Towards Placing the Dusun Nyoir Rebellion of April 1948 in its Wider Geo-political and Religious Context: Post-WWII Chaos and Invulnerability Cults

By Dr Christopher M. Joll

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Tower Block Level 10, 469A Bukit Timah Road
National University of Singapore @ BTC

CHAIRPERSON

Assoc Prof Michael Feener, Asia Research Institute and Department of History, National University of Singapore

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to rectify the deplorable neglect of the personalities and processes involved in previous rebellions in South Thailand. I present a mixture of ethnographic, historical, and textual data related to a Sufi movement that has been embedded in Dusun Nyoir of Narathiwat Province since the 1940s. Most even vaguely familiar with the geography of violence in South Thailand will be aware that this was the site of one of the most deadly notorious altercations between Malay villagers and Thai security forces in the twentieth century. Indeed, suggestions have even been made that the timing of the April 2004 attacks were connected with the events of April 1948. Although this paper builds on previous studies, its primary objective is to both place the Dusun Nyoir rebellion in its wider geo-political context, and to revisit conceived wisdom about the role of Islamic movements (albeit inadequately) classified as Sufism. In Narathiwat and Kelantan following contacts with Haji Muhammad Salleh bin Abdul Karim (1916-1959) of Batu Pahat (Johor Baru) – better known as Kyai Salleh – a movement locally known as Ayat Pa’ (empat) spread his repertoire of amalan, hikmah, and esoteric knowledge, such as invulnerability (ilum kebal). I describe how the Sultan of Johor Baru, and his Mutfi, a certain Haji Fadil, co-opted Kyai Salleh by inducted him (perhaps temporarily) into the Qadriyyah wa Naqshabandiyya tariqa, before commissioning him to defend Malay communities against the anarchy that was rapidly spreading throughout Malaya. As is well known, following the Japanese surrender, communist forces attempted to consolidate their position before the return of the British rule. I show that similar situations existed in north of the Golok River.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Christopher M. Joll is a New Zealand anthropologist who has been affiliated at the Centre for Ethnic Studies and Development (CESD), Chiang Mai University, since September 2012. Between 2000 and 2010 Chris lived and worked in Pattani. He completed his doctorate from the National University of Malaysia in 2009, and his first monograph, Muslim Merit-making in Thailand’s Far-south, was published in 2011. Notwithstanding his interests being inter-disciplinary (anthropology, history, theology, Islamic studies), inter-religious (Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism), and trans-national (Thailand and Malaysia, the Indian Ocean), his principal ethnographic subjects have been Thailand’s Muslim minority. His latest project begun in late 2012, which involved multi-sited fieldwork among Muslim Communities between Ayutthaya and Narathiwat, could best be described as a historical ethnography of sufi orders in Thailand.

REGISTRATION

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