or the stubbornness of the Malay Muslims in this area who seem unwilling to adapt themselves to Thai cultures. Being unwilling to accept the Thai cultures has always been seen in a negative light as shown on mainstream media. However, some see the Malay Muslim world in the three provinces as an acceptable attractive culture (Pawakapan, 2007, p. 205). On the other hand, geographical features may play a vital role in making the relationship of the people in these provinces with other parts of Thailand complicated. Another notable point of this geographical area is that this area is called as a 'borderland' where the complication in ethnic relationship is embedded, especially, in terms of categorizing and levelling the ethnic relationship (Pawakapan, 2007, p. 211).

2. Malaysian nationalization and Malaysian amalgamation

Based on the review of related studies, the establishment of Malaysia is, in general, based on written Malay language seen as *Pembinaan Negera Bangsa*, composed by Dr. Mahathir Muhammad. His book is *ISU-ISU KETAHANAN NASIONAL MALAYSIA* (2014) stated that 'building the nation' is actually a new idea. That is to say, building the nation meant that in the past each area was separately administrated by authoritarians. This kind of administration was generally seen in Europe and Asia. On the other hand, Japan was once administrated based on separate areas. One of which was the area where there was the highest leader who controlled all. However, China's administration was different from that of Japan. Each area of China was administrated by leaders of that area. The same can be said of Malaysia where each state or independent small city was administrated by a sultan. Later on, all states and cities are amalgamated and were administrated by one highest leader. With this amalgamation, the Malaysian government was established by means of amalgamating all states.

Eventually, before Malaysia became one nation, it amalgamated all states. This kind of phenomena could have happened in other powerful countries where the small states were amalgamated. When Malaysia became one nation, it accepted that the reason for gathering all states was in order to make the country into one Melayu nation. Therefore, according to political theories, Malaysia has successfully become a country. Nonetheless, there is complexity within the nation in races, religions, and cultures. This is similar to other countries which have received immigrants from abroad who have their own cultures and languages. As a result, they seem to be isolated from the local people. However, Malaysia's circumstance differed in that all people agreed that they are entitled to maintain their own languages, religions, cultures, with Malay as the national language. Hence, even though the Malay language is the language of Malaysians, they can also use other languages. This can be seen by a wide variety of language schools established in Malaysia.

Once Malaya state got independence, Signore, Sabah, and Sarawah states became a part of Malaysia. After three decades of establishment, there were no any disputes among tribes or groups of people in the nation. Rather, building the nation through merging all states led Malaysia to an awakening of nationalism among the people and economic stability. These are the root causes of Malaysian social, political, and economic stability. By the 30th year of national establishment, the Malaysian government has linked and turned all ethnic groups of the country into citizens for the country or known as 'Bangsa Malaysia'.

The book, written by Abdul Rahman Abdul Aziz (2014), whose title is *Tunku Abdul Rahamn Putra Al-Haj* presented the meaning of patriotism. He explained that in his perspective, patriotism is when an individual will dedicate 75 percent of his/her life to nation, other people, and religion. Meanwhile, another 25 percent of his/her time will be dedicated it to himself and herself and family by doing what is the best and most beneficial for their country. Further, he maintained that patriotism means that he or she will love his or her work and try to improve the quality of life in the country better.

However, a cause of the anxiety for Malaysia is that when one is sent to study abroad and he or she graduates, he or she may not come back to the country. This kind of situation has ever occurred in the past and continues until now where some groups of Malaysians do not seem to come back to the country after they graduated from their study abroad. However, Goh Choh Tong, a Singaporean, noted that wherever he works, he will still love his country. This is congruent with the saying 'You can walk out of India, you cannot take India out of India'. The outstanding example can be seen in the Philippines and Indonesia where their people leave the countries, but those people still love their country.

Tun Abdul Razak has proposed a plan, called 'KEMAJUAN', which aimed to increase people's love for the country as follows:

K = 'making people progress'

E = 'making quality of people's life better'

M = 'no empty land'

A = 'better economy'

J = 'economizing leading to being merciful'

U = 'being more curious'

A = 'co-existing with a variety of cultures'

N = 'liberty leading to happiness of the people'

These abbreviations were used in the era of Tun Abdul Razak, who was the Prime Minister of Malaysia, in order to make the country more stable. He sees that developing the country should not focus only on economy, but should also place an emphasis on society, politics, and cultures. In the same vein, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, one of the Prime Ministers of Malaysia, perceived that developing the country means the development of people's thinking and their quality of life.

Currently, there have been two Malaysian prime ministers who have successfully formulated a long-term plan, namely Tun Abdul Razak Hussein and Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. The former proposed the Economic Policy of 1970-1990. Throughout 20 years under Tun Abdul Razak administration, the results of the policy did not seem successful. Once this policy expired, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad rushed to propose 2020 vision policy, which aimed at a long-term 30-year plan. He stated that 'the national development and security are not about answering the needs of the people, but about developing the spirit of the people in the nation. This is being implemented. Developing the country is aimed to protect the democracy'. In addition, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein once mentioned in regard to developing the country defined that developing Malaysia should be defined based on ideology, bridge and road construction, and clean forest. This ideology is congruent with that of the Development Project initiated by the United Nations in 1994 which stated that there are seven aspects of human stability and security: economic stability, food security, health security, environmental security, individual security, community stability, and political stability. Based on these aspects, Malaysia was, as a result, categorized as one of the 20 happiest countries in the world.

According to NATION - BUILDING AND MALAYSIA CONCEPT: ETHNIC RELATIONS CHALLENGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD written by Wan Norhasnah Wan Husin (2011), 'building the nation' is the conceptual framework influenced by the English language. In accordance with the English-Malay dictionary 'building' means 'Pembinaan'. Meanwhile, the word 'nation' has several meanings, one of which is 'nationality' or 'country'. The process of building the nation may be seen as architectural design or the platform for politicians to accumulate power based on the needs of the people. However, building the nation should not only focus on gathering people to be one nation, but should also focus on uniting people and making them coexist in harmony. These efforts may lead to stimulating love in the country and a decrease in ethnic conflict. To order to cultivate unity and reduce conflicts between ethnic groups, it is to develop a national ideology or policy in order to create identity of the country. Nevertheless, the strength of each ethnicity could be a major issue for the country's development. This problem is seen in building up the nations of France, Russia, United States of America, Nigeria, and Indonesia.

Wan Norhasnah Wan Husin also said that on 3rd April 2009, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Abdullah presented Malaysia's policy of 'one Malaysia'. According to this scheme, developing the country should be based on the policy of 'the people first' followed by other potentials of the country. The first step that needs to be taken is action to tie up the relationship and cooperation between ethnic groups in order to embrace for the 21st century challenges. If the policy is accepted by Malaysians, the

country will be stably developed economically, politically, administratively, and socially. Regarding the importance of the ethnic languages, the language of each group is not only the medium of communication, but also represents the importance of each group.

In order to maintain a national language, the Malaysian government decided that the Malay language is the national language. The national educational policy may not be problematic for the investigation of ethnic varieties. After Malaysia got independence, it was found that the political system of the country may be problematic. More specifically, the weakness of Malaysian education in regard to co-existing with various ethnic groups is mainly because of immigrants who created the educational system themselves. Najib Razak and Naraman Talib (1961) encouraged the government to administrate the country based on three things: school educational system, using the Malay language as the medium of instruction, upgrading the schools' curriculum. However, choosing a particular culture to be the national one does not mean that the government will not accept other cultures. Therefore, in order to develop the country based on the concepts of language and the educational system, the government should be aware and base these developments on the appropriateness of the Malay cultures. The government may stick to 'one nation', based on history and local cultures as the main tool to build the culture of Malaysia.

When looking at Malaysian cross-country identity, LIAN KWEN FEE (1995) stated that the development of the Malay identity was rooted in the structure of the social class. For example, the grassroots are divided from the social high class. This began to appear in the writings of many Malay intellectuals who are ordinary and who have been exposed to Western ideas. But, in Malay society, sometimes, "Bangsa" may be quite contrary to "Kerajaan", which is the important part of the national ethnic identity. Therefore, it can be noted that creating Malayness stems from different factors linked with two drives: the external factor drive, capitalism economy and the internal factor drive, the variety of society.

With regard to the relationship among the ethnic groups and the continuity of the country development, Uqbah Iqbal (2016) stated in a Book Review entitled 'Hubungan Etnik: Kelangungan Pembinaan Negara Bangsa (Malay Version)'. Malaysia is a country of diverse people, religions, and cultures coexisting together. The events of May 3, 1969 clearly show the problems in ethnic group relationship. Furthermore, the ethnic groups and economic process are closely linked with economic development and political stability.

At the end of the 5th century, the cultures of the ethnic groups started to play an important role for the Malayu world. The expansion of British power in the 19th and 20th centuries made people migrate to live on the Malayu peninsula, especially Chinese and Indian populations.

Developing the country depends on the change of agricultural produce export and industry of the country. The rate of economic growth and the good quality of the people's lives prove that Malaysia has upgraded its economy. The economic downturn in the country affected economic development and political stability. Similarly, political instability may also affect the economic development. Therefore, living together in the country amidst the diversity of ethnic groups has high potential to make the country more stable.

According to clause 3 of the Malaysian institution, the national religion of Malaysia is Islam. As the national religion of the country is Islam, Abdullah Muhammad Badawi proposed a concept called 'Islam Hadhari'. This concept aimed to develop the country based on Islamic teachings through an appropriate method regarding spirit, economy, education, society, and legal services.

Most of Malaysians can be united superficially, but this may not be the realistic unity. It can be assumed that other ethnic groups may not be satisfied with the concept. Therefore, uniting people in the country should be based on the sincerity and honesty of all parties. Other ethnic groups should agree on the policy of cultural economy and education (Osman Chuah Abdullah, 2012).

3. Border, Malayu People, Identity

Even though globalization may bring about changes in the identity of an ethnic group, there are several ethnic groups that still maintain their identities, especially Malayness in Malaysia. This can be seen from Malaysian immigrants who have lived in other places. They still maintain their identity which can be seen in the form of a language and a culture. In support of this, Ramadan (2012) strove to explore the identity of the Pattani Malayu people who resided in Bangkok. He examined their identity

by considering ethnic boundaries such as food taste, the definition of home and death, and so on. These boundaries are not stagnant but keep changing according to the daily routines of these people. Therefore, it can be concluded that these people still keep their identity.

According to the above-mentioned paragraph, it can clearly be seen that the relationship of the people in the bordering areas is not stagnant, but always keeps changing. Therefore, the understanding about 'border' needs to be revisited taking into account the diversity and flow of the people.

Who are the Malayu people? This question reflects and shows that ethnicity is derived from society, cultures, memories, and stories of people's experiences in each context. Therefore, this question should be re-asked as 'how can the definition of Malayu be explained?'. This can truly reflect the circumstances that control the definition having dynamic features based on the people's experiences and thinking (Aimauryut, 2007 and 2016).

Interestingly, the study of Malay identity and its change in the concept of tran-nationalism has been conducted. The study maintained that investigating of the identity of Malayu should not only focus on ethnicity, language, culture, but should also focus on tran-nationalism in terms of contemporary history and culture either in southeast Asia, Middle East, other related other places. Muhammad Arafat (2013) investigated the pride and the participation of Pattani people in the context of Makkah and Jawi (three southern border provinces of Thailand). The data of this study were collected based on history and ethnography. He spent two years to collect the data in Thailand, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia.

Muhammad Arafat (2013) indicated that knowledge, pride, or the existence of the relationship among the Pattani people is built through the perspectives of the people in communities, as mentioned in Home and Homeland Story. These perspectives stem from the people in a particular community after some time of being involved with the culture of that community. From the perspectives of the Pattani people, being considered as a foreigner while residing in Makkah, may not be quite satisfying for them since they see Makkah as their second home. This stands in contrast to that of Jawi or the three southern border provinces of Thailand where they perceive this place as their birthplace and themselves being the citizens of this place. Furthermore, he gave more details about the story of Pattani's people, including the pride, excellent intellect, and determination of the people.

4. Malayness and interest in the academic sphere of the three southern border provinces

The three southern border provinces of Thailand have been through long-standing violence, which affect communities and economy in the area. Deep South Incidents' Database-DSID (2017) synthesized that between January 2004 – April 2017, there have been 19, 279 incidents happening which claimed 6,544 lives and 12,963 people were injured. This means that between 2004 – 2017, 19,507 people have either died or were injured. To efforts to solve the conflict, the government has spent 30,866 billion baht.

Throughout 13 years of the violence, many studies focused only on the unrest situation, they were concerned with finding out 'the cause of the unrest', 'why the unrest become more violent', and 'who plays behind the scene of this unrest', such as the studies of Abuza (2003 and 2005), Askew (2007), Croissant (2005), Liow (2006), MacCargo (2006), Srisompob and Phanyasak (2006), Ukrist (2006), wattana (2006), etc. However, these studies barely attached importance to focusing on the victims of the unrest. Only a few studies attached importance to Malayu society and cultures (Prachuabmoh, 2007 cited in Unno, 2011).

When reflecting on the present society which is under modernism, social studies have placed an emphasis on more understanding about the micro-social structure. The sociology-related studies have focused on the new interest about communities and ordinary people. This new interest leads to the new interpretation and analysis of culture of its historical description, in which economy, politics, and society are a part. This shift of interest in the sociological studies leads to the interest in the daily routines of the people. This interest is widespread among cultural studies because the daily routines are associated with conflict of interest and power relation between policy-makers and users. This is not a one-way relationship, but it is an endlessness of the cycle of power in daily routines (Koonphon, 2007).

It cannot be denied that currently, the unrest in the three southern border provinces of Thailand is not stable even though the level of the violence has decreased because of the enforcement of the law and the government's policies. This is in accordance with Conflict and Cultural Diversity

Research Center, Prince of Songkla University (2009) stating that the long-standing violence does not seem likely to end easily in the near future as there are a lot of teenagers who have been involved with the unrest. In support of this, Baka and Laeheem (2007) posit that some teenagers in the area have been involved in the unrest. In addition, some of the injured people are the teenagers. According to the statistics of people injured by the unrest, there were 1,631 injured people between 2007 – 2009 aged between 15-29 years old (Three Southernmost Health Development Administrative Center, 2009). The study of Baka and Laeheem (2007) also mentioned that the reasons for the teenagers getting involved in the unrest were because they may ask for more wage, may be deceived, or may receive wrong Islamic ideology.

5. Thai Malay Muslim students in Malaysia

The Southern Border Provinces Administration Center has set up a program which contain the information about Thai students who study abroad. The database contains: 1) the information regarding Thai students who go to study abroad, 2) the information of the study who are studying abroad, and 3) the information of alumni. This database shows that there are 4,788 students who went to study in 17 countries. Most of them study in Egypt where there were 2,268 students, followed by Malaysia where there were 220 students. Indonesia was found to be among the top three where there were 602 students. Additionally, the database revealed that there were only four students who study in Japan. However, checking the number of Thai students who went to study abroad seems to be problematic as there are no prominent government agencies responsible for scrutinizing, collecting and analyzing the data regarding the students who went to study abroad. The number of the students are shown according to the table below.

Table 1: The statistics of Thai students in Malaysia between 2002-2009

Universities	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Public	22,827	25,158	25,193	33,903	36,449	33,131	49,916	65,525
Private	5,045	5,239	5,735	6,622	7,941	12,419	20,343	24,225
Total	27,872	30,397	31,671	40,525	44,390	45,550	70,259	80,750

The above table showed that the number of the Thai students in Malaysia, from the three southern border provinces has increased from 881 in the year 2003 to 1,725 in the year 2010. The increase in the number of the students in Malaysia led to the establishment of the Thai Students Association in Malaysia (TSAM) on 23rd January 2010. The objectives of this establishment are to strengthen the relationship among the Thai students in Malaysia and to be center for coordinating Thai students' affairs in Malaysia (TSAM, 2010, cited in Chanarnupap, et. Al., 2018).

According to Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2011, cited in Chanarnupap, et. Al., 2018, the number of Thai students studying in Malaysia had increased between 2003-2010 as the table below.

Table 2: The number of Thai students in Malaysia between 2003-2010

Universities	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Public	457	360	493	464	719	803	809	786
Private	406	475	501	480	429	661	870	939
Total	881	835	994	944	1,148	1,464	1,679	1,725

Table 3: the University's names that have been registered with TSAM

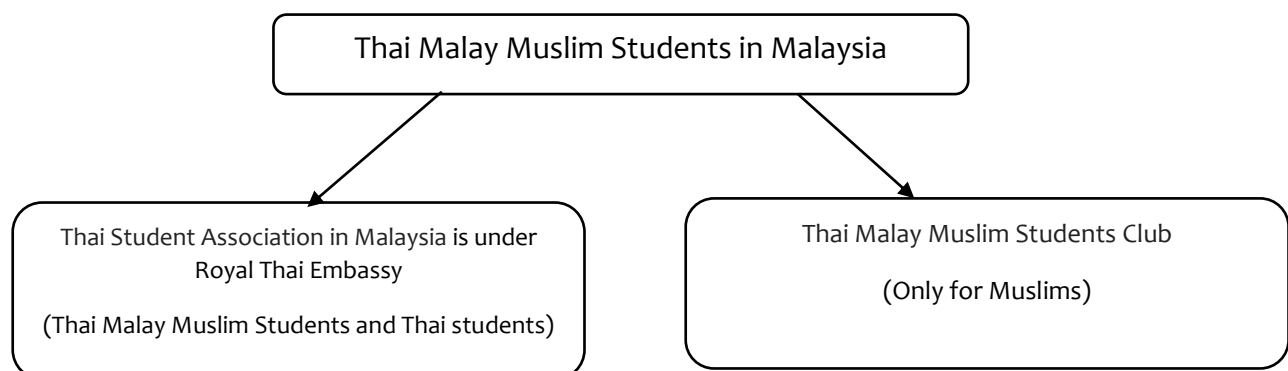
Universities' Names	The Universities' Location
1. Multimedia University (MMU)	Central Malaysia
2. International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)	
3. University Malaya (UM)	
4. Kolej University Poly-Tech MARA (KUPTM)	
5. University Putra Malaysia (UPM)	
6. Al-Madinah International University (MEDIU)	
7. Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation (APU)	

8. University kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) 9. Kolej University Islam Antarabangsa Salangor (KUIS) 10. University Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) 11. University Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) 12. University Sultan Azlan Shah (USAS) 13. University Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR)	
14. University Sains Malaysia (USM) 15. University Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP) 16. Kolej University Insaniah (KUIN) 17. University Utara Malaysia (UUM)	Northern Malaysia
18. University Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) 19. University Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) 20. Kolej Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Ismaik Petra (KIAS) 21. University Malaysia Kalantan (UMK)	Eastern Malaysia

6. Conclusion

6.1 Malayness in Malaysia: Thai Malay Muslim youth adaptation

A preliminary study has interviewed 10 Thai Malay Muslim students in Malaysia who studied at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). Most of them were from the three southern border provinces of Thailand. The results of this study were as follows:



6.2 Associating and disassociating between Malay Muslim students and Thai Malay Muslim students

Before 2005, the distinction between Malay Muslim Students and Thai Malay Muslim Student Club was not clearly defined. However, presently, the association of Thai Malay Muslim students means Thai Malay Muslim students who went to study in Malaysia and who always gathered after Friday prayer. The place where they gathered was in the mosque of IIUM.

Between 2005-2006, after the start of the unrest in the deep south of Thailand, the Thai Malay Muslim students in Malaysia divided into two groups. In 2010, the Thai Malay Muslim Students Club was disassociated, and divided into two clubs. This means there were then two clubs one of which was composed of Malay Muslim Students whose advisers are PhD students at IIUM, which is not under Royal Thai Embassy and the other was composed of Thai Malay Muslim Students Club whose advisers are some IIUM lecturers, which is under the Royal Thai Embassy. The assembling point of the two was still in the mosque; however, it was at different places.

6.3 Malayness of Thai Malay students in Malaysia

When the Thai Malay Muslim students who study at IIUM graduated and came back to Thailand, they seemed to be more tolerant than those who graduated in the three southern border provinces of

Thailand or in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the Thai Malay Muslim students who graduated from IIUM have the same religious understanding compared to those who graduated from Thailand as well as Saudi Arabia. Finally, they seem to have more compromise than those who graduated in Thailand or Saudi Arabia.

With regards to Malayness, the Thai Malay Muslim students showed more Malayness than Thainess throughout their time in Malaysia. This can be assumed that one reason why they showed more Malayness than Thainess may be because the Thai Malay Muslim students' Malayness is similar to that of Klantan Malayness in regard to lifestyle, language, food, etc. However, the Thai Malay Muslim students seemed to try to seek for the true 'Malaysian Malayness', through which they strove to dress in Malay styles that they have never tried when they were in Thailand. Apart from this, they also tried to seek for 'Malayness' through activities and emulated Malaysian Malayness.

During Ramadan, the Thai Malay Muslim students who are under Royal Thai Embassy would break their fast together. Mostly, they ordered food from Thai restaurants. However, the Malay Muslim students who are not under the Royal Thai Embassy did not break their fast together with the previous ones because they perceived that the budget used for breaking the fast might come from the Thai government. Normally, this group of students would do activities separately from the previous groups. They seemed to resist any support from the Royal Thai Embassy. Another notable sign of this resistance is the conservation of the Pattani Malay dialect and cultures through which they organize activities refusing to the Thai language. What is more, the Malay Muslim student club has attempted to persuade some students from the Thai Malay Muslim club for the ultimate purpose of preventing them to join activities through where the Thai language is used. In addition, the Malay Muslim student club also organizes several other activities such as Anasheed (Islamic singing) and religious sermons during which the only Malay language is used. Additionally, the club has got many networks with other universities across Malaysia.

From the fieldwork data, the study notably revealed that the most prominent Malayness of the Thai Muslims in Malaysia is running Tomyam restaurants, which function as the symbol of the Thai Malay Muslims in Malaysia.

Malayness in the context of the three southern border provinces of Thailand seemed to be mingled and similar to that of Kelantan in terms of linguistic accent. In terms of the culture, that of the three provinces context seemed similar to that of Kelantan. Once the people who are from the three provinces are in Malaysia, Malaysians see them as Kelantan people, not the people of the three provinces.

In regard to Kelantan state, Kelantan's Malayness may be seen differently from that of other Malaysians, Malaysians would see it as one state of Malaysia. The same can be said to the people who live in the three provinces of Thailand whose lineage contrasts that of other Thais. In relation to this, even though Thais who live in Malaysia are seen as 'the people of the other side, Malaysians', they are still Thais.

From the above-mentioned issues, it can be concluded that conserving Malayness means that the Thai language is not used doing activities and the Malay Muslim students studying in Malaysia put on the Malay style dress.

An important issue that can be researched is that Malayu identity may be created identity, not an original one. This is the debatable issue discussed in an article written by Shamsul A. B. (2004) whose title is 'A History of an Identity, an Identity of a History: The Idea and Practice of Malayness in Malaysia'.

6.4 'ASEAN Community' Life (Is) Changed

It may be obvious that planning and going to study abroad may not be easy. This means that once a student decides to further his/her study abroad, he or she may encounter many forms of obstacles. With regard to the Thai Malay Muslim students, an obstacle that most of them have encountered is the VISA process. That is to say, prior to the formation of the ASEAN Community, they were entitled to stay in Malaysia for 30 days while waiting for the VISA which took only two weeks to complete and its fee was just 700 baht. However, once ASEAN Community came into effect, they were not allowed to stay in Malaysia for 30 days. In addition, their VISA process needed to be completed before travelling to study in Malaysia. They were required to pay 10,000 baht for the VISA fee (the actual fee is only 2,000 baht). Participants of this study hypothesized that the reason for the lengthy

and costly VISA process may be because Malaysia and Singapore are not willing to join in the ASEAN Community in which people of each country can freely cross the border. These countries are afraid of possible crime, human trafficking, and drug problems.

6.5 Does the unrest in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand change their life?

After the unrest has occurred in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand, the study found that the students who want to travel to study in Malaysia have not faced any problems at Thai immigration checkpoints. This may be because of the fact that Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center gathered the information regarding the students who study abroad and shared it with Thai Immigration Office. Thus, it may be not necessary for the Office to question the students who need to travel to Malaysia for their study. However, the majority of the students have faced some problems at Malaysian immigration checkpoints. The study disclosed that the students, especially those from the three provinces, are asked questions. For example, what is happening in the three provinces? Or how is the situation in the three provinces? Once they arrived at the university where they were going to study, some of the Malaysians asked them about the unrest in the three provinces of Thailand. The students tried to reply them in a positive way. For instance, the situation is not as bad as seen in the news where it is often exaggerated. In the event that there were some Malaysian friends who really want to know more about the unrest, they tried to explain that the incentive behind the unrest may be because the majority of people in the deep south feel that Thai government has limited their rights.

In the perspectives of the majority of the students from many countries, they thought that Thailand is the Buddhist country where people can only speak the Thai language. Some Malaysians were astonished that most of the Thai Malay Muslim students could speak Malay language. Some Turkish students who come to study in Malaysia give Thai Malay Muslim students a special recognition, because they held that the three southern border provinces of Thailand were like Palestine where a lot of Muslims are affected by the unrest and are in need. Therefore, these Turkish students have tried to narrate and tell their compatriots about this that the Muslim people in the three provinces are in need and affected by the unrest. As a result, they may feel duty bound to help these Muslims in the three provinces.

6.6 Survival for success

Regarding adaptation to the Malaysian context, Thai Malay Muslim students need to deal with two main issues. First of all, they are faced with challenges in relation to both Malay and English languages. As for the Malay language, the dialect that the Thai Malay Muslim students used in the three provinces of Thailand is slightly different from that is used in Malaysia in terms of an accent and some vocabulary. Therefore, it took them one or two semesters to get established with the dialect differences. Furthermore, when learning the English language, the students faced difficulties as they seemed to stick with the way they learned in Thailand, which always focused on grammar. Based on these difficulties, the study found that some of the students are, unfortunately, found to have dropped out of their study program due to having poor English skills in spite of the fact that they have spent on studying English for two years before entering to the university level. Hence, the students needed to study hard and be curious in learning the language. Moreover, one more thing that the students needed to adapt is about food. As the taste of the Malaysians food is different from Thai one, this resulted in the fact that some of the students needed to bring some food with them to Malaysia.

Thus, the study showed that there are some interesting considerations that Thai Malay Muslim students who need to further their study in Malaysia to be prepared. The first one is that they need to be prepared financially as it is one of the most important factors for surviving and living life abroad. Most importantly, as the tuition fees of many Malaysian universities are very high, all students regardless of whether they acquired scholarship need to be aware of this. Another consideration is the grade of their previous educational degree. As Malaysia has got a very high educational standard, the students who desire to study in Malaysia need to have at least 3.00 GPAX. The final consideration is that these students need to have a good educational background. Namely, as mentioned earlier Malaysian educational system is different from that of Thailand. After Malaysian students finish Grade 11, they go through pre-university preparation for either one or two years. This shows the strategies for being a

good university student and having good language skills are inculcated into Malaysian students so that they are prepared for the university life. It can be noted that the Malaysian educational system is very clear with screening students before they study in the university level. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Thai Malay Muslim students need to prepare several things in order to adapt themselves more easily with the new environments.

6.7 Reflective analysis

With regard to life space adaptation of Thai Malay Muslim students, this study showed that students are required to adapt and assimilate themselves into the Malaysian context (Malayness in Malaysia). Importantly, the students need to make preparations for living their lives abroad successfully. This does not only include language preparation or identity maintenance, but they also need to be prepared for improving themselves through the Malaysian educational system in order to develop themselves so that they can be ready to return to Thailand and develop their own communities.

This study also revealed that there were some Thai Malay Muslim students who went to study in Malaysia and could not able to adapt themselves to Malayness in the Malaysian context. This can be illustrated by the fact that they have tried to maintain the Malayness of the three southernmost provinces by means of sticking together only with their friends who were also from the three provinces of Thailand, without befriending other students who are from different places. Moreover, they tended to use the Malay language rather than speaking other languages. Even some Malaysian students may realize that they tried not to involve and befriend these students. Nevertheless, there were some Thai Malay Muslim students who could adapt themselves to the Malaysian Malayness. Notably this may indicate that they were highly likely to succeed in their study comparing to those who just stuck together with their particular groups of friends. Also, these groups of students were reported to play a vital role in leading and organizing student activities in Malaysia.

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