Women, Violence, and Gender Dynamics during and after the Five Patani-Siam Wars, 1785–1838

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This article examines five wars that occurred on the Malay-Thai Peninsula in the period 1785–1838 and the deep impact they had upon women's lives during and after the conflicts. Constituting the majority of surviving refugees, women rebuilt their lives in the wake of war through business and trade in Malaya, as Islamic teachers in Mecca and Southeast Asia, and as servants and slaves in Bangkok. In each of these settings, women encountered new forms of agency and newfound challenges, shifting cultural values that regulated decisions and actions, and evolving perceptions of the qualifications for leadership. Focused upon the political demise of the Patani Sultanate, a state with a long history of female rule, this study is of particular relevance to scholarly debates concerning women in contemporary warfare because of its transnational focus with keen attention to women in a variety of Islamic spaces and contexts, its aim of dispelling the pervasive notion of Muslim women as lacking agency, and as a point of comparison for the present armed conflict still raging in Southern Thailand that has claimed more than five thousand and continues to impact women and gender dynamics in the region.

Keywords: Muslim women, Southern Thailand, women in war, social movements, post-war society

"The Siamese General is extirpating Pattany all the men Children and old women he orders to be Tied and thrown upon the grounds and there Trampled to Death by Elephants."——Captain Sir Francis Light, at Penang, 12 September 1786.[1]

What happened to Patani's young women?[2] Captain Light, the East India Company agent who founded British interests at Penang, off the west coast of Malaya, left us with this single, cryptic passage in the initial report he filed to the governor-general in Calcutta. Other sources suggest that the fall of Patani in 1786 and the four subsequent wars were not only a political denouement for the Patani Sultanate, but also marked a watershed for shifts in gender dynamics within the displaced and scattered Patani communities wherever they resettled, from Mecca and Bangkok to northern Malaya and back in Patani

itself (see Map 1). The generation that survived the fall of Patani in 1786 underwent profound changes to their family structures, domestic environments, gender roles, economic agency, and body politics, much like what their descendants would again experience in 1832.

In this article, I trace the gendered outcomes of participants in the five wars between Patani and Siam (today Thailand) that occurred between 1785 and 1838. I then compare the fates of people in mobile communities who followed varied trajectories: those who returned to Patani; refugees who permanently settled in either the northern Malay states or in Mecca; and those who were captured and enslaved; while focusing on changing familial spaces, sexual violence, and gendered leadership. Ultimately, many of the gender dynamics discussed in this article continued to have a deep impact well into the twentieth century as the region experienced three additional periods of protracted violence in the post–World War II period. The most recent conflict claimed over five thousand lives and affected countless others.

Despite the many conflicts between Patani and Siam, there has been remarkably little scholarship on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history of the region. This is largely due to the paucity of primary sources available. The few that are available to illuminate the history of the region may be split into four categories. First, there are bilingual Malay Islamic manuscripts, composed in Arabic and Malay languages, with the latter appearing in Jawi script, primarily composed in Mecca from 1809 onwards, inspired by the prolific scholar and translator of Patani origins, Shaykh Dā'ūd bin 'Abd Allāh al-Faṭānī (1769–1847) and his students. These manuscripts, while often not addressing gender issues directly, bear considerable context for the shifting gender dynamics embedded in the rise and distribution of textualised Islam via vast knowledge networks.

All other sources were written by Europeans, primarily British colonial officials stationed in the Malay states who, while blind to their own violence, often made note of the devastation Siam enacted upon Patani during the wars. Many of the reports were originally internal communications, but some also appeared in Singapore newspapers by the 1830s. British and American travellers also sometimes made cursory notice of political events on the peninsula that also shed some light upon gendered developments in the period. Finally, the Dutch colonial anthropologist Snouck Hurgronje, who disguised himself and dwelled in Mecca in the 1880s, offers a problematic yet insightful view of the city and its people and environs. I have carried out close readings of the available sources to posit my deductive and speculative arguments about the evolution of Patani gender dynamics.

One of the first scholars to address "Thai-Malay" relations, Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, placed Patani within the context of broader trends in the evolving political order of the peninsula as it played out between Siam and the numerous Malay states. While the author has keen insights into Siam's political intrigue in the region, she balks at illuminating the most contentious of all cases, that of Patani, characterising the period of wars merely as a "failure of tributary relations."[3] In a more recent article, Marc Askew analyses the effects of Siam's invasion of Vientiane in 1827–28, providing a comparative case of urban destruction and mass deportation.[4]

In terms of gender, one recent scholar analysed the reigns of Patani's female rajas, who ruled for most of the period 1584–1718, arguing that the institutionalisation of female rule was not only viewed as internally beneficial, but also provided a model of successful female governance for other Southeast Asian polities that adopted a similar practice, such as Aceh in north Sumatra.[5] Another ground-breaking study analyses gender dynamics in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Malay literature, drawn from regions spanning the peninsula. Scholar Mulaika Hijjas notes how heroines in such tales often took on masculine roles and how, at times, heroes adopted feminine roles or sensibilities, especially during depictions of wartime.[6] Though at times women were explicitly discouraged from fighting on the field of battle, there were many instances of women not only displaying battle prowess, but achieving victory over their enemies. Hijjas's account provides a glimpse at the social and cultural values displayed in literature from the period, even if the tales she analyses were not intended to display actual historical events of the time. Building upon Hijjas's study, the present article illustrates how women's lives changed during the same period that the social and cultural landscape for Patani changed so dramatically due to war, displacement, and enslavement.

The study of Islam in Patani has a dominant place in its historiography, though rarely through the explicit lens of gender. Virginia Matheson and M. B. Hooker's seminal article provides a preliminary sketch of some of Patani's legacy as an educational centre and the distribution point for some Islamic texts authored by Patani and Patani diaspora scholars.[7] Hasan Madmarn's book also detailed some of the key *pondok* (Islamic schools), madrasah, and the legacy of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Patani ulama (*'ulamā*) in the post–World War II period.[8] Additional studies, mostly in Malay, have focused on individual Patani scholars or texts.[9] My book *Forging Islamic Power and Place* put forward the argument that the rise of handwritten Islamic texts and their transmission in the nineteenth century vaulted ulama into positions as arbiters of social and cultural prestige in Patani and within diaspora communities in Malaya.[10] Though I did not address these transformations through the lens of gender, inherent in my study was the argument that the social position of men benefitted tremendously from the surge of textual Islam.

Mobility had a transformative power, as my colleagues have shown in the other papers in this special issue. To move was to change and evolve, to gain a different perspective on lives and places that had at certain times been more static. Patani was an unusual case in that it was not fighting for its survival against a European colonial regime, but rather against its old adversary Siam. Nevertheless, my colleagues Joshua Gedacht and David Kloos have drawn interesting parallels in their study of Dutch attempts to integrate Aceh into their imperial schemes in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[11] Meanwhile, Chiara Formichi and Amrita Malhi have demonstrated that Muslim separatists and insurgents employed vast networks to inform and strengthen their positions in the colonial and postcolonial eras.[12] After all, it was the network that gave the displaced meaning, community, and varying degrees of transformative power.

In this article, I examine gender dynamics on two levels: as a direct result of the wars, and in how people reconstituted their lives, often in new social or cultural environments.

In so doing, I pose this question: how did gender play a role in the outcome of punishment, enslavement, and dislocation? What spaces did women come to inhabit in postwar periods and what possibilities were there for autonomy and self-regulation in those domains? How did female-regulated spaces differ across the divergent geographies of the displaced? And finally, how did women's relationships with each other and with husbands, children, and broader society shift in the aftermath of war?

Background

Patani and Siam (today Thailand) had a long history of prior conflict that serves as a background to the events of 1786. Siam's predecessor state, Ayutthaya, centred on the Chao Phraya river valley, had the upper hand as it extended its political influence down the Malay-Thai Peninsula to Patani and the other Malay-speaking sultanates. The result was that the Patani Sultanate was begrudgingly forced into tributary status with Ayutthaya as early as the sixteenth century. In 1767 the region was thrown into political disarray by the Burmese invasion and destruction of Ayutthaya, and the rules of warfare in mainland Southeast Asia changed. The scale of violence increased, made possible by the importation of better-constructed, more efficient, and readily available European firearms. One historian has estimated that via wartime death, deportation, famine, and massacre of captives, the populations of southern Burma and northern Siam decreased by as much as 17 percent in the period 1770–84.[13] As Ayutthaya was reconstituted as Siam in the 1780s, its leaders were desperate to bring order to the territories they had lost to the Burmese and to regain lordship over their former tributaries. While they devised new strategies against the Burmese, Siam's king and leading generals resorted to unprecedented tactics against their former tributaries, some of which, such as Patani, had not obediently complied with Siam's demands since the rise of Burma's military might. In 1784 Siam's armies, having vanquished a Burmese garrison at Nakhon Si Thammarat in the central peninsula, pushed farther south.[14]

The Patani-Siam Wars, 1785–1838

A brief account of the five Patani-Siam wars will outline the key political events that resulted in dislocation, refugees, and mass enslavement. Patani and Siam fought five wars during the period, some erupting into large-scale conflicts, others merely abortive uprisings. The first of these, in 1785–86, was the most devastating and established Siam's definitive upper hand through the succeeding four wars. Through a year-long siege with battles occurring both at principle forts and eventually converging upon Patani's royal palace, Siam broke the back of the sultanate's military strength. The victorious army slew the reigning sultan, destroyed every remnant of the palace, and burned the city to the ground. Siam's army also captured a portion of the defeated population, while driving the remainder south through the jungle into the neighbouring states and beyond.

Some survivors of the first war attempted an abortive uprising in 1789 that was joined by a contingent from Mecca that added *'ulamā* (Islamic scholars) and the call for jihad to

the milieu of leadership and political purpose.[15] But the movement possessed neither cohesion nor a sound military strategy and thus the second war came to a close within three years. Not until 1808 were the political leaders again able to come together in revolt against Siam and they again faced defeat. In the aftermath, Siam's imperial government adopted a divide-and-conquer strategy by separating the region into seven principalities whose leaders each reported to a regional Siamese governor.

Four of Patani's seven regional rulers rose again in revolt in 1831–2, mounting the most sustained fight against Siam since the first war. Nevertheless, Siam eventually prevailed with a result similar to 1786: the city and its environs devastated, thousands of captives destined for slavery in Bangkok, and an additional wave of refugees forced to resettle in neighbouring Malay states or Mecca. A final attempt to repel Siamese dominance came in 1838, but the last of the five wars never gained enough momentum or support to develop beyond an abortive uprising and was soon defeated. Thus by the close of the 1830s, Siam had secured political domination over the region of the former Patani Sultanate that would be followed by a century of restless peace.

The breaking of Patani's political leadership had profound effects upon systems of patronage, kinship ties, and moral authority. The process undermined the legitimacy of remaining political leaders as protectors of the Patani population and redefined the importance and potency of that patronage. The population would ultimately seek explanations for this existential crisis and many would find them in Islam and the rise of *'ulamā* as custodians of moral authority in Patani society.

Tales of Tumult: The Experiences of Refugees

Patani had experienced periods of extended and active female rule between 1584 and 1718, but men had inhabited these posts in the decades since. The conditions of constant internal political feuding that had erupted after Siam laid waste to Patani in 1689–94 seemed to favour men, due to the fact that personal martial prowess had become a more significant factor in a ruler's success and survival than in previous times.[16] Indeed, Light noted that "Patany [is] . . . governed by several Chiefs who are frequently at War with each other but join against a foreign Enemy."[17] The four thousand soldiers Patani stationed at its impressive fort at Pujut, for example, were all men and comprised significant portions of the overall casualties.[18] Women comprised a majority of survivors, both as refugees as well as captives reserved for enslavement.[19] Displacement—an enduring act of violence—was nevertheless the preferred fate for many survivors. In the aftermath of the fall of Patani in 1786, thousands of displaced people fled south into the neighbouring sultanates of Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu because Siam had razed the city of Patani to the ground and destroyed rice stores, agricultural land, and venerable fruit trees.[20] With Siam's army only days away, however, the rulers of the three polities were loath to offer asylum to the masses that clamoured towards their capitals. The rajas of Trengganu and Kedah, for example, sent immediate appeals to the British for military assistance, the latter stating that the Siamese general had sent him "strict injunctions not to succour" the Patani refugees.[21] More than a thousand

refugees arrived in Kedah alone, suggesting that others had fled down the east coast into Kelantan and Trengganu, where terrain and familial connections allowed for the passage of people more easily.[22] Besides integrating themselves into the cities and towns of the east coast, some refugees founded new settlements under the lordship of the local sultans.[23]

Captain Light most likely based his reports on the stories that survivors bore upon their lips in the marketplaces and mosques of Kedah. The fate for many was dire, as Light wrote: "The Siamese have conquered Pattany, such of the People as have escaped their Sword, are Perishing in the Forests, the King of Queda [Kedah] being afraid to grant them admittance into any Part of his Country."[24] Despite pleas from the leaders of the refugees and the *laksamana* (general) of Kedah, Light forbid the settlement of any refugees near his post on Penang. Death from starvation awaited many of the displaced—a majority of whom were women—across the northern Malay states where they resettled.

Not all refugees met such a fate. Some resettled in peaceful environs and rebuilt their lives. Though the vast majority of refugees settled in the northern Malay states, Mecca provided a new home for a small number of people, many of whom later became influential *'ulamā*.[25] The earliest Patani refugees to reach Islam's holy city arrived around 1787, but subsequent wars issued additional waves of refugees-turned-pilgrims who managed to afford the expensive and arduous journey to Arabia.[26] Unlike annual pilgrims from Southeast Asia during the time period, who were largely or exclusively men, the Patani migrants included entire families and certainly included significant numbers, if not an outright majority, of women. The mobility of these people naturally afforded women both opportunities as well as strictures. In Mecca, women attended lectures given by prominent teachers at *masjid al-ḥarām,* such as the Ḥadhramī Shaykh Saʿīd Bā Bisīl, who on Friday mornings offered moral tales and sayings of religious import and on other days gave more extensive afternoon sermons on aspects of faith or religious practice to exclusively female audiences.[27]

Available primary sources suggest that familial environments in Mecca remained fluid. Marriage for Patani women in Mecca fell under existing traditions of Arab-Islamic law, where divorce was neither uncommon nor difficult to obtain.[28] Furthermore, if Meccan customs were any indication of the social environment that Patani women encountered in the city, women possessed the autonomy to forge woman-centred social spaces and friendships. The *rumah Patani* (Patani house), a boarding house for visiting scholars and pilgrims, was an all-male environment, but women no doubt had their own dwellings or lived as part of a family house.[29] While women often hosted evening parties exclusively for other women, the most public example of such community was the festival in honour of Shaykh Maḥmud, a revered Sufi saint, held annually on the fifteenth day of the sixth month, Jumādā al-Ākhira.[30] The custom honoured the son of a figure much revered by Southeast Asian Muslims, so one might assume that at least some Patani women would have taken part in the rituals and festivities. Participants spent considerable time in all-female environments, first in rented rooms or houses and later at the tomb of the shaykh. Women exchanged gifts such as coffee, black or green tea, or tobacco, the last of which they consumed, at leisure,

using hookahs. In the evenings, women enjoyed banquets of food while being enter-
tained by singers and drummers, who were also mostly or exclusively women. While
for many women the festival represented an intensification of platonic social bonds,
men often viewed it with nervous suspicion because the event was one regulated, for
the most part, by women themselves. The disguised Dutchman Snouck Hurgronje
even claimed that the festival provided a space for amorous relations between two
women or between women and men outside the bounds of marriage, though to what
extent these reports were drummed up by Orientalist fantasy is unclear. At the very
least, we may conclude that autonomous social spaces forged by women in Mecca played
an important role in how Patani migrants conducted their lives and how they integrated
themselves into a rapidly changing, cosmopolitan city.

In other zones where Patani's displaced settled, they dwelled in more familiar cultural
contexts, though ones undergoing religious reform. Nevertheless, given the dispropor-
tionately high rate of male deaths in war, there must have been a number of widowed
or single women in these communities. As early as the 1810s, a new text authored by
an influential Patani shaykh in Mecca, Dā'ūd bin 'Abd Allāh al-Faṭānī, outlining proper
marriage practices according to the Shāfi'ī school of law, appeared in displaced Patani
communities on the peninsula, directed at reformulating both family structures and gen-
der roles.[31] The author asserted authority over the "law and rule of marriage," and out-
lined "the right way of marriage."[32] While we cannot gauge the book's immediate
impact, the continued popularity of the book in *pondok* (Islamic schools) and within
scholarly communities suggests that the text was critical to informing evolving dis-
courses on marriage and family life, with women being central to the debates.

Increasingly through the course of the nineteenth century, *'ulamā* came to inform
these debates through their writings and increased social visibility as community leaders
and teachers. Thus women's bodies, daily lives, and social decisions became key points
of contest within the emerging cultural discourse, increasingly informed by textualised
Islam, over the century following.

War Captives and Enslavement

Those who were not fortunate enough to flee from the five Patani-Siam wars were
claimed as booty. As indicated in numerous sources, women comprised the vast majority
of war captives. These captives, which Anthony Reid and other scholars of Southeast
Asian warfare have argued were the most valued spoils of wars in the region, were gen-
erally taken back to the capitals of the victorious.[33] Unfortunately we know virtually
nothing of the fate of the captives of 1786 other than that the survivors and their descen-
dants comprised a significant portion of the slaves still residing in Bangkok in the 1820s.
British diplomat John Crawfurd mentioned them during his mission in 1828: "Besides
the Malays living in their own countries, there are said to be at Bangkok not less than
ten thousand, chiefly captives, carried off from Queda and Patani, but especially from
the latter."[34] One oral tradition states that in the aftermath of 1786, the captives were
placed in chains and marched up the peninsula to Thonburi, across the river from

what was just then emerging as Bangkok. Some, however, likely went by boat, seeing as Siam's admirals commanded a navy that had taken part in the assault.

Sources for the fourth war, in 1831–32, are more abundant and give us a clearer picture of the fate of war captives. Women clearly comprised a majority, as one British company agent, J. H. Moor, an eyewitness to the slave ships arriving in Bangkok, noted, "The number of Malay slaves [from Patani] brought up here, within the last six weeks, will amount to between 4,200 and 5,000 souls, consisting principally of . . . women and numbers of young children and only a very few able-bodied men."[35] The observer rationalised the slave demographics by adding, "Those . . . who were able to run, made their escape and left the old, sickly and very young to the mercy of the . . . Siamese invaders."

Many of the captives did not survive long. The two-week sea passage alone spelled death for many due to the confines of the ships. Moor wrote:

> The captives were thrust by hundreds into the filthy holds of the junks, which were totally incapable of containing so many, and in most instances, the wretched beings were obliged to trample or lay on each other, by which numbers of them perished![36]

In the holds of the slave ships, deadly diseases festered and spread rapidly due to unhygienic conditions, weakened immune systems, and close quarters. When the captives arrived at Bangkok, "one fourth were covered with the small pox," leading to a quick and certain death.[37] Some captives developed other ailments:

> Most of the Malays [of Patani] had immense large ulcers about their feet or legs and the stench from them alone was enough to breed a plague. Besides that, they were all swarming with lice and covered with the itch and to wind up all, had sore eyes.[38]

By Moor's estimates, disease killed at least 25 percent of the captives outright and afflicted many more with conditions that would plague them in the years that followed.

Those captives who survived ended up working the rest of their days in a variety of capacities, such as slaves on rice fields, as domestic servants or concubines, or as labourers gifted by rulers and noblemen to a particular Buddhist *wat* (temple).[39] As one travelling missionary in the region remarked, the war captives "were distributed to the principal families in Bangkok as slaves."[40] To ensure that slaves could be easily recognised, a tattoo was often placed upon their arms, marking them as the property of a particular person or family.[41] Records however do not tell of their living conditions, if any achieved freedom, or whether any returned to their homes in Patani. It is clear, however, that many of the captives became permanent residents of Bangkok, leaving behind descendants who still live in the city today, though the memory of their origin remains.[42] Communication between the descendants of the slaves in Bangkok and their kin in Patani continued, if intermittently. In 1873, for example, a Muslim from Patani made the trek to Siam's capital, distributing religious books and calling his wayward kin to renew their faith by embarking upon the hajj to Mecca.[43] Another figure who grew up in the post-slavery community in Bangkok heeded his advice and embarked for Mecca, where he reconnected with his Patani kin, as well as other Malay-speakers, as he studied a variety of Islamic doctrines.[44] Though men were the ones who left written

record of such scholarly involvement, women commonly joined their husbands, parents, and children on such journeys and engaged in study of their own.

War captives, a majority of whom were women, clearly faced a diverse array of fates. Many slaves were cast into social and cultural isolation as servants in households either in Bangkok or further north and disappear from the record. Over time, as was the general case in Southeast Asian slave systems, some of the captives, or their descendants, gained freedom from bondage and came to constitute a diasporan community in Bangkok that survives to the present day. Clearly many, after decades or generations in captivity, chose to make Bangkok their home, though some returned even in very recent times.

Shifting Familial Spaces

Among the various outcomes for Patani's people during and after the wars, the family unit experienced profound changes. The disproportionately high rates of male casualties meant that many women were left to reconstruct their family once the wars were over. This was no simple task. In many cases, families had become scattered or divided, often over vast distances, or else the fate of children, siblings, or spouses remained unknown. Spatial displacement added to the social disorientation of the survivors. After the 1808 war, for example, approximately four hundred families identified as affiliated with the participants in the uprising were forcibly resettled at Nongchik and Yaring, two towns to the south of Patani.[45] With the confiscation or destruction of food stores being commonplace during wartime, famine laid waste to these surviving communities in the immediate aftermath of the war.[46] Furthermore, families had to wait a full season to harvest another crop of rice, which involved a great deal of manual labour, the digging of irrigation works and the organisation of a workforce to manage the fields. Given that men had traditionally been the farmers, hunters, and fishermen of the region, their absence no doubt forced women into those roles, while some maintained their position as the businesspeople in the markets.

Other types of environmental destruction contributed to the challenges survivors faced after the conclusion of wars during this period. After the 1831–32 war, for example, many families were left with no means of sustenance. As a way of thwarting enemy occupation, many inhabitants "set fire to their houses" before fleeing into the forests and jungles where they waited until the victorious army had finished plundering and returned to Bangkok, though the process could take weeks or even months.[47] As a means to prevent the populations from returning, the victorious army burned or cut down mango and other fruit trees.[48] Soldiers also confiscated all livestock they came across in conquered regions. The arable land, which had been "described as having been most beautiful and in good cultivation,"[49] now became "depopulated and desert."[50] Environmental warfare wrought such long-term effects upon the landscape that it took survivors a full generation or more to restore them to their former condition. Women, in particular, faced the challenges of rebuilding agricultural yields in the wake of war.

Famine naturally killed many of the inhabitants and likely claimed women in disproportionate numbers since many were without food stores, land, or husbands or other

family to help rebuild in war's aftermath. The effects upon the overall population were devastating. One British agent, James Low, estimated Patani's population to be sixty thousand in 1842, or one-third of its pre-1832 total.[51] Another British officer, T. J. Newbold, claimed that the urban population of Patani numbered only ten thousand, down from a pre-1832 total of ninety thousand, or a loss of 89 percent.[52] He added, "[Kedah and Patani] now contain little more than one-eighth of their former inhabitants and this remnant in a wretched state."

In other cases, captured families were deliberately divided and scattered when slaves were distributed in Bangkok. In these cases, Moor recorded:

> No regard was paid to the parental feelings of either the father or mother. I often saw the children taken away from their parents, altho' the father generally seemed quite *callous,* the poor mother used to set up such a howling, tearing her hair and begging and praying to be allowed to accompany her only child—but the more she cryed the more the Siamese clerks laughed at her![53]

The breaking of families has many historical parallels during slave distributions in Southeast Asia. During the Burmese conquering and enslavement of the Mon in the eighteenth century, for example, one Mon chronicler wrote, "Families were separated. The sons could not see their mothers, the mothers could not see their sons."[54] Another account, telling of an earlier Mon victory over the Burmese, stated simply, "mothers could not find their children, nor children their mothers. . . ."[55]

Patani families bore a deep impact from the wars. Some people merely had to deal with the social disorientation of relocation, whether into a hostile context or one more benign. Regardless of the location of their newfound homes, uprooted families struggled to survive, especially in a society where systems of patronage had no doubt been disrupted or severed entirely as a result of war.[56] The economic well-being of many declined as numerous families struggled merely to find enough food to eat. In other cases, families were scattered and siblings, spouses, or children never saw their kin again. Through this process, women had to adjust, working within newly defined spaces or in newfound roles within both family and broader society.

Sexual Violence

What types of sexual violence did the young women of Patani experience? Wartime rape as an object of historical inquiry is a recent phenomenon, but the preponderance of sexual violence in the twentieth century compels scholars of warfare in earlier periods to search for such evidence. Ibrahim Syukri, in his nationalist history of Patani, composed around 1950, levels charges of rape against Siamese soldiers during or after the 1831–32 war.[57] While it has been assumed that he relied upon oral histories or heretofore undiscovered written documents to inform some of his account, rape as a weapon of war in this period has not been corroborated by any other source. Given its intended political impact, Syukri's claims in this instance may have been an attempt to inspire young men of the postwar generation to take on leadership roles in the nationalist movement, while

simultaneously demarcating women's bodies as vulnerable, placed in the ward of aspiring young men who participated in the movement.

More recently, the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO), one of the underground political organisations advocating for independence or autonomy for the southern provinces of Thailand that once constituted the Patani Sultanate, has sounded a similar call on its own website. In a page with the heading "about Patani" under a subsection entitled, "Historical Background of Patani Case," it includes in its list of claims against Thailand that in the 1831–32 war, Siamese soldiers "raped their Muslim women."[58] PULO situates its claims within the context of intrusion and defilement: the end of Patani's political sovereignty, the degradation of Islam and of Muslim sacred spaces, and the destruction of homes and cities. Captain Light's quote with which I began the present article opens the door for our considerations, but provides us with no conclusive evidence. Even Moor, whose contempt for Siam's treatment of the war captives is clear, merely stated, "Of the captives, the women suffered most from their brutality, as neither infant youth, nor age were spared."[59] Not spared from what? Social conventions of the time would have prevented both men from elaborating further: to speak of sexual violence, even within an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century framework, would have been inappropriate for Light's report to British officials in Calcutta and certainly would not have been printed in Moor's article in the Singapore newspaper or even his broader account published in book form five years later. Unless heretofore unknown documents or other evidence arises, the question of the role of rape in the 1831–32 war will remain a matter of speculation.

Nevertheless, the women of Patani endured at least one enduring form of sexual violence: forced concubinage. It is unclear how many young women who were distributed as slaves became concubines for elite men of Bangkok. If Moor's scepticism about the captives' use as agricultural slaves is any indication of their role after capture, concubinage and domestic servitude seems a likely fate for a number of young Patani women.[60] Beyond some doubt, we may assume that even female domestic slaves in such circumstances, without any legal recourse, family, or other kindred support, dwelled in spaces where rape, de facto concubinage, and other forms of sexual violence were likely a part of their daily lives. Enslaved women thus lost a great deal of control over their reproductive processes: no choice of partner, sexual intercourse regardless of consent, and inevitable pregnancies must have become central features in the lives of many. What autonomy concubines were able to forge in these spaces, if any, remains unclear. Furthermore, on a societal level, the capturing of disproportionate numbers of women not only severed vital social bonds between spouses, siblings, and children, but also undercut Patani's ability to recover on a demographic scale.

Gender Leadership and Shifting Roles

As noted earlier, the shift away from direct female involvement in Patani's political apparatuses had begun in the early eighteenth century during a preceding period of warfare and internal conflict. The rise of valour and battle prowess as central to constructions

of Patani masculinity only increased during the period covered in this paper, a time when men of each succeeding generation fought or were directly affected by warfare and fighting. The fact that these became fused to the social values that emerged in the wake of war are evident in stories passed down telling of the feats of the participants.[61] Beneath this sheen, however, remained the uneasy tension created by repeated emasculation that accompanied each defeat: the loss of land, wives, and children that men had failed to protect.

Siam effectively subdued Patani's political leadership, appointing a Kelantanese prince to become raja of Patani in 1842. The old sultanate had been divided into seven small principalities following the 1808 war and remained politically disunited, giving way to local feuding. The old political order had been humbled and the political elites who remained had no choice but to accept a subservient position vis-à-vis Bangkok, a fact only reinforced by the two wars of the 1830s. An uneasy peace emerged from the 1840s onwards during which Patani's new rulers found themselves increasingly cramped for political agency.

As the prestige of the political order waned, a new form of leadership emerged, albeit gradually through the course of the nineteenth century. The *'ulamā* assumed an unprecedented position in Patani society both in the former sultanate's territories and within the displaced community. Many *'ulamā* spent time in Mecca studying Arabic language, Islamic law, Sufism, and ritual prayer and returned with texts and teachings with which to transform their fractured society.[62] The most successful of these figures established *pondok* throughout Patani and other parts of Malaya, gaining influential positions as teachers, preachers, scribes, and mystics.[63] Others joined and spread a variety of Sufi *ṭarīqa* (orders), including the Shaṭṭāriyya, Qādiriyya, and later, the Aḥmadiyya.[64] Both the *pondok* and the Sufi *ṭarīqa* were exclusively male institutions and the participants generally inhabited all-male spaces for extended periods of time. The division of dynamic segments of Patani's population along gender lines reinforced gender difference and advocated for new definitions of not only masculinities, but femininities as well. Some of the most prominent texts taught at the *pondok* addressed the laws governing marriage, the role of women in the family, and the proper method for distributing inheritance.[65] The resulting gender dynamics afforded both men and women new social opportunities in both work and family life, while applying strictures on social conduct, relationships, and social etiquette.

The surviving written sources left by *'ulamā* during the period, totalling nearly 1,400 manuscripts, were written exclusively by men and intended for a male audience. Together, these texts expanded greatly a social and cultural educational space in which men competed for positions of influence. Nevertheless, some evidence reveals clues about the new social spaces that women inhabited in the post-1838 period. Exclusively female networks and institutions of religious knowledge also existed, though primarily in oral form. Some women gained reputations as scholars or prominent reciters of the *Qur'ān,* for example, teaching mixed gender or exclusively female audiences.[66] Established reciters passed their expertise down to women of succeeding generations, thus maintaining an oral tradition that existed alongside the writings produced by men.

As part of their training, female scholars learned Arabic well enough to read and recite the *Qur'ān,* a tradition still thriving in recent times. In the 1950s, Thomas Fraser, in his study of the fishing town of Rusembilan, near Pattani, noted that "quite a few women can" read the *Qur'ān.*[67] He further elaborated:

> While it is not essential that girls receive this instruction, almost all of the girls at Rusembilan attend the sessions more or less regularly. This is probably due to the fact that there are a number of women there who have been to Mecca, who are respected for their religious knowledge and who take a fairly active part in the religious life of the community. One of these women is the Imam's wife. In 1956 she was in charge of Koran instruction for the village girls. . . .

Even if the Patani community was positioned on the forefront of the information gateway between Mecca and the peninsula in the nineteenth century, there is clear evidence of women playing a role in knowledge transmission in other nearby parts of Southeast Asia. For example, Abdullah Munsyi, in his well-known memoir, illustrates, in detail, that he learned to read the *Qur'ān* from his grandmother and that she ran a school that drew more than two hundred students—girls and boys—in Melaka in the early nineteenth century.[68] In Riau, Raja Ali Haji cautioned girls away from studying the *Qur'ān* with male teachers, implying that female teachers for such students were preferable. At Pulau Pinang, a British observer noted women who supported themselves by teaching in the 1850s.[69] In early twentieth-century Negeri Sembilan, there is evidence of male members of the aristocracy receiving their earliest *Qur'ān* instruction from female teachers.[70] Given the incredible intellectual output of male Patani scholars, we may assume that there was an upturn in female literacy in the region and through the displaced community as well. While there is no available data to assess literacy rates for the Patani community, we may note that the ratio of female to male literacy rates in nearby Riau was one to ten by the late nineteenth century, a much smaller gap than in Egypt or other parts of the Muslim Middle East.[71] The increasingly textualised form of Islam practised in the archipelago clearly had mixed blessings for women: while the process afforded men disproportionate social opportunities, women maintained their position as reciters and teachers of *Qur'ān,* while female literacy gradually increased.

Women retained an active or even dominant role in the marketplaces of Patani's cities and towns. European accounts often remark upon the preponderance of women as merchants throughout Southeast Asia in the early modern period.[72] In seventeenth-century Patani, women played a central role in commerce on all levels, from local and regional traders to *orangkaya* (elites), most notably the female rajas, who actively traded at the port as well as functioning as important moneylenders to local and foreign merchants working in the area.[73] One British observer noted in the 1880s that "a not inconsiderable portion of the town labour is left to the women, who may be seen plodding about a great part of the day with loads of various descriptions balanced on their heads."[74] Other trades, such as tin and lead mining, fishing, and collecting timber, three of the main industries of the nineteenth-century Patani economy, appear to have been primarily or exclusively male affairs. Nevertheless, as Fraser noted in the 1950s, it was the wives of fishermen who sold the fish and built a community with other people due to their

active role in the market, especially the biggest one generally held on Thursdays in Pattani city.[75] Such occasions served an even more important social function than the purely economic. Marketplaces, as female-dominated spaces in terms of numbers of people and activity level, were crucial spaces for the maintenance of women-centred segments of the community, despite or even due to the fact that they were competitive and contested environments.

Conclusion

The five Patani-Siam wars in the period 1785–1838 have generally been viewed as a watershed moment for the political history of the mid Malay-Thai Peninsula and turning point for relations between the two polities. As we can see, in terms of gender, the period demonstrates dramatic changes as well. On one level, the wars had profound effects upon the spatial geography of the community, creating a displaced or migrant community stretching from Bangkok to Mecca, though concentrated most heavily upon the northern Malay states. Each of these newly inhabited spaces possessed their own gender dynamics, some of which have been outlined in this article to the extent possible given the limitations of the available sources.

In the zone stretching from Kedah to Trengganu on the peninsula, women of the diaspora encountered cultural contexts more similar to their own than those who settled farther afield and thus faced different opportunities and strictures. While the prominence of women in the marketplace in many cities throughout the peninsula may have continued, the displaced of all genders faced the challenges of not possessing land or other resources necessary to be significant players in the economic arena. The avenue for social mobility most readily available to male members of the Patani community was the position of *'ulamā* or *pondok* teacher, one that became available primarily because of their ability to study in Mecca or with prestigious local teachers. Many men developed reputations as Islamic leaders because they had engaged on the hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca and had returned bearing texts containing teachings written in Malay. While women constructed their own knowledge networks, these were decidedly smaller, involving fewer individuals, and did not allow for women to achieve equivalent positions of social prestige or influence.

Captive women taken to Bangkok largely disappear from the historical record. Those who were forced into concubinage or worked as domestic servants have left us no evidence or voices of their own, despite the likelihood of them bearing descendants of mixed blood. Those who engaged in agricultural work, however, retained a space within their own communities despite the strictures applied to the movement and economic well-being of the entire slave population. Their descendants, even by the 1870s, had reconnected with Patani and various diasporan centres, allowing for cultural reinvigoration. Gedacht, in his essay, portrays comparative uses of capture and exile of Acehnese political figures in Java by Dutch officials that similarly uprooted and fractured the community.[76]

In Patani and its descendant Siamese provinces in the twentieth century, the shifts in gender dynamics of the nineteenth century continue to be seen. Men continued their

prominent position in politics, both within official Siamese-Thai apparatuses as well as within the various nationalist or independence-minded underground organisations. Men also commonly became religious leaders or educators. Women, if they could not establish an economic niche, often found employment as public or private school teachers or opened restaurants. Still, in tough economic times, Pattani produced generation after generation of diaspora, primarily going to Malaysia to find work or to Egypt or Mecca for education, if their family could fund the venture. Thus it became common for families to be scattered or divided across vast distances. In those contexts, women continued to forge autonomous spaces, to seek opportunities and build community within their adopted settings as well as with their families and friends back home.[77]

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Notes

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1 Light to GG, 12 Sep 1786, SSR 2: 318.

2 The spelling of Patani is a contentious poliTical issue. I have used the Malay transliteration in this article because it focuses on a period prior to the formal inclusion of the Patani Sultanate into Siam.

3 Kobkua, *Thai-Malay Relations,* 159–62.

4 Askew, "From Glory to Ruins," 43–72.

5 Amirell, "The Blessings and Perils of Female Rule," 303–23.

6 Hijjas, *Victorious Wives,* 121–30.

7 Matheson and Hooker, "Jawi Literature in Patani."

8 Madmarn, *The Pondok and Madrasah in Patani.*

9 Abdullah, *Syeikh* Daud *bin* Abdullah *al*-Fatani; Daud, *Tokoh-tokoh* vol. 1; Daud, *Tokoh-tokoh* vol. 2; al-Fatani, *Ulama Besar dari Patani*; Bradley, "Sheikh Da'ud al-Fatani's *Munyat al-Musalli.*"

10 Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and Place.*

11 Gedacht, "Exile, Mobility, and Re-territorialisation"; Kloos, "Dis/connection."

12 Formichi, "Displacing Political Islam in Indonesia"; Malhi, "Race, Space, and the Malayan Emergency."

13 Koenig, *The Burmese Polity,* 58–9.

14 James Scott to GG, 4 Sep 4 1786, SSR 2: 140.

15 Light to GG, 30 Jul 1792, SSR 5: 61–2.

16 Teeuw and Wyatt, *Hikayat Patani,* 2: 128–33.

17 Light to GG, 15 Feb 1786, SSR 2: 41.

18 Light, 12 Sep 1786: 312.

19 Light, 12 Sep 1786: 318; "Siam," *Singapore Chronicle,* 22 Nov 1832.

20 "Phongsawadan Muang Pattani," 1.

21 Light to GG, 25 Nov 1786, SSR 2: 410; Light to GG, 6 Oct 1787, SSR 3: 7–8.

22 Light, 25 Nov 1786: 412.

23 Talib, "The Port and Polity of Terengganu," 221.

24 Light, 25 Nov 1786: 410.

25 Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and Place,* 63–83, 100–37.

26 Al-Fatani, *Ulama Besar dari Patani,* 26.

27 Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century,* 200.

28 Ibid., 87–8.

29 MKI 513: 19.

30 Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka,* 48–9, 51.

31 MKI 75B, 105; PNM 161: 78v–78r; PNM 2014: 110.

32 Al-Faṭānī, *Īḍāḥ al-Bāb,* 2.

33 Reid, *Europe and Southeast Asia,* 1; Charney, *Southeast Asian Warfare,* 18.

34 Crawfurd, Journal of an Embassy, 449.

35 "Siam," *Singapore Chronicle,* 22 Nov 1832.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Malcolm, Travels in South-Eastern Asia, 106.

41 Moor, *Notices of the Indian Archipelago,* 201.

42 Scupin, "Thai Muslims in Bangkok."

43 PNM 2669A, 7r; PNM 2669B, 15v.

44 MKI 399: 43.

45 "Phongsawadan," 7.

46 Moor, *Notices of the Indian Archipelago,* 201; Malcolm, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia,* 106; Dodge, "Population Estimates," 439.

47 "Siam," *Singapore Chronicle,* 22 Nov 1832.

48 Moor, *Notices of the Indian Archipelago,* 201; "Siam," *Singapore Chronicle,* 22 Nov 1832.

49 "Siam," *Singapore Chronicle,* 22 Nov 1832.

50 Malcolm, *Travels in South-Eastern Asia,* 106.

51 Report of James Low, "A Retrospect of British Policy in the Straits of Mallacca from the Period of the First Establishment of Penang on the 17th of July 1786 up to April 1842, Combining Historical Details Respecting the Straits Settlements and the Neighbouring Native States," CO 273/1: 203v.

52 Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements,* 2: 419.

53 "Siam," *Singapore Chronicle,* 22 Nov 1832.

54 Kiernan, *Blood and Soil,* 153.

55 Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles,* 230–1.

56 The power and maintenance of Patani's *orangkaya* (elite) revolved around an intricate and constantly contested system of patronage attached to the court. Many other segments of Patani society were likewise knitted together with the royal court as the space for these social contests; Bradley, "Moral Order in a Time of Damnation," 281–5.

57 Syukri, *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani,* 89.

58 http://puloinfo.net/Patani.asp?
    Show=About. Site accessed 27 Dec 2011,
    though no longer available.
59 "Siam," *Singapore Chronicle,* 22 Nov 1832.
60 Ibid.
61 Abdullah, *Penyebaran Islam,* 4.
62 There are too many primary sources to
    list, including nearly 1,400 extant manu-
    scripts that exist in public and private
    repositories in Malaysia, Indonesia,
    South Africa, the United Kingdom, the
    Netherlands, and the United States.
63 Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and
    Place,* 100–38; MKI 343: 17; MKI 667:
    38; MKI 697: 61; MKI 767: 116; PNM
    2410: 150v; PNM 2419: 18v.
64 MKI 49D, 97; PNM 21B, 370v; PNM
    669: 20v; PNM 1240: 75v; PNM
    2270A, 13r; PNM 2380: 24r.
65 Al-Faṭānī's *Īḍāḥ al-Bāb li-Murīd
    al-Nikāḥ bi-1 -Ṣawāb,* mentioned above,
    and his text on inheritance, *Ghāyat
    al-Taqrīb fī al-Irth wa al-Taʿṣīb,* were
    the most influential texts involved in
    shaping these discourses, both appearing
    in all of the major *pondok* centres

66 One example is Wan Kaltsum binti Haji
    Ismāʾīl al-Faṭānī, wife of the famous
    Shaykh Aḥmad bin Muḥammad Zayn
    al-Faṭānī (1856–1908). She was known
    as Tok Jong and was a well-known
    teacher of the *Qurʾān*; Abdullah, *Syeikh
    Daud bin* Abdullah *al*-Fatani, 4.
67 Fraser, *Fisherman of South Thailand,* 80.
68 Abdul Kadir, *The Hikayat* Abdullah,
    39–56.
69 Vaughan, "Notes on the Malays," 122.
70 Said, *Memoirs of a Menteri Besar,* 52.
71 Hijjas, *Victorious Wives,* 34–5; Baron,
    The Women's Awakening, 80–1.
72 Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of
    Commerce,* 162–5.
73 Mooreland, *Peter Floris,* xxv; Cense,
    "Maleise Invloeden," 425–6.
74 Cameron, "On the Patani," 126.
75 Fraser, *Fisherman of South Thailand,* 38–9.
76 Gedacht, "Exile, Mobility, and
    Re-territorialisation."
77 Tsuneda, "Navigating Life on the
    Border," 256–64.

founded by the diaspora in the nineteenth
century.