ECONOMIC LIFE OF MALAY MUSLIMS IN SOUTHERNMOST THAILAND
AMIDST ECOLOGICAL CHANGES AND UNREST

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Abstract

The economic life of rural Malay Muslims in Kampong Ai Hetae in southernmost Thailand is examined. The affects of the politics of Thai state development on the ecosystem is explored together with local farming practices and resource uses amidst ecological changes, the market economy, conflict and violence. This dissertation also relates agriculture to other dimensions of rural transformation to understand economic life.

The dissertation research revealed that economic development in the region has aimed to stabilize Thai nation-state ideology under the assumption that poverty is the main cause of the civil unrest. However, the development, which aims to incorporate Malay Muslim identity and ignores ecological values and the meaningful participation of local residents, has not been successful in suppressing the unrest nor in improving the economic life.

Local residents have adapted farming practices to try to continue to use the changing ecological system and also to pursue new economic incentives. While trying to cope with unsupportive development and intermittent violence, the local residents face many serious risks all alone. The use of chemicals in farming and conflicts over common resources seem unavoidable. Agriculture is the foundation for households to gain better opportunities in the non-farm sector in the face of the rural transformations in the region. Modern lifestyle and consumption can’t be separated from investment in farming. The intensification of Islam strengthened by the robust commercial farming in turn shapes the community’s political power reproducing the failure of development.

The local economic life is full of ups and downs although not destitute. However, increasing pressure on the land with population growth is unsustainable even with increasing involvement in non-farm activities, and it will bring more difficulties in the future. Even if development were sustainable and the rural poor could cultivate new skills, education, and networks for employment in non-farming jobs, the quality of life of local residents will still be depreciated if the conflicts continue in the south. Quality of life is not only economic, but also ecological, cultural, and political, and it will be diminished as long as the development is under the Thai nation-state ideology.
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<td>Alternative Agriculture Network</td>
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<td>AOP</td>
<td>Assembly of the Poor</td>
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<td>ARD</td>
<td>Office of Accelerated Rural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAAC</td>
<td>Agricultural Cooperative under Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives</td>
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<td>BOI</td>
<td>Board of Investment of Thailand</td>
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<td>CDD</td>
<td>Community Development Department</td>
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<td>CSS</td>
<td>Civil Society Sector</td>
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<td>DLD</td>
<td>Department of Livestock Development</td>
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<td>DNFE</td>
<td>Department of Non-Formal Education</td>
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<td>DPHO</td>
<td>District Public Health Office</td>
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<td>LDD</td>
<td>Land Development Department</td>
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<td>LDI</td>
<td>Local Development Institute</td>
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<td>MDU 99</td>
<td>Mobile Development Military Unit 99</td>
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<td>OARD</td>
<td>Office of Accelerated Rural Development</td>
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<td>OPDA</td>
<td>Office of Padae Kuwing Merah District Agriculture</td>
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<td>RDPB</td>
<td>Office of Royal Development Project Board</td>
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<td>SAFT</td>
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<td>Sub-district Administrative Organization</td>
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<td>SBCSA</td>
<td>Southern Border Civil Society Assembly</td>
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<td>SBPAC</td>
<td>Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center</td>
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<td>SBRA</td>
<td>Southern Border Reform Assembly ()</td>
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<td>SNSC</td>
<td>National Security Council</td>
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<td>THPF</td>
<td>Thailand Health Promotion Fund</td>
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<td>TRF</td>
<td>Thailand Research Fund</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Can the Future be better than being a Coolie in the Rubber Business?

I have no worries. If my son can’t do well in school, he will be able to survive as a coolie working for thao khae (rubber middle man).”

Fateemoh, a 36-year-old woman who is a wife and a mother of four kids, replied the sentences quoted to me during our long chat happening casually while she and her kids were hanging out in front of the grocery owned by her relatives. I asked Fateemoh what she would like her kids to do to make a living in the near future, especially the oldest one who is now in grade six and will grow up as a teenager soon. Her response came out with no stress or anxiousness if being a rubber coolie would be the fate of her son, even though the job gains little money, is not a constant or long-term job, and has only a rare opportunity for advancement. I was not surprised with her answer since it is normal in Kampong Ai Hetae for male teenagers to work as coolies or other low income and insecure wage labor jobs. This seems to be the route of life for several families here including Fateemoh’s family.

Fateemoh’s family demonstrates the current generation in Kumpong Ai Hetae: a kind of nuclear family consisting of parents in middle age and kids in school. In terms of the way to make a living, it also represents the normal trend of household’s dependent on the non-farming sector. Apart from tapping a 5-rai (a 2-acre) rubber plot—a small piece of land Fateemoh’s husband inherited from his parents—Fateemoh’s family has made a living by the income from her husband, who has mainly worked in the non-farming sector. Her husband used to work as an independent construction contractor for several years. However, because of the high cost in running the business, a few years ago her husband started running a new business as a recyclable stuffs trader driving his old pickup truck around villages nearby to buy used materials such as water and soda bottles, broken appliances and farming equipment, and then selling them to bigger traders in nearby district.

The shrinking of land holding seems to be the main situation of these families. They may not have trouble getting land from their parents for their houses. They may also be able to build their own houses in the same piece of land with their parents.
Nevertheless, for farmland, they usually don’t get enough inherited land to make a living. In the case of Fateemoh who has seven siblings, she doesn’t get any rubber plots from her parents, because they don’t have enough plots for all of their kids and today her parents still need a rubber plot for their own living. Luckily, her husband still received a rubber plot from his parents. However, it is impossible today that the 5-rai rubber plot would be enough for a family to survive with four kids in school. Therefore, income from non-farming activity has become crucial for this family.

Fateemoh’s family is in the middle between the one whose members have still lived, worked, and almost totally depended on farming activities, and another one whose members don’t work on farming activities anymore because they don’t have any piece of farmland, and in some cases a situation like this has happened since previous generations. However, for the first group, even though income from farming activities has still been important to them, it is likely that they may not have enough farmland for their kids who are growing up and will start their own families soon. For the residents of the latter group who are in middle age, most of them still work as wage labors in the farming sector. However, for the ones who are young and don’t get higher education, wage labor positions in the farming sector in the village are not sufficient for them. Therefore, apart from working as tapping workers or coolies in the rubber business, they may work at shops or food stalls in local markets, go to find jobs in Malaysia, or, in some cases, they don’t have jobs to work at all.

For Fateemoh’s and other families in the same situation, it is hard to recover their agricultural activities, which means that they have to gain more farmland. In Kumpong Ai Hetae, the land frontier already ended since the generation of parent’s of Ayah, my host father who is now 68-year-old. Therefore, if Fateemoh would like to have more income from farming activities, she has to have enough money to buy land from other residents. However, it seems to be impossible for her to gain extra money, especially from farming, even though Fateemoh has pursued diverse activities in farming—apart from rubber farming she also does rice farming with her mother and plants watermelon some years. Also, this is like this even though she has assured her farming productivity with modern agricultural techniques including using some chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which actually may not be good for health and the environment in the long run. Sometimes high productivity does not guarantee high income because the price of farming products, both rubber and other cash crops, usually
fluctuates. Drought and flood are also the risks that farmers have to face regularly. Also income from the farming sector is limited because of the decrease in the utilization of common natural resources such as swamps and grasslands by several households amid ecological changes and the decrease of common or public area. Therefore, income from the farming sector is not enough even for household daily spending, not to mention buying new plots of farmland.

While the dependence on the non-farm sector has been increasingly necessary, the opportunity for these families to gain sufficient income and better life from non-farming activities has been limited. It is not only the limitation for people in middle-age like Fateemoh, who went to school only for elementary education before going to study religion for a few years in *pondok*—a traditional Islamic boarding school—but also for their kids as well. In southernmost Thailand, the rate of school dropout has been high even in the elementary level. Also educational achievement of students of the region is much lower than that in other regions. This becomes one obstacle preventing the younger generations from securing good occupations for a better future. The differences of language, culture, and religion of Malay Muslims as an ethno-religious minority from those favored by the Thai state—which means that Buddhism and the Thai language are imposed through formal compulsory education—seem to make studying in Thai state schools very uncomfortable for Malay Muslim students. However, it is interesting that, even though during the past few decades there has been the growth of Islamic private schools teaching both religion courses and regular courses, this doesn’t help improve the educational achievement of the students in this region.

Moreover, the widespread us of drugs by teenagers is another important factor preventing them from getting good occupations. Drugs are weakening their ability to study and work. Interestingly, the drug situation in southernmost region has been getting worse after the renewal of violence since 2004. It is important to note that the near future of livelihoods of families like that of Fateemah mainly depends on their children. If her kids don’t do well in school and can’t get good occupations, or if they get addicted to drugs or get married too early without having the ability to take care of themselves economically, then parents like Fateemoh and her husband may have difficulties as has happened with several cases already in Kampong Ai Hetae and some other villages in this southernmost region. Therefore, it is not surprising at all for Fateemoh and other residents, if Fateemoh’s kid has a future as a coolie carrying rubber.
Even though some families may have different stories—for example, some have been already in poverty and in difficult situations since previous generations, while some are getting rich from their business or careers and able to buy more farmland and gain higher political and economic power—the route of life like that of Fateemoh’s family seems to be mainstream for Kampong Ai Hetae residents.

It is important to note that southernmost Thailand in which Kampong Ai Hetae is located has been the region of long-term conflict and violence for several decades. It is the conflict and violence from unfairness based on ethno-religious difference between the minority Malay Muslims and the majority ruling Thai state. Especially during the past decade the situation has been much more intense and very severe. During this period there have been more than 5,000 persons killed, including Thai authorities, insurgents, Buddhist Thai and Malay Muslim civilians. The livelihoods of Kampong Ai Hetae residents have been going on under the conflict and violence which has been the main factor shaping state interventions affecting economic and ecological attributes of the region. In Kampong Ai Hetae, the changes in the ecological system which influence the way local residents do farming and utilize natural resources have been going on in this violent context. The conflict and violence also shape the role of NGOs and the CSS working in the region. However, although the conflict and violence make the southernmost region different from other regions in Thailand, Malay Muslims in this region also live under the same conditions as people of other regions, especially with the market economy and national politics. These common factors, combined with the conflict and violence of the region, have shaped the characteristics of the livelihood of Kampong Ai Hetea residents.

**Research Objectives**

This dissertation narrates the complexity and dynamics of livelihoods of Kampong Ai Hetae residents that have been going on under wider contexts or outside factors, especially state interventions, market economy, the roles of NGOs and the Civil Society Sector, and conflict and violence in the region. Farming practices and natural resource uses in changing ecological system under these contexts and factors will be highlighted as the main component of dynamic livelihoods. At the same time, lives during rural changes, which means the increasing role of non-farming activities and the
interplay between rurality and urbanity, will be examined as well. Also, actions or agencies of the residents to pursue desirable lives amidst outside conditions as well as internal attributes of the community such as power, social and political relations will be analyzed in this dissertation. Finally, the dissertation will discuss whether or not under current livelihoods the residents will be able to achieve good quality of lives—economically, politically and spiritually—in the way they would like.

Conceptual Frameworks

Political Ecology of Ecological Changes

Political ecology is an explicit alternative to perspectives that focus on causality in terms of ecological changes and degradations because of overpopulation, ignorance and selfishness of individuals, and inadequate adoption and implementation of “modern” economic techniques on management, exploitation and conservation. Political ecology contends that ecological changes, that mostly involve ecological deterioration, are a product of political processes comprised of winners and losers, hidden costs, and differential powers. In addition, influences of political and economic variables are involved historically acting on a number of scales from local to global, and nesting within each other, all shaping local decisions on environmental exploitations (Robbins 2004).

Land degradation is one of the main topics discussed in reference to the political ecology of environmental changes. Political ecology argues against the strong discourses of ‘environmental orthodoxies’ closely tied to over population and human actions on land degradation, such as neo-Malthusian explanation focusing on population density and the “tragedy of the commons” focusing on individual goal-seeking at the expense of the collective good as well as the theory on Himalayan Degradation focusing a series of human actions upstream in a river basin responsible for deforestation and soil erosion downstream.

Instead political ecology asserts that socio-economic and institutional changes—caused by state interventions in development and/or increasing integration of people into regional and global markets—are the real causes of the overexploitation of natural resources leading to land degradation (Robbins 2004). According to Piers Blaikie’s (1985) thinking, social marginalization, which is both the result and the cause of land
degradation, and the ‘Chain of Explanation’, which links land users to wider forces operating at multiple scales, can explain how capitalist agrarian production destroys soils. Surpluses are extracted from farmers, and thereby the costs and risks are always passed downward to them. Then to compensate for their losses, farmers in turn are forced to extract surplus from the environment, and this leads to degradation as well. In turn, this generates increasing poverty while cyclically increasingly overexploitation, especially amongst the most marginal individuals and groups (Robbins 2004: 131-2).

Susan C. Stonich (1993) emphasized the vicious circle of environment deterioration caused by state interventions, the market, and the adaptations of residents. For Stonich, the land use causing environmental deterioration by people of Honduras is caused by pressure from state and large agribusiness expropriating land. Stonich points out that the people diversify their household economy, enhance dependence on the informal sector of non-farming activities, and increase the participation of woman in the labor force as strategies for the survival of their households in order to mitigate the effects of an exploitative system. However, these creative household strategies also encourage continued exploitation and inequitable distribution of resources which precipitates various problems. According to Stonich, destructive management of resources by small-holders is frequently the result of the increasingly diversified nature of production systems that the household must pursue by both working in the fields and in a variety of other vital economic activities. Under conditions of labor scarcity farmers may favor techniques with lower demands on labor and short-term increases in production, even though this may cause very serious environmental problems in the long-term.

At the same time, such discourses, especially neo-Malthusian explanations of environmental degradation, have been criticized for their pessimistic view of human-environment interactions. There are several studies pointing out positive influences of population pressure; namely, that it can also act as a stimulus to increase agricultural production. There are also the studies pointing out that not only human actions, but also natural causes, such as climate variability, play a much stronger role in driving changes in ecosystems, such as desertification, than have been recognized.

The perspective of political ecology on environmental degradation, however, has some drawbacks. For Paul Robbins (2004), the simple pattern of degradation and marginalization may be too generalized because not all cases fit neatly into it. Instead,
the link between degradation and marginalization or poverty depends on a combination of factors, including agro-ecological conditions, farmers’ assets, market access, infrastructures, nonfarm income possibilities, and broader policy conditions influencing pathways of change. In addition, the definition or selection of criteria on degradation is a political choice. Even though there are some main categories on land degradation—such as the loss of natural productivity; loss of biodiversity; loss of usefulness; and creating or shifting risks, each of these can be measured and evaluated differently. For example, in term of the loss of usefulness, the turning of forest into pasture, or vice versa, may be seen as degradation or improvement, depending on the community and its resource use priorities. In addition, nutrient depletion is highly variable temporally and spatially across regions, farming systems, field types, and social categories of farmers (66, 76, 82–85, 94).

In addition, the perspective of political ecology on environmental degradation influenced by structural Marxism has been criticized as overemphasizing the structures determining human actions. The vicious downwards spiral in the poverty-degradation relationship in which the poor are forced to overuse environmental resources just for survival has been afforded greater attention than the complexities of cultural and political practices and the roles of human agency. That is, people not only reproduce but also transform the structures around them. In several recent studies, local people were not portrayed as victims of uncontrolled land degradation, but as knowledgeable agents managing their land sustainably. Also the focus of Piers Blaikie and Harold Brookfield (1987) on the causes of land degradation may not be sufficient. It is necessary to consider the broader questions of how resource struggles play out in the landscape, and who has power, and who resists it? Also it is important to note that struggles over resources can even happen within the household, or as a part of gender struggles.

Political ecology also provides a framework to examine environmental knowledge and narratives about ecological crisis or degradation. It focuses on the ‘black box’ or unquestioned reality about environmental changes which is justified by what is believed to be ‘scientific truth’ (Forsyth 2003). However, only some kinds of scientific knowledge are picked, utilized, and maintained by the establishments, whereas other kinds are ignored or even blocked, especially if they do not support the existing power structures, although they have been academically proven. For example, human activity
as a major cause of soil erosion has been long ignored by state policy on the environment. This is because such findings delegitimize state control over space, resources, and people in marginal areas (Forsyth 2003: 65; Blaikie and Muldavin 2004). This is also the same problem that Michael R. Dove (1983) pointed out with regard to the political economy of ignorance. That is, external government administrators disregard the efficiency and sustainability of many traditional farming practices, even though they have been informed about this by academics and others. Discourse and narrative on environmental problems is seen from a political ecology perspective as the primary means whereby institutions claim rights to stewardship over lands and resources that they do not own. Also, discourse, narrative, and even knowledge of ecological changes mostly depend on naïve, unproven, and simplifying assumptions about the problems to be addressed. They impose changes in a top-down manner, and then construe local practices as damaging while ignoring or deprecating local environmental knowledge.

The conceptual framework from political ecology regarding environmental changes is useful for understanding the changes of farming and resource uses of Kampong Ai Hetae residents happening under external forces: state interventions, market economy, and the role of NGOs and Civil Society Sector. Here through political ecology, the important context—long term conflict and violence in southernmost Thailand—will be examined in terms of how it relates to development projects and ecological system of the southernmost region in general and in Kampong Ai Hetae specifically. Political ecology will also be utilized to examine the modern and intensive practices of farming and resource uses, that appear to be economically and ecologically unsustainable, within the wider context and with external forces.

Ecological Transitions and Human Agency

While political ecology has not yet examined much the role of human actions or human agency in ecological changes or land degradation in comparison to its focus on the influence of external forces, the dissertation also utilizes one of the foci of ecological anthropology to comprehend the role of local residents---the concept of the ecological transition (Bennett 1976).

One of the main questions of ecological anthropology is how human agency is involved in the ecological transition from equilibrium to disequilibrium with nature. An
equilibrium society is characterized by a stable population with a sustainable economy, among other attributes. In contrast, a disequilibrium society is characterized by uncontrolled growth both in population and in the consumption of resources which cause resource depletion and environmental degradation. The most common direction in the continuum of the ecological transition is toward greater disequilibrium. However, Bennett points out that the transition is complex, that is, it can be devolutionary when growth returns to a preexisting equilibrium or homeostatic system. Moreover, equilibrium and disequilibrium are not a dualistic typology or a simplistic either-or proposition. Rather, the two are a matter of degree; they are relative rather than absolute, most societies are in-between the two polar extremes along a continuum, and they exist in dynamic ecological, economic, and sociopolitical contexts. Although some individuals and groups within a society may abuse resources, overall a balance between society and the natural environment prevails in an equilibrium society with minimal destructive environmental impact (Bennett 1976, Sponsel 1998).

To comprehend the role of human agency in the ecological transition, researchers have explored how people exploit the natural resources and environment in their habitats (Moran 2006). Since the 1960s through ecological anthropology such studies have tried to argue against the “irrationality” discourse proposed by some Western scholars and development experts regarding traditional production systems like pastoralism, swidden horticulture, and exotic crop farming as irrational and mismanaged, and accordingly requiring external intervention (Kottak 1999, Dove and Carpenter 2008:34; Burton, et. al. 1986). For example, Marvin Harris (1966) argued against the published characterizations of the sacred cow in India as useless and uneconomic. He pointed to the secular values of cows in making agriculture possible in addition to their religious status.

The actor-based model also aims to examine the rationality of individual actors and the manner in which external constraints shape their choices. Interestingly, for ecological anthropology the rationality of resource-related decision-making may not be always explained in terms of a cost/benefit calculus as pursued by optimal foraging theory. The latter is criticized as relying too much on quantitative measures of observed behavior and lacking any “cognized” model. To argue against “irrationality” discourse is also the main work of environmental anthropology, the applied dimensions of ecological anthropology (Burton et al 1986).
The question of why people treat or exploit nature in such ways is closely related to the question of why some groups of people exploit resources sustainably and do not give up their subsistence productions. Several studies in ecological anthropology point to the role of ecology in supporting such a situation. Solwey and Lee’s work on the !Kung of southern Africa found that their ecology was the most critical factor in determining their ability to actively resist incorporation into world capitalism; that is changing from foraging to agro-pastoral system. They point out that as long as severe environmental degradation has not yet happened and their habitat still provides necessities, the complete incorporation of the !Kung as dependent on agropastoralism was delayed (Dove and Carpenter 2008). Robert Netting’s *Smallholders, Householders* (1990) points out that the penetration by the capitalist system and incorporation into it are variable and perhaps always partial, disturbing some traditional systems profoundly, but leaving others relatively unchanged. Netting also points to the complexity in that the connection with world capitalism may play some role in maintaining the subsistence systems of locals. For example, exported labor functions as a safety valve for the local ecosystem by siphoning off a surplus population that would otherwise exceed carrying capacity.

There are also studies on the shift in people’s ideas and ways in coping with their environment through time. Some studies show a shift of local communities from one stance to the opposite one, according to people’s experiences with environmental changes and gradual changes in their production system. Ellen (2001) explained how the indigenous Nuaulu could come to endorse environmental destruction, and how they subsequently underwent a further transformation to become the self-conscious environmentalists that they are today. The Nuaulu saw many benefits in logging and land settlement, but when they saw the eventual failings of such things, then they changed their stance. At the same time, with the adoption of new cash crops and consequent decline in the economic role of foraging and swiddening, a sharp distinction between culture, nucleated village, and gardening on the one hand, and on the other nature, forest gathering, and dispersed settlement has emerged. Ellen pointed out that the more Nuaulu become distanced from forest, the more they become its protectors and the more they participate in environmental discourses.

The perspectives from ecological anthropology on the ecological transition and on human agency are useful in this dissertation in exploring why the Kampong Ai Hetae
ecological system has been deteriorating and how this is related to the ways that residents practice farming and use natural resources. The key factors from the above studies will be utilized in examining the role of local resident actions and agency on environmental changes---especially the attributes of the ecological system, the shift in the environmental thinking of the people, the influences of “irrationality” discourse, and the characteristics of the relation to state interventions and capitalism.

**Rural Changes and Agrarian Transformations**

The dynamic livelihoods of Kampong Ai Hetae residents haven’t only been about farming or resource uses related to their ecological system, but their lives have also relied on the non-farming sector, especially during the past few decades with the expansion of capitalism and the integration of the rural and urban sectors happening so fast. At the same time, to understand agricultural changes, such as mechanization, intensification, and land use changes, it is necessary to view them in the context of the relationships between the non-agricultural and urban spheres.

According to Jonathan Rigg (2012), under the limited ability of agriculture, mainly caused by the shrinking of land holdings, to deliver adequate livelihood de-agrarianization seems to be the main facet of rural changes and agrarian transformations in Southeast Asia. The main attributes of de-agrarianization are the increasing role of non-farm activities and the high rate of mobility and migration. Rigg also points out that in the process of de-agrarianization social and economic relations change though employment that is stretched or cuts across space—causing a de-localization of life and living, disembedded households and families, and a dissociation of the village-community. De-agrarianization also means that land and agrarian production relations are no longer primarily related to class differentiation or inequality either inside or outside the community. Instead, class in the agrarian context is multidimensional relating to occupational status, educational level, generation, and gender (Vandergeest and Rigg 2012).

Even though the migration of rural people, which is the main characteristic of de-agrarianization, has been viewed by international development organizations and some governments as a problem and as a deterioration of rural life, Rigg views de-agrarianization in a positive way. Rigg realizes that that rural people in different economic statuses may benefit from the process of de-agrarianization in different
degrees. He distinguishes between new and old poverty. Old poverty is an inheritance of the past caused by dependence on traditional technologies, limited income, and remoteness and dislocation from the resources of the state and the market. New poverty is created by development processes and the engagement with the market and state. Rigg views de-agrarianization as a part of the processes that produces new poverty, yet offers the means by which people escape from the old poverty (Rigg 2006, 2001). His case studies from northeast Thailand reveal that amidst rural changes and diversified livelihoods, poverty has fallen dramatically, fear of undernutrition has virtually disappeared, real income has risen as have health and education profiles, and access to amenities have improved. However, some problems remain to be addressed, such as unsustainable levels of debt, environmental decline, and rising social malaise (Rigg 2012).

The significance of non-farm income for the land poor and the landless, whose land and agriculture have lost its strategic economic role in helping them to survive, is very high. Therefore, Riggs criticizes the policies on agricultural development because they increase inequality by supporting the concentration of agricultural resources among a few rural rich. At the same time, Rigg asserts that policy interventions need to acknowledge the mixed nature of rural living, the fragmentation of households, the hybrid identities that many rural people embody, the mobility of much of the rural population, and the diversity of activities that occur in the countryside. Rigg recommends that the best way to achieve pro-poor development policies amidst rural changes is to do much more in endowing the rural poor with skills, education and networks so that they can escape from farming and perhaps even from the countryside. This would allow the relatively few households that remain on the land to make the transition from peasant farmers who produce largely to meet subsistence needs to commercial producers who are aware of the demands of the market (2001, 2006).

It is interesting that the family farm is not disappearing in my study region in spite of the agrarian transition with modernization, capitalist dominance, and development wherein usually there is polarization into landowning capitalists and landless workers, the moving to cities of farmer household members, and the increasing forces of individualism. The latest research, including Rigg’s, also points out that de-agrarianization and re-agrarianization can exist along side each other. Rural change cannot be fully understood by simple models defining pathways away from rural
tradition, self-sufficiency, and equality, and instead towards modernity, commercialization and inequality. In the middle of agrarian transition, rural villages and communities are remade or re-identified with no depreciation of identity. The specifics need to be understood about who the farmers are and how they might relate to the capitalist economy (Vandergeest and Rigg 2012). While some people are again emphasizing agrarian livelihoods as a way of avoiding the exploitation and drudgery of employment as unskilled labor, in other cases labor migration may actually help rural people strengthen their claims on their natural resources and enhance their agrarian production through the provision of investment capital (Konick et al 2012: 33). Moreover, the return to or maintainence of an agrarian occupation is often a lifestyle, or a stage-of-life choice. The new peasants are able to farm, fish, and market their products in ways that were not available to their parents. They may also pursue part-time farming or as agrarian entrepreneurs (Vandergeest and Rigg 2012: 20).

It is important to realize that in some cases agrarian transformation is not equal to de-agrarianization but can be agricultural restructuring caused by the expansion of boom crops and plantations on a large scale. Anan Ganjanapna (2010) describes in the case of northern Thailand how the transformation of the rural population cannot be seen only as a linear process, but a shifting between de-peasantization and re-peasantization with the restructuring of agriculture in the forms of the agribusiness and agro-food industry. For, Tania Murray Li (2013) the process has rapidly replaced subsistence farming system and customary land tenure, and then it has marginalized and impoverished many rural poor, especially those in remote areas and the poorest ones. These people are ‘in between’ struggling with becoming landless farmers with no other options because the availability of the off farm options is highly uneven. In Li’s Sulawesi case the conversion from swiddens to monocropped cacao causes the emergence of a class division between those who owned lands and capital (key means of production) and those who have only their labor to sell. At the same time, with the perennial nature of cacao, the old form of shared access to ancestral land has been weakened (Li 2012: 209).

In studies on rural change and agrarian transformation, human actions and human agency have been the focus as in ecological anthropology. However, in the studies on agrarian transformations, human action can go beyond the farming sector and may not relate to the natural resources of the ecological system. These studies point out
that rural changes and agrarian transformations take place not only through structural processes and movements along given pathways, but through positive choices among other meager ones available in pursuing diverse aspirations, especially a better life through improved social and economic status (Vanderveet and Rigg 2012). Rural people are not passive victims of changes who just wait because they are excluded by unjust economic and political relations. On the contrary, the actions of rural people have also helped to create the social-economic conditions of the nation.

For Rigg, the positive valuation of modernization has been internalized and become an uncontested goal of all people in Southeast Asia. Agriculture is perceived as an occupation with low status and little future. Therefore, it is not surprising that rural families put so much effort in the education of their children in order to gain access to the growing number of non-farm jobs, the most important way to be modern have pursue a better life (Rigg 2001:49, 53-54). Likewise, Li points out that rural villagers have a sense of insecurity and of being backward, and they want to join the prosperity that they see elsewhere. When we understand their real production system which is a combination of the traditional and the commercial, then we can recognize their reality. They are people who are innovative, dynamic, aware of market prices, very interested in cash, and making investment decisions following their new desires and aspirations for the future. Moreover, Li (2008: 21; 2007: 191) demonstrates that the rural poor, especially the indigenous ones, need to be included by state power to gain the benefits of a fuller citizenship and from being recognized by the government to obtain access to roads, education, and health care facilities.

The framework from research on rural changes and agrarian transformations will be utilized to comprehend the changing livelihoods of Kampong Ai Hetae residents as related to the market economy, modernity, and globalization. This framework is helpful in exploring whether the changes, both de-agrarianization and re-agrarianization or restructuring of agriculture, have permitted the persistence and resilience of the residents or have further marginalized and impoverished them.

The Critical Studies on the Notion of Community

To understand dynamic livelihoods on Kampong Ai Hetae residents, apart from utilizing the frameworks from the studies on rural changes and agrarian transformations, it is necessary to review critical studies on the notion of community to gain a
constructive framework to comprehend the roles, perspectives, and impacts of outside actors working on local communities, such as state agencies, NGOs, and Civil Society in the context of rural changes and agrarian transformations.

The notion of community has long been based on a romantic perspective viewing the community as collective, communal, and homogenous with cooperation, consensus, conformity, and solidarity. This view also emphasizes the community as primordial by associating it with images of the past, a rural village livelihood in contrast to modernity, capitalism, and urbanity. This romantic notion can be more complicated and subtle when discussing the symbolic level of community as shown in Anthony P. Cohen’s (1985) study, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. In this book, Cohen argues against the focus on a structural model, or a specific form of social organization of community, as a significant component in creating meaning for people. Instead, he points out that community is symbolically constructed or, in other words, it is a system of values, norms, and moral codes which provides a sense of identity for its members as they exist within a bounded whole. Cohen also argues against the simplistic dichotomizing of antithetical types of society; namely, the ‘folk society’ with traditional personal rural social relationships, and the ‘urban society’ with impersonal, urbanized, rationalized, and class-based social structures. Instead, these two ‘types’ may coexist in terms of the symbolic dimensions of a community. Thus, for Cohen, the issue in the study of community is not whether its structural limits have withstood the attacks of social change, but whether its members are able to infuse its culture with vitality and construct a symbolic community that provides meaning and identity.

Although Cohen’s work is an excellent alternative to previous studies of community in that it proposes the significance of a structure of feeling and a quality of identity that are far from territorial and rural qualities, still it contains romantic elements with its implications of consensus and solidarity in community. In the edited volume, *The Seductions of Community* (2006), Creed argues against the romantic notion of community. For Creed, such a notion ignores the nature of social relations; namely, differentiations and conflicts resulting from the processes of exclusion, alienation, and segregation among individuals of the labeled and conceived communities. Likewise, Michael Watts (2006) points to the possibility of severely violent and fractious communities, which he calls ‘unimagined communities,’ in the political economy context of the oil complex. It is interesting to note that the romantic notion of
community is prevalent in many social movements. Miranda Joseph (2006) points out that the support of restorative justice in the incarceration context by criminal justice activists—aimed to reintegrate the offender into the community by bringing criminals and victims into direct interaction and accountability—affirms the romantic notion of community by emphasizing social solidarity and social norms. It takes the community for granted on the basis of its internal unity and boundaries, and in that communities are broken or violated, instead of seeing the constructive social process of community and power differentials between offenders and victims in the community.

The romantic notion of community is criticized as well for its adoption of the dichotomy between community as isolated and with ‘premodern’ or ‘subsistence’ livelihood on the one hand in contrast to urbanity and capitalism on the other. The exaggeration of this dichotomy is usually related to the political demands of each group. Mary Weismantel (2006) points to the images of indigenous peoples in the Andes who often are portrayed as a survival from the ancient past and a symbol of steadfast native resistance to change through five centuries. Interestingly, such images were essentialized by anthropologists in the 20th century and adopted by the activists as a weapon in ideological struggles against the superiority of modern civilization over the indigenous world. This is the similar to the myth about upland peoples always having a sustainable economy grounded in a viable environmental ethic which is promoted by NGOs, activists, and scholars opposing modernist development. This myth ignores the involvement of many people in the uplands with commercial farming and wage labor. This leads to practical matters such as ‘participatory management’ or ‘social forestry’ that carelessly assume a consensus on the future of the uplands (Li 2012).

Also following the romantic notion of community, modernity, and especially capitalism, are generally understood as a threat to communities. However, on the contrary, some critical studies reveal that the integration into capitalism does not necessarily lead to decline in interpersonal trust in a community, but instead creates new social formations and new communality. Joseph (2006) argues that, contrary to the romantic notion, in the case of modern finances with their more impersonal forms of credit, there isn’t necessarily a decline in and the replacement of interpersonal trust in the community. Rather, this constitutes new social formations and new communality. Moreover, Joseph proposes the idea of the imbrications of community with the
economy; that is, the community facilitates the flow of capital while capital in turn provides the very medium in which community is enacted.

Yet another criticism of the romantic notion of community is about the relations between the community and the state, which are almost always narrowly seen in a one-way direction wherein the state weakens and undermines the community, especially its primordial nature. However, Pandy Gyanendra (2006) points out that actually the romantic idea of community as primordial and natural is utilized by the state to include the community as part of it. In India, communities considered to be a “natural unit” long in existence, affective in character, and possessing moral collectivity, are important to naturalize the nation-state’s political form. Therefore, members of caste, religious groups, or the nation are described as members of an extended family and the nation is worshipped as the motherland or fatherland. Moreover, this critique demonstrates the opposite direction of the relation between the state and community in that, actually, community can shape the characteristics of state as well and also the success and failure of state-making. As pointed out by Watts (2006), fragmentation, illegitimacy, and conflict within and among oil-producing chiefdom communities and ethnic communities have made the form of governance and the process of national-building in Nigeria less effective.

In this dissertation the framework from critical studies on the notion of community will be utilized to examine the complexities and differentiations in the Kampong Ai Hetae society in the process of economic and ecological changes involving wider contexts and external forces. This framework will be applied to understand the notions of community prevalent among Thai state agencies and civil society that are related to their political stands. At the same time the framework will be useful to understand the local community’s relations with the state and capitalism. These relations are not necessarily threats weakening or undermining the community’s primordial nature, values, and subsistence, but the community may shape the characteristics and the success of state interventions and capitalism as well.
Studies on Development, Agriculture, and Natural Resources of Southernmost Thailand

The long-term unrest and resistance against the Thai state has been the backdrop of most academic studies on the people and the region of southernmost Thailand. Ethno-religious conflict as caused mainly by the process for many centuries of nation-state building and nationalism as well as state integration and assimilation policies in favor of the dominant population group (Buddhist Thais) has been the focus of studies since the late 1970s. Recognizing the significance of ethno-religious conflict has been the main basis for analyses of Malay separatism and resistance to Thai rule (Anuar Nik Mahmud 1994, Idris 1995, McVey 1984, Scupin 1986, Pitsuwan 1988, Uhlig 1995). The specific cases of the conflict over the historic mosque (Krue Se) and hijab (Muslim woman headscarf) in Pattani have been considered as theaters wherein Malay Muslims as a minority group of Thailand attempt to renegotiate their identity influenced by the global Islamic resurgence (Satha-Anand 1993, 1994). With ethno-religious conflict as a background, ethnic interactions between Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists has been examined anthropologically from the perspective of the Malay Muslims maintaining their ethnic boundary (Prachuabmoh 1980).

In the 2000s, especially after the start of the new round of conflict and violence in 2004, most scholarly work has focused on the causes and perpetrators of the unrest trying to understand what the violence is about, why it is rising, and who is behind it. Even though some prominent studies focus on current national politics by maintaining that Thaksin’s ‘hawkish approach’ (Pathmanand 2006) as well as political conflicts between this former Prime Minister and the “network monarchy” (the King’s network centering on the Privy Council chairman) accounts for the escalation of violence in southernmost Thailand (McCargo 2006), the ethno-religious conflict has still been in the central concern. However, amid the global Islamic resurgence and after the 9-11 terrorist attack in the U.S.A., religious issues have received more attention than ethnic ones. According to Jitpiromsri and Sobhonvasu (2006) and Sugunnasil (2006), religious resurgence enhanced by global Islamic radicalism has shaped the ideological beliefs of the insurgent movement leading some Malay Muslims to pursue violent actions. However, for some scholars, Islam is just a rhetorical source the movement has selectively invoked and interpreted for their own political ends to refuse the legitimacy of the Thai state in the region (McCargo 2008). Joseph Chinyong Liow (2006) points
out that the political ideology of Malay Muslim nationalism and separatism has still played a more important role than international radical Islamism. Aurel Croissant (2005) proposed that the growth of Islamism has been only one among several other factors, such as the shift in government policies and the low quality of conflict management, that have promoted increasingly virulent and violent incidents in recent years.

While ethno-religious factors have been the main focus of research, there hardly are any studies about Malay Muslims’ economic lives in relation to economic development, agricultural changes, and natural resource uses. This neglect curiously persists even though since the 1970s proper economic policies by the Thai state have been stated regularly in these studies as an important means to reduce local grievances of Malay Muslims toward the state (Haemindra 1976, 1977).

Uthai Dulyakasem (1984, 1988) appears to be the first to emphasize development and economic changes, by which he means modernization, as main cause of the intensifying conflict in southernmost Thailand. For Dulyakasem, modernization had taken place in three spheres—the expansion of modern secular education, the expansion of bureaucratic organizations and an increased control over Malay Muslim communities, and the modernization of economic activities. However, Dulyakasem concentrates only on the educational problem. For him, Malay Muslims view education and the school system in general as a threat to their ethno-religious identity and this generated a new round of large-scale revolts.

A singular classic case study examining economic life of the Malay villagers was conducted by Thomas M. Fraser (1966). In his book titled ‘Fishermen of South Thailand: the Malay Villagers’ he describes the changes and dynamic continuities related to increasing outside influences during the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s of Malay people in coastal villages. One of the seven chapters titled ‘Make a Living’ is devoted to the economic life of the villagers. Fraser describes the fishing economy (cost, income, fishing techniques, hiring and wage, and selling) as well as other alternative economic activities (cash crop planting of coconut and rubber and wage labor jobs). He points out that the coastal villages as a whole are far better integrated into the cash-based market system, and far more dependent upon it than the more nearly self-sufficient interior Malay communities of the southernmost region. Interestingly, Fraser points out how the
deteriorating marine resources and the changes in technology (the use of motors for the fishing boats) change social relations (group solidarity and status and prestige of some religious and traditional leaders) that were built upon successful fishing careers.

Even though Fraser points out the incompetence of government development programs at the village level, he agrees that several other economic development programs, education development, and expansion of public health works have helped facilitate integration in the context of national security, the latter the main concern of the Thai government. Combined with the changes in production systems which have tended to become more diversified, Fraser concludes that “[I]n short, if the Royal Thai government pursues consistently the policies and programs it has established in the South, it will probably, within a generation, achieve the goal it has set for itself: creation in the South of full citizens of the Kingdom of Thailand, no longer Malays resident in Thailand, but Muslim Thais.” Fraser’s prediction of more than 40 years ago has not yet happened, and the situation of conflict and the unrest in southernmost Thailand is now far more complicated than he imagined.

Another ethnographic study related to development and economic life of Malay Muslims is ‘Whose Place is This? Malay Rubber Producers and Thai Government Officials in Yala’ by Andrew Cornish (1997). This study explores the relation between rural Malay-Muslims and local officials of the Thai government in the context of a government-sponsored development scheme. In the context of the long-term unrest and violence in southernmost Thailand, Cornish embraces James C. Scott’s wisdom about “everyday resistance” to examine the failure of the development projects in promoting a cooperative rubber processing and marketing group. For Cornish, the strategies of “everyday resistance” to Thai state’s penetration into their village lives, such as the villagers’ refusal or their unwillingness to join the projects or their bending of the projects’ objectives to serve their own benefits, were more significant than any conscious masterplan of resistance by “a fundamentalist Islamic movement” or guerilla activities. That is because everyday resistance gained the largest portion of active resistance from the hundreds of villages in this Malay-majority region, while the activities of political extremists and guerillas couldn’t do so, although most Malays had never favored complete assimilation into Thai society and there has been no shortage of sympathy for the aims of separatist movements.
Cornish pointed out the power relations and social and economic structure of the Malay communities, which are about leadership, land ownership, market access, and the web of debt obligation. This complexity in the social life of Malay villages, which government officials failed to comprehend while continuing to view Malay villagers as self-sufficient holders or free agents, was the main factor in the failure of development projects. Cornish pointed out the financial considerations of villagers indicating that attending the Marketing Group would push them to risk losing their relation with traditional creditors and patrons. This is not to mention that the development projects didn’t address the aspirations of villagers and had very little economic benefit. Beyond doing ethnographic fieldwork on two Malay communities, Cornish also did so on the operations of the local bureaucracy as one of the major political processes in the region. He explored the conditions and limitations and the hierarchy of work that shape the results of the development projects and the attitude to their work and to Malays of the staffs in each position.

The study of a Muslim fishing village in Pattani province, ‘No Fish in the Sea: Thai Malay Tactics of Negotiations in a Time of Scarcity’ by Saroja D. Darairajoo (2002) has the destruction of coastal and marine resources caused by the advent of commercial pushnet and trawler boats and the harmful practices of shrimp farming as a backdrop. Darairajoo aims to understand how the Malay villagers utilize their multiple identities to survive in responding to the adverse impacts from natural resource destruction. She found out that even though the fishing crisis is a conflict between different ethnic groups—small scale fishermen who are Malays, and the owners of pushnet and trawler boats and of shrimp ponds who are predominantly Thai Buddhists and Sino-Thais—and, even though the ethnic and separatist revolt led by the minority Muslim population against the Thai Buddhist state is a context of the fishing conflict, it has not led to ethnic war. Instead, Muslim fishermen have joined hands with Thai Buddhist NGO workers to solve the problem. Darairajoo points out that the Malay fishermen emphasize their status as oppressed Thai citizens to gain governmental and non-governmental help in these times of scarcity. Many young Muslim men migrate to Malaysia to work in halal Thai restaurants. They sell food that Muslims are allowed to eat under Islamic dietary guidelines. They maintain their Thai identity in order to gain jobs as authentic Thai cooks of authentic Thai food. The wives of Malay fishermen who sell fish in town markets promote their Malay Muslim identity in order to sell fresh fish.
without using formaldehyde. Young women who are the daughters of Malay fishermen promote their Muslim identity in order to have permission to travel to the towns to work as net repairers.

All studies related to development and economic lives mentioned above have been useful to understand Malay Muslim’s lives, decision making, and strategies to survive amid the development policies, modernization, and commercial economy in southernmost Thailand. Also these studies had the long-term ethnic and separatist revolts as backdrop. However, these studies were conducted before 2004, the time that a new round of conflict and violence in this region started, and this has changed the region drastically. The current intensity of violence in the southernmost region is totally different from what Soroja called “truce-like situation” during which for the decade of the 1990s Malay separatists eased up on their struggle. Since the aforementioned studies, new factors have come into the region, such as the arrival of the global Islamic resurgence, the increasing of state budget and development projects, and the increasing role of civil society. These new factors will be considered in this dissertation in examining the livelihoods of Kampong Ai Hetae residents in relation to development, agriculture and natural resources.

Research Site

Location and People

Kampong Ai Hetae is a pseudonym for the community fieldwork in this dissertation. Kampong Ai Hetae consist of two villages—Village Satu and Village Empat, which are also pseudonyms. These two villages are located in the same area on opposite sides of a small road. Kampong Ai Hetae is a part of Ai Hetae sub-district consisting of five villages. Apart from the two villages of Kampong Ai Hetae there are the villages of Dua, Tiga, and Lima in the Padae Kuwing Marah district of Pattani province. Kampong Ai Hetae is far from Selasa market, which is the economic center of the district located on the intersection of two inter-district roads for around 1-2 kilometers. The residents can get access conveniently by public pick-up trucks to town markets nearby in Yala province and in Mayo and Talubah districts, which are not more than 30 kilometers from Selasa.
Most houses of the 339 households out of 1,523 Kampong Ai Hetae residents are located along the two kilometer long road starting from Selasa and ending at the grassland area of Baroh Ai Hetae. Recently, especially after the establishment of the army base, Mobile Development Unit 99 (MDU 99), there have been several roads constructed in Ai Hetae sub-district by MDU 99 and after that some new houses have been built around these new roads. The settlement pattern of Kampong Ai Hetae shares the characteristics of other communities in the low-inland area in this southernmost region. The houses are always crowded together in an area with facilities such as roads and electricity separated from gardens, rubber plots, and paddy fields. Kampong Ai Hetae is a center of Ai Hetae sub-district since it is the area where the primary school, Sub-district Health Center, and Sub-district Administrative Office (SAO) are located. Also, Kampong Ai Hetae is not far from state offices. It is not more than four kilometers for the villages to reach the district office, police station, agriculture office, hospital, informal education office, and secondary school. This is especially after 2004 when several army bases settled in Padae Kuwing Marah, some located in the Ai Hetae grassland where the residents graze their livestock.

In term of ecology, Kampong Ai Hetae is one of several communities located at the edge of ‘Pru Tung Krabue,’ the huge seasonally inundated wetland ecological system, in the middle of the Talubah Watershed. The area consists of an inundated part, a non-flooded part, and a low mountain part.
Located in such a complex ecological system, Kampong Ai Hetae is prominent in term of the diversity of agricultural activities: rubber farming, rice farming, fishing, annual crop planting, and grazing. However, the most significant economic activity is rubber tree tapping. The dynamic changes in farming and natural resource uses have happened gradually in Kampong Ai Hetae, such as the changing from traditional rubber plots to modern ones, the changing way to do double crop rice farming, and the arrival of new annual crops like watermelon, cucumbers, and so on. At the same time wage labor and non-farming income are important to the residents, especially the ones who don’t have enough farmland or the landless ones. Moreover, several residents work as officers or employers for various state agencies in the district, especially the younger generations who gain higher education at the college level as well as others who work on security tasks.

Kampong Ai Hetae is a typical Malay rural village. Most houses are still wooden or half cement and half wooden, and built in traditional style. The crowded group of houses is still surrounded by paddy fields, orchards, and rubber plots. However, simultaneously people are living with some aspects of modern lifestyle as evidenced by their consumption such as basic appliances for daily use, cell phones, and modern vehicles.

Like the majority of rural communities in southernmost Thailand, all of the residents of Kampong Ai Hetae are Muslim, even though five of them used to be Buddhists and then converted to Islam by either being converted by a *dakwah* (Muslim missionary) or through marriage. There are also few Muslims who are ethnic Thai. They originally lived in other regions and then moved to Kampong Ai Hetae after getting married to local residents. There are two main mosques and three communal places for Islamic prayer worship including one pondok (Islamic boarding school) and two Islamic private schools in this community.

The type of household and family in Kampong Ai Hetae is a mixture between nuclear and extended families. Even though some new married couples built their own houses separate from their parent’s home, their new houses are often on the same piece of land as their parents. Also several new married couples still live in the same houses with their parents because building a new house is expensive. Therefore, in some households, there are three generations of couples living together—grandparents,
parents, and grandchildren—especially if the grandchildren get married when they are very young before they can live on their own.

**Ai Hetae Ecosystem and Geography**

Most area of Ai Hetae sub-district is located at the edge of Baroh Ai Hetae (Ai Hetae wetland), which is a part the vast freshwater inundated wetland well known by outsiders in Thai as ‘Pru Tung Krabue’ which means the field of wetland for buffalos. ‘Pru Tung Krabue’ covers 6,000 acres of land and is surrounded by 14 villages of 2 sub-districts at the border of two provinces: Pattani and Yala. It consists of several smaller wetland ecological systems, each with marshes, swamps, swamp forests, and grassland.

Pru Tung Krabue is a component of the Talubah Watershed of which the Talubah River is an integral element, as shown in map 1.2. Apart from the Talubah River with the length from its origin to its estuary of 195 kilometers, the watershed has at least 299 small streams originating from the Sankalakiree Mountain Range, the border between Thailand and Malaysia in the province of Naratiwat. The river and streams flow from the south to the north into the sea, the Gulf of Thailand, at the district of Panareh’s Pattani province. The Talubah Watershed covers 3,238.60 square kilometers and has 434 villages in 35 sub-districts of 23 districts in three provinces, which are Naratiwat, Yala, and Pattani.

![Map 1.2 The Talubah Watershed (Inside the red line) (Google Maps, 2012)](image)

The Talubah Watershed can be classified into three geographic parts based on geo-ecological attributes. The first one is the upper part, which is mountainous and
forested. This part is the origin of the Talubah River and other streams. The area has been full of small rubber plots and integrated orchards of durian, mangosteen, rambutan, long kong, betel nut, and so on. The second one is the middle part of the watershed with some valley but mostly a lowland seasonal floodplain along the Talubah River. Wetlands are the main component of this part. In the upper area which is hardly affected by flooding the area is used for rubber plantations and integrated orchards. The lower area is used mainly for paddy and grazing. At the same time the swamp area is used for inland fisheries. The last part of the Talubah Watershed is the lowest area, which is a flooded plain and includes coastal areas consisting of wetlands and mangrove forests. Rice farming and brackish water fisheries in the Talubah River’s estuary are the main kinds of resource uses there.

Violence Incidents

After the new round of unrest and violence in southernmost Thailand started in 2004, Kampong Ai Hetae as elsewhere in the region, has become a dangerous place with shootings and bombings. During 2004 to mid 2012, there were 11,754 violent incidents causing 5,206 deaths and 9,137 injuries. In Ai Hetae sub-district itself there were 17 incidents causing the death of 19 people (see Appendix 1). Only in 2011, the year of the fieldwork for this dissertation, there were nine incidents consisting of shootings of Malay-Muslim villagers, attacking and bombings police troops and military bases, and shooting and burning Buddhist Thais. Also the residents often experience security forces coming to search for suspects in their community, especially at the pondok. Some residents said that after the army bases were settled in Ai Hetae sub-district the violent incidents increased and became more severe.

Although the attacks on government officers are frightening for Kampong Ai Hetae residents, in the first few years after 2004 the attacks mainly targeted state officers and this made the residents feel that the violence was still far from their lives. However, after the first resident, a woman, was shot dead in 2008, other residents realized that their lives would never be the same and have been afraid since then. The residents realize that if they have close relationship with security officers, then they may be in danger. In addition, every time when someone in a village is killed, then for several days some residents are too scared to go to tap rubber, even though the incidents are not directly related to them. When a violent incident happens, even though
the stories from the ‘witnesses’ may spread around informally, they do not want to risk informing or reporting this to officials. Yet they may have heard gunshots, seen pickup trucks or motorcycles of gunmen, or even seen victims chatting with the gunmen before being shot. It is necessary for their safety to behave properly by not talking too much or witnessing too much.

Several Kampong Ai Hetae residents experience the existence of insurgents in their locality. Some residents, while going to tap rubber at a low hill area, use to see the insurgents travelling there. The insurgents’ militant actions in the district are also true. This is the reason why the Ai Hetae SAO chief executive doesn’t allow Buddhist Thai SAO staffs to go out of the SAO office alone or travel in the community at all. The chief executive also provides these Thai Buddhist staffs a ride commuting between their residences at the district Bureaucracy Center and SAO. Moreover, it is very normal in Kampong Ai Hetae, as elsewhere in the southernmost region, for most local residents who have any relation with the Thai state, such as village heads, deputy village heads, territory defense volunteers, and SAO members, to carry a weapon to protect themselves. This is because, apart from state agencies and undercover informers, the locals who become part of state authority thereby also become potential targets of violence by the insurgents.

In the meantime, the residents also have to be very worried that they may be suspected by state authorities. The residents usually already feel mistrustful of state security forces. No one knows whether or not they might be reported by security force informants who are also local residents working secretly for security units. Simultaneously, they have to face the feeling of being very uncomfortable, insecure, and unsafe from security force patrols. This is not about minor disturbances such as rangers trespassing villagers’ properties and sometimes damaging their trees and picking their fruits. The main anxiety of Kampong Ai Hetae residents is that they might be hurt or shot if rangers mistakenly think that they are criminals. Rangers always patrol in the very early morning which is the same time when the residents travel from their home to tap rubber in the low mountain area. At that time the sky is still dark, so vision is not clear and it is hard to identify a person clearly. Every time when residents realize that an army troop is patrolling, then they always try to avoid it automatically, but then it is easy for a troop to feel that these people are suspicious. Moreover, all residents
can’t speak Thai fluently or can’t speak Thai at all, so when they are faced with a troop speaking Thai they can’t communicate clearly and this can bring them trouble.

For ordinary people, who are not directly related to the violent incidents, it is hard for them to know exactly what is the real cause of the incidents happening in their community. Most incidents are left unclear with confusion full of rumors and presumptions. For local residents, each case of violent incidents could be about insurgent actions based on udomkarn (Thai word means ‘ideology’). At the same time, the assumption of a conflict of interest among drug dealers has been also pervasive with the spread of drugs in the community as elsewhere in the southernmost region. There are also the presumptions focusing on personal affairs, and on karn sang satanakarn (Thai words means ‘making the situations’) by the Thai army to justify keeping a great amount of money and power in the region.

Research Methods

I conducted my 11-months of field research in Kampong Ai Hetae from January to November 2011. I got access to Kampong Ai Hetae with help from my senior friend who used to work with some residents there when she was a NGO staff member working on sustainable agriculture and natural resource management. In the beginning there was some concern among a group of residents about my living in the village. They insisted that Kampong Ai Hetae was not safe for me because even women had been killed there while the killings of female residents hardly happen in other neighboring villages. Although some of them believed that most killings in Kampong Ai Hetae were related to the drug business, they were still worried that I might be suspected by other residents of being a government spy. They told us that the formal community leaders didn’t want me to stay in Kampong Ai Hetae either.

What these people were worried about is the fact that a Buddhist Thai, like me, is a soft target for killing by insurgents. When Ghalib tried to avoid having me stay with his family for my fieldwork, he said ‘They’ don’t want a Thai Buddhist to stay and go around in the village. I was unable to ask him who ‘They’ were, but everyone knew that Ghalib meant the insurgents. In addition, he was not only afraid that I would be attacked by the insurgents, but also by state security forces, especially tahan pran (rangers), who
may want to use me as a tool to blame the insurgents for hurting or killing Buddhist Thais.

The problem was solved when my friend contacted Kah Mariah, who was one of member of phuek anurak (Thai word mean ‘natural resource conservation group’) and who is also a council member of Ai Hetae SAO. Kah Mariah is famous for her fearlessness and straightforwardness. Kah Mariah allowed me to stay with her family and said that those formal leaders are too stupid and cowardly to have me staying in the village. Also Ibu, Kah Mariah’s mother, said that I could stay in her house regardless of the reservations of the village or sub-district heads. I tried to make the situation better by going to meet and introduce myself with the two village heads and SAO executive chief as well as the imam (Islamic religious leader) during the first few days of my stay in Kampong Ai Hetae. When I talked to these leaders, they expressed their worry but grudgingly allowed me to stay. Waseem, the head of Village Empat, told me that he actually doesn’t want me or other outsiders who are Buddhist Thais, to stay in his village because if I or other outsiders get killed or hurt, it would cause him as a community leader trouble.

These formal leaders suggested that I wear hijab (head scarf) during my stay saying that the residents would feel better and be more kind to me if they see my effort in respecting their religion. Lby I decided to do so. However, this in not only because of their suggestion, but mainly because I found that my uncovered head made Ibu as well as Kah Muskan,, the daughter-in-law of my host family who always accompanied me to various places, feel uncomfortable. Every time when either of them took me traveling with my head uncovered, we were always starred at by people and everyone we met asked them many questions about me. My acceptance in wearing the hijab made Ibu, Kah Muskan, and other members in my host family’s social circle feel relieved and satisfied.

In the beginning Ibu and Ayah, my host father, told other people that I am a Malayu Bangkok or I am a Muslim from Bangkok and that this is why I can’t speak Malay. Humnah, another member of phuek anurak, also told me to tell this to other residents I met. However, I told her that I don’t want to do so because I don’t want to lie to other people that I am a Muslim. Luckily, for other residents, they seemed to not care much whether I am a Muslim or not. Later on Abuh, Ayah, and Humnah didn’t talk about Malayu Bangkok anymore. Furthermore, I was prohibited to pass in front of the
pondok in Kampong Ai Hetae. When Ibu or Kah Muskan took me with motorcycle to their rubber plots, both of them always avoided the route where the pondok was located. When we couldn’t avoid the route, I was warned to cover my head tightly and wear a long-sleeve shirt. Interestingly, this was not as much a religious reason as for safety because the pondok has been raided by security forces so often. Thai state security forces have always suspected most pondok as being involved with insurgent movement. Ibu and KahMuskan didn’t want me to be accused of being a spy by this pondok people.

I started my fieldwork based on my host family’s networks and connections. I knew more people gradually starting from my host family’s relatives and friends, and then these people brought me to other people close to them. The first few months were the time to know people and make them know me so that they could feel more comfortable to have me, the only one Buddhist Thai, in the community. I tried to appear in public as much as I could to make most people know me by participating in various public activities, both religious and non-religious. It is worthwhile to note that I mainly spent time with female residents attending activities in the woman’s sphere such as female dominated food or tea shops, female religious classes, kitchens or communal cooking for various occasions such as marriage, circumcision, or other religious ceremonies. It was, of course, impossible for me as a female working in a Muslim village to hang out in the male’s sphere such as in male dominated tea shops and mosques. However, with good rapport, the female residents helped introduce me to their husbands, their fathers, and their sons. Then, I could conveniently manage to interview these men on various specific topics.

The first few months were also the time to learn the geography of the area and the importance of each geographical and ecological part. It was the time to learn the process of each farming activity and resource use and their cycle in the year. I did so by participating in farming activities as much as I could the whole year long both with my host family and with other residents. Also my everyday life in the field included visits to the scheduled markets, grocery shops, and food stalls which helped me to develop rapport with residents, especially with those who didn’t do farming but make a living from trading.

In the beginning of my fieldwork there was another problem. Some residents, especially those who worked closely with Thai state authorities such as territory defense volunteers, or those who in the past lost some benefits from conservation activities by
local academics and NGOs (described in Chapter 3), thought that I am a NGO worker and I would bring some trouble into Kampong Ai Hetae. Some residents also called me *phuek anurak*. One territory defense volunteer told Padae Kuwing Marah’s district head that Kah Mariyah brings some NGOs to live at her house. Kah Mariyah retaliated by saying behind him but loudly that “The territory defense volunteers are just stupid like a buffalo. He doesn’t know at all what a PhD student is.” However, after several months passed and these residents didn’t see me trying to push any environmental projects, and after repeatedly introducing myself and explaining why I was in Kampong Ai Hetae to everyone I met, the suspicion disappeared. The territory defense volunteer seemed to become friendlier with me, especially after I had a chance to interview his wife who is an employee at the sub-district health station.

After the residents became familiar with my stay and felt more comfortable with me, I could conveniently make an appointment to interview people. To examine the market economy of farm productions, I did informal interviews with *thao khae* (rubber middlemen), fertilizer sellers, watermelon middlemen, and fermented fish sellers. To examine the role of state agencies, I interviewed state officials such as District Community Development officers, District Agriculture officers, formal community leaders, the SAO chief executive, the SAO chief administrator and some other SAO staff as well as village health volunteers and village agricultural volunteers. To better understand the role of the Thai state, I attended as an observer several meetings, ceremonies and activities that were held by the state organizations in Padae Kuwing Marah district. However, I didn’t have a chance to interview officers in the military, especially MDU99, which was recently established in Ai Hetae sub-district working on development projects, but were accused by local residents of changing vegetation and enclosing public grasslands. Even though I really wanted to interview the military officers, amidst the conflict and violence in the region it would confuse the residents about my role if they saw me travelling back and forth to the army bases or talking with security officers. Therefore, the information about MDU99 I gathered is only from its website and from interviewing residents who used to work for the unit or used to attend the unit’s activities.

After several months in Kampong Ai Hetae I realized that I had not yet participated much through my everyday life in the field with other residents outside the circle of my host family or with the residents whose households are located far from the
cluster around my host family’s house. Thereafter I tried to spend more time with other
groups of residents. I also used question guidelines for informal interviews as a tool to
help me to get more information and more acquaintance with interviewees and their
family members. In the interview I asked them about the details of family members,
kinship network, occupations and income both farm and non-farm activities, farming
activities or trading, religious practices, and their ideas on how to develop Kampong Ai
Hetae.

The informal interview was also useful during the special period of the holy
month of Ramadan when normal activities of both farming and rituals or ceremonies are
suspended. Then it was hard for me to do “participatory observation” as usual. During
the month of Ramadan many residents always rest in the morning from their late night
religious activities and from getting up too early for observing a pre-fast meal called
subor before dawn. Then, in the late morning they usually hang around in front of their
houses chatting among neighbors and relatives before separating to cook or buy food for
fast-breaking for women, and to do some light jobs like moving their cows to graze in
other spots around their houses for men. Therefore, 10 am. to 2 pm. each day was an
appropriate time for me to ride a bicycle slowly to the houses I planned to visit without
disturbing them too much. Also on the way of my slow bicycle riding, I enthusiastically
searched for the ones sitting in front of their houses who gave me some smiles or
greeting, and then I suddenly stopped by to talk to them.

I planned to conduct a full 12-month year of fieldwork. However, during my 11th
month there was the killing of two Ai Hetae SAO officials who were Buddhist Thais
and the crime scene was just around 150 meters from my host family’s house. Even
though killings had happened regularly in the Ai Hetae sub-district during my stay, only
this incident happened so close to me. A few days after the incident there was a rumor
about a leaflet saying that “they” wanted to kill more people, and everyone knew that
the Buddhist Thais could be the first priority for a target. Even though I and my host
families knew that there had been so many rumors going around during the past recent
years on violent incidents, and even though it seems that the incident this time might not
be about political unrest but a personal affair, my stay in the village caused my host
family and my friends there to become very worried by then. Thus I decided to finish
my field work in late November of 2011 and travelled back to Bangkok. However, a
few months later I made two short trips for few days each to visit my host family and
my friends in Kampong Ai Hetae, and also I conducted fieldwork for eight days in July 2012 to collect some more data.

**Dissertation Outline**

In addition to the Chapter 1, an introduction, the dissertation comprises six more chapters. Chapter two examines the background of conflict and unrest in southernmost Thailand starting before the late 19th century. The chapter also examines the changing development policies of the Thai state from the mainstream to the ‘alternative’ ones. The role of the CSS in development will be analyzed to see if I can make some contribution to solving some of the problems in the region.

Chapter 3 explores state development projects implemented in Kampong Ai Hetae. The chapter also examines how the projects pursue the perception of the Thai state that to improve the quality of life for people is the way to solve the conflict and unrest in the southernmost region. The chapter explores the drawbacks of these projects as well as the role of formal community leader as important active agents in implementing state development on the ground. In addition, the chapter analyzes the roles of local academics and NGOs, which later became a part of civil society in promoting environmental conservation and sustainable agriculture as well as the discontinuity in their activities in Kampong Ai Hetae.

Chapter four describes the current attributes of the Ai Hetae ecological system and farming activities in each ecological zone. Also the chapter examines the changes in each ecological zone: wetland, grassland, flooded-plain area, non-flooded plain area, and low hill area, which are mainly caused by state construction projects and the expansion of state agencies into the area, especially after the resurrection of unrest and violence in 2004. In this chapter the adaptations of local residents in response to the changes in the ecological system, including market incentives, are examined both as the consequence and the cause of these changes.

Chapter 5 describes the current farming economy of Kampong Ai Hetae by considering two important cash crops, rubber and watermelon. The chapter also shows how the residents are at the bottom of the farming market economy. Furthermore, it examines the ways the residents survive through their strategies in doing farming in spite of the state’s unsupportive policies and their low status in the market economy.
Since the adaptations and strategies to make a living through modern farming are closely related to other dimensions of change in the Kampong Ai Hetae which are the attributes of rural transformation, Chapter 6 discusses the three main attributes of the transformation consisting of (1) the increasing role of the non-farm sector happening with the decrease of farmland caused by population growth; (2) the increase in modern consumption and lifestyles that in various ways help enhance the economy of Kampong Ai Hetae; and (3) the intensification of Islam which has happened closely with the growth of the modern market economy. This chapter examines how these three issues shape the significance and status of farming in the current lives of the residents of Kampong Ai Hetae.

In the Conclusion, the politics of development in the southernmost region and the political processes of ecological changes are summarized and highlighted both in wider level related to Thai political institutions, nation-state ideology, and the civil society sector, and at the local level related to the roles formal community leaders in development projects and the perceptions of the residents toward the ecological changes. The chapter also summarizes the resident’s adaptations and struggles of farmers with the market economy and ecological changes, and it highlights the reasons behind their unsustainable farming practices and resource uses. Also the inseparable relationships of the non-farm sector, modernity and modern consumption, and intensification of Islam are highlighted. At the end of the chapter several recommendations are offered for the more desirable development initiatives that can simultaneously more effectively enhance the economic, cultural, and political lives of the local people.
CHAPTER 2
DEVELOPMENT AMIDST UNREST AND VIOLENCE
IN THE SOUTHERNMOST REGION

Development is the main factor shaping ecological changes and economic life of the rural Malay Muslims in southernmost Thailand. All development projects in the region have emerged under the long-term conflict and unrest of the region. This chapter will discuss the background of conflict and unrest in southernmost Thailand starting prior to the late 19th century. The chapter will also examine the changing development policies of the Thai state from the mainstream one promoting the growth of the market economy and cash crops to the alternative one promoting self-sufficiency. The role of the CSS in development will be analyzed in this chapter to see if it can be helpful in solving the problems of the region.

The Conflict and Violence: Background

History of Unrest and Conflict between Siam/Thai State and Malay Muslims

The raid of an army ammunition depot in Narathiwat province by tens of unidentified gunmen on January 4, 2004 took away 413 rifles and other ammunitions and left four guards dead. This has been perceived as the start of a new round of conflicts and violence in the southernmost region of Thailand. From that day up until September 2012, there have been 12,377 violent incidents causing 5,377 deaths and 9,513 injuries. The incidents consist of shootings, bombings, arsons, brutal murders, weapon thefts, and gun fights. Around 65-70% of the deaths and the injured are ordinary people, and both Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims. Also since 2004, 182,402 million baht ($6,000,000,000) of the national budget by the Thai government has been spent both on security missions and development projects to stop the conflict and violence of the region.

It is clear that political ideology plays an important role in the conflict and violence in this region. Around 60 percent of the incidents are identified by Thai authorities as ka dee kwam man kong, or cases related to the demands by the insurgents
of liberating the southernmost region that they call ‘Patani’\(^1\) to be independent from the Thai nation-state (Puengnate 2013). This is in accordance with what Duncan McCargo (2008) estimated about militants during 2004-2007 that 70-80 percent of incidents were conducted by insurgents, and 10-20 percent were linked to the action by state authorities including many extrajudicial killings, and around 10 percent were essentially criminals (McCargo 2008:xii). Even though during the past 50 years there have been several groups of insurgents waging guerrilla warfare against the Thai state liberate Patani\(^2\), BRN (Barisan Revolusi Nasional, or the National Liberation Front) - Coordinate or BRN-Coordinate is the one identified by the Thai state intelligence unit and military as well as the local civil society as being active and involved in most current violent incidents. BRN-Coordinate is a secret group and Thai authorities do not know the leadership. However, it has been estimated that so far there are 9,822 insurgents

\(^1\) ‘Patani’ has been used by the insurgents as well as scholars and activists concerning the history of the southernmost region as an, in some degree, independent state loosely governed by Siam, while ‘Pattani’ has been used by the Thai state as the name of one province in the southernmost region.

\(^2\) According to Rungrawee Chalermsripinyorat and the Deep South Journalism School (2012), from 1960 on there have been armed groups of insurgents as listed below:

1) BNPP (Barisan National Pembebasan Patani - Patani National Liberation Front) was founded in 1955 by Malay Patani traditional elites. BNPP is the first armed group fighting for independence. Later on in 1986, the name was changed to BIPP (Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani – Patani Islamic Liberation Front). Now BIPP is not active.

2) PULO (Patani United Liberation Organisation) was founded in 1968 in Saudi Arabia. PULO mainly works outside Thailand and tries to make the case for southernmost Thailand to be on the political agenda at the international level.

3) BRN (Barisan Revolusi Nasional – National Liberation Front) was founded in 1960 by religious teachers who didn’t agree with the education reform policies of the Thai government. In the beginning, BRN employed Malayu nationalist, socialist and Islamic approaches for its actions mainly implemented through the pondok. Later on in the late 1970s there was a conflict over the ideologies employed regarding which one should be highlighted between nationalism-socialism and Islam. Then BRN became divided into three groups: BRN-Coordinate, BRN-Ulama, and BRN-Congress. The leaders of BRN-Ulama and the BRN-Congress already had died, while it is believed by Thai authorities that BRN-Coordinate has been behind most of the violence after 2004.

4) GMIP (Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani – Patani Islamic Holy Warriors Movement) was GMP (Gerakan Mujhidin Patani) before and it was founded in 1995. The leader of GMIP used to go to Libya to get military training and used to fight in the war in Afghanistan. It is believed that GMIP is the most ideologically close to the international jihad movement. It is not known whether or not the actions of GMIP are related to the current incidents in southernmost Thailand.

5) Bersatu was founded by Dr. Wan Kadir Che Man in 1989 as an umbrella organization of PULO, BIPP and BRN. Bersatu is not active now.
consisting of 2,262 armed fighters, 5,930 sympathizers, 1,113 unit leaders, 207 high rank commanders, and 310 ulama or religious scholars/leaders (Puengnate 2013).

The conflict started long before the late 19th century. Even though at that time Siam (as Thailand was formerly known) claimed jurisdiction over large areas of mainland Southeast Asia including the Malay state of Patani, Siam’s control was mainly through tribute and allegiance paid by local rulers while the local states were largely self-governing. Often during the long history Malay Patani elites resisted the power of Siam, especially when Siam was weak or at war with its neighbors. However, Patani always met with Siam’s fierce suppression.

At the beginning of the Rattanakosin Kingdom in 1782, Siam strengthened its territorial sovereignty over the Malay Peninsula, which made Patani no longer a tributary state but rather an integral part of Siam. Anyway, authority in conducting such internal affairs was still granted by the king of Siam to Patani’s rulers, while Siam required from Patani only taxes, labor, and the demonstration of loyalty. In the late nineteenth century, Siam’s territorial sovereignty over Patani was firmly established. King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) and his advisors launched a reorganization of government in which the loose union of provinces and vassal states was replaced by a central administration and the Patani rulers’ right on taxation and revenue. Later on in the early 20th century Patani became a province of Siam.

It is important to note that colonialism was involved in the dispute between Patani and Siam as well. Apart from being a threat to Siam’s territorial sovereignty which led to the implementation of the administrative centralization policy of King Chulalongkorn, the British interests in Malaya undermined Siam’s extension and consolidation of control over the Patani and Malay states. British colonial officials at times were sought for help by Patani’s rulers in their attempts to get rid of Siamese rule over their territory. However, in 1909, Siam was forced to sign the Anglo-Siamese Treaty, which resulted in the transfer of its suzerainty over Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, Peris, and Langkawi to the British. The British in turn renounced extraterritorial rights in Siam and acknowledged Siamese sovereignty over the region to the north of the border, which included Patani. This treaty was the final territorial disposition and has remained the border of demarcation up until now (Anuar Nik Mahmud 1994, Farouk 1984, Idris 1995, Haemindra 1976, Scupin 1986, Teeuw and Wyatt 1970, Dulyakasem 1988, Yegar 2002).
Siam’s administrative centralization policy is seen by scholars as a form of colonialism resembling the methods used by colonizers like the Dutch and British in their colonial areas in Southeast Asia (Anderson 1996: 99-100; Dulyakasem 1988: 213). Wan Kadir Che Man argues that Siam’s administrative centralization is in fact an “internal colonialism” in the way that the relationship between the core area, which is normally dominated by an ethnic majority, and the peripheral regions, which comprise diverse ethnic minorities, are characterized by exploitation due to the uneven progress of industrialization and development. Che Man asserts that internal colonialism is worse than regular colonial practice because it is not based on cost/benefit calculations. This means that the incorporation of an autonomous region into a larger entity is considered to be a permanent gain to the colonizers and no other calculations and assessments are necessary (Che Man 1990: 241). Not surprisingly, there were constant revolts against Siam by Patani’s ruling elites.

Together with demarcating a clear and fixed boundary of the country, Siam’s ruling elites had to connect together various ethnic groups within the territory. This issue became more pressing when the French, who posed the greatest threat to Siamese sovereignty, utilized a racial justification for expanding control over the Lao and Khmer who were claimed to belong to French Indochina. Faced with the ‘logic of race’, Siamese elites needed to break down “primordial attachments” among ethnic groups across the territory creating a common identity that transcended local linguistic and cultural differences (Keyes 1971: 1997). Certain policies had been carried out during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. King Wachirawut subsequently launched a series of official nationalism policies, mainly associating the nation with only the ethnic Thai, through compulsory state-controlled primary education, state-organized propaganda, official rewriting of history, militarism, and affirmations of the identity of dynasty and nation (Anderson 1996: 100-1).

The ethno-nationalistic ideology and assimilation policies were very forcefully carried out under the government of Field Marshal Plaek Pibunsongkram. In 1939, Field Marshal Plaek’s administration promulgated a royal decree called ‘Thai Ratthaniyom’ (Thai Custom Decree) to create a unitary nation based on one ethnic identity and one religion. Therefore, any ethnic or religious attributes which were not in line with the Thais and Buddhism were susceptible to being wiped out. Moreover, the decree was to impose a new Western-modeled mode of conduct on the citizens. Under the Thai
Custom Decree, all Thais, regardless of race and religion, were required to discard all “uncivilized” manners and adopt Western etiquettes such as wearing a European style of dress with particular kinds of hats and eating foods with spoons on the table.

Under the Thai Custom Decree local inhabitants of southernmost Thailand who are Malay Muslims were therefore forced to be both “Thai” and “civilized” at the expense of their “incompatible” customs and traditions including to defer to Buddhism as the state religion. To be civilized, local inhabitants were now forbidden from wearing Malay dress, having Malay names, and speaking and learning Malay. Instead they had to speak central Thai, have Thai names, wear European dresses, and eat food in a European manner. This resulted in local inhabitants’ resistance, and especially to the proposed seven-point demand to the Siamese government by Hajji Sulong, a renowned and highly esteemed Islamic religious teacher. This demand called for the reconstruction Patani as an autonomous territorial and cultural Malay state having a local-born and elected Malay Muslim as a head of state. However, the government didn’t listen and then in 1948, Hajji Sulong, together with a number of Malay leaders, were arrested and jailed for almost four years. Sadly, after being released from jail he was mysteriously killed, allegedly by the Thai authority in 1954 (Anuar Nik Mahmud 1994, Haemindra 1976, Scupin 1986, Dulyakasem 1988, Yegar 2002).

This caused great rancor among Malay Muslims. Later on the decree was revoked by the following government and the law aimed to allow Islam was issued. However, Malay Muslims in the southernmost region have never been properly incorporated into the wider Thai society dominated by Buddhist Thais because of their different ethno-religious identity as well as the identity as people of Patani, especially for the elites. Consequently the resistance against the Thai state had continued.

Thai government’s policy involving the Malay southern region was significantly transformed under the Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat’s administration from a forceful assimilation policy to development. Convinced that economic factors contributed to political unrest in the area, Field Marshal Sarit initiated a number of socio-economic development programs, especially agricultural ones, in this southernmost area during the years from 1964 to 1974. It was believed that improvement in socio-economic welfare would reduce the level of social conflict and lessen the social distance between the central government and the peripheral Muslim provinces. In other words, since the
Field Marshal Sarit’s administration, socio-economic development has been employed as an instrument of national integration, fostering loyalty and understanding towards the government, relieving the Malay Muslims’ feeling of being abandoned, and preventing them from being manipulated by external agitators. Also, another kind of projects was launched to gain loyalty and allegiance from local inhabitants, such as the recruitment of local inhabitants into the bureaucracy. Importantly, there were several projects to minister Islam, such as assistance to the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, or funding for mosque constructions or repairs, thereby displaying the Thai state’s liberal approach to the religious issue. The constitutional concept that the monarch is the patron of all religions was translated into political reality to prevent the exploitation of religion by the separatist fronts.

Field Marshal Sarit administration’s attempt to gain loyalty and allegiance from local inhabitants through development projects has not been successful. The development programs were perceived by local inhabitants with disdain and mistrust as an intrusion of colonial power that threatened their identity and socio-cultural values. This is not to mention several obstacles inherent in the Thai bureaucracy that contributed to the failure of such development programs, be they the inefficiency of the bureaucratic system, the shortage of funds and trained personnel, or the lack of follow-up to advance projects. Importantly, such socio-economic measures designed to lift the living standards of the ethnic minorities failed to recognize that local inhabitants perceive the conflict not in socio-economic terms but as ethnic, religious, and nationalist ones (Che Man 1990, Haemindra 1976, Pitsuwan 1988, Dulyakasem 1988, Yegar 2002).

It is important to note that, apart from the Thai government, the monarchy also has been an institution involved with social work and development projects in this southernmost region since the era of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat. Although suppressed by the 1932 Revolution, the monarchy started to resume its revered status from the 1960s onwards, especially through Field Marshal Sarit’s support, leading to the monarch’s high involvement with politics. This has shaped Thailand as a state with a constitutional monarchy, not just a monarchy limited to ceremonial duties or with power dependent on the constitution. On the contrary, according to MaCargo (2005), the monarch has been playing an important role in forming Thailand’s political order since 1973 through the political network termed the ‘network monarchy.’ It consists of the king and his proxies, such as the privy councilors and trusted military figures. McCargo
points out that the main features of Thailand’s network monarchy are as follows: the monarch has been the ultimate arbiter of political decisions in times of crisis; the primary source of national legitimacy; acted as a didactic commentator on national issues, helping to set the national agenda; intervened actively in political developments, determining the nature of coalition governments, and monitoring the promotions of military and other high rank positions.

Interestingly, the monarchy has taken the situation in southernmost area seriously during the past four decades. In the beginning its role was in providing some emergency services for people in far away rural areas such as a doctor mobile unit. Later, development projects on wetlands were initiated. Apart from those of the monarch himself, royal projects in the southernmost region include the queen’s initiatives focusing on supporting housewife groups in handicrafts and supplementary jobs for additional income. Over the past 30 years, in the three southernmost provinces alone, there have been 398 royal development projects spending 3,700 - 3,800 million baht: 296 projects with 2,700 million baht in Narathiwat province, 62 projects with 549 million baht in Pattani province, and 40 projects with 455 million baht in Yala province. The first group of development projects were started after the royal family’s first visit to the region in 1959, and the number of the royal projects has significantly increased after the regional palace, Tamnak Taksinrathchaniwet (the Taksinrathcainwet Palace), was built in 1974. The king and his family members had been to the southernmost region on a yearly basis and always stayed there each trip for 1-2 months.

The New Round of Conflicts and Violence
Along with the soft method to assimilate Malay Muslims through various development projects, the violence and human rights abuses by state armed forces on suspected villagers has still been going on. One of the most notorious cases in 1973 is known as ‘Saphan Gohtoh’ or Gohtoh Bridge. The sole survivor from the incident informed most local residents about how their fellow Muslims were brutally tortured and killed by Thai military forces. While driving a pickup passing the check point of the marine unit in Narathiwat, six Malay Muslims from the truck were arrested and were brought into GMC army trucks. Then they were killed in the trucks and their bodies were left in the Talubah River. The survivor was found and helped from villagers and the dead bodies were gradually found. This incident led to a big rally in Pattani city to call for justice.
The rally lasted 45 days, the longest rally ever in Patani. However, it is very sad that another five people died in the scene in the rally from a bomb from an unknown source. This made local people more wrathful.

The fighting against the Thai state was most virulent during the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is believed that during General Prem Tinsulanond’s government (1980-88), the Thai state successfully restrained the violence by granting amnesties to former militants and setting up the new security and governance arrangement in the area, coordinated by the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC). General Prem’s policy was to co-opt Malay-Muslim elites through a combination of political privileges and development funds, many of these brokered by the army (McCargo 2005, Atchawanijjakul et al 1997). These policies decreased the violence for around two decades. For McCargo (2005), the Prem-era policies were the product of a semi-democratic period during which the military and the palace played a leading role in shaping the country’s politics.

After the May 1992 Popular Protest against power maintaining of the leader of military coup-makers and the arrival of the 1997 ‘People’s Constitution,’ parliamentary politics were really institutionalized which made elected politicians gain increasing power. This paved the way for the emergence in 2001 of Thailand’s most popular and most powerful civilian prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra. Thaksin’s aggressive way in dealing with the incidents in southernmost region has been widely perceived by academics and Thai civil society as sharply deteriorating the security situation. Thaksin has been severely criticized on his abolition of the Prem-era special administrative arrangement saying that he shut down the channel for local residents to call for justice by placing the highly unpopular police force in charge of security in the region. Also during his period in office there were many cases of extrajudicial killings as well as the two worst incidents related to violent measures utilized by state authorities. On April 28, 2004, more than a hundred men died in simultaneous attacks on a series of security posts, and 32 of them were killed inside the historic Kru-Ze Mosque in Pattani province. Another incident on October 25, 2004, occurred when 78 unarmed protestors died in Thai military custody from suffocation following mass arrest at Tak Bai district, Narathiwat province. However, after the 19 September 2006 Coup
overthrowing Thaksin, strong military measures as well as the increasing number of army forces were continued under the coup-maker appointed government.

So far chronic armed conflict has continued in this region. The violence also seems to have a higher quality and meaning in that each incident causes more severe damage and several incidents have been well-prepared, such as car bombs in urban areas. However, some local academics and local civil society groups believe that even though the violence persists it will not become more severe than today. For them this is because of the strength of the high number (more than 60,000 positions) of security forces (soldiers, policemen, paramilitary troops) and armed villager volunteers (more than 80,000 persons) working on every single village. It is also because of the open-minded approach of Thai government and security agencies in the peace building process allowing all stakeholders to participate (Jitrpiromsri 2012).

For intelligence units, security forces and local of civil society, it now seems possible to identify the insurgent groups responsible for the current violence in the southernmost region. They also have some secret contacts with the insurgent groups for the truce and peace process. In addition, there has been knowledge about the insurgents, especially about their discourses or narratives which have been changing through time from a focus on Malay nationalism or Patani as a Malay Muslim state to a focus on Islamic Revival or Patani as an Islamic state. However, there has never been even one time for the insurgents to take responsibility or to address their demands over the incidents. They have left violent incidents to remain unclear (Samoh 2011).

After Pheu Thai Party won the general election in July 2011, Yingluck Shinawatra’s government has provided several measures to relieve local residents’ grievance and distrust of the Thai state, including 7.5 million baht in compensation for victims of human rights abuses by state authorities, including those from the Tak Bai Massacre and the Kru Se Mosque Incident. Through the work of SBPAC, directly supervised by the Prime Minister and closely working with local academics, civil society sector, and various groups in the people sector, many programs on sustainable development as well as programs to promote education, culture and religion that are based on local community needs and cultural and religious identity have been launched. In addition, under Yingluck’s government there is the national policy of ‘The 2012-2014 Southern Border Provinces Development and Administration Policy’ propelled by the Secretariat of the National Security Council (SNSC) cooperating with local civil
society. This is the first time the national policy on the southernmost region is based on wide participation from all groups of local people and organizations. It is also based on various research studies by academics. The policy therefore seems to face the complexity of problems going on in southernmost region today, and it pays attention to environmental and natural resource issues as well.³

The 2012-2014 Southern Border Provinces Development and Administration Policy was proposed to the government and Thai parliament to be utilized as an operational framework for all governmental agencies. One of the important issues in this policy is to promote peace building through peace dialogue with insurgent groups. This led to the signing of the ‘General Consensus on Peace Dialogue Process’ on February 28, 2013, between the Thai government by the Secretary-General of the National Security Council and the leaders of BRN who are called in the Consensus as “people who have different opinions and ideologies from the state.” This is first time that the Thai government accepts publicly the existing insurgent movements based on their political ideology and views them as stakeholders in the southernmost region. So far the peace dialogue is in progress. However, it has not yet halted violent incidents. At the same time, the alternative forms of administrative and governing system, such as decentralization and autonomy, which can cope with ethnic and religious differences in this restive region, have not yet been recognized by the Thai state in the peace dialogue process. This is because it such matters conflict with mainstream ideology in Thailand; that is, the inflexible nationalist ideology which is based on singular sovereignty as the Kingdom of Thailand cannot be divided.

Moreover, there are other obstacles to solve the problems in the southernmost region. First of all is the lack of unity of the Thai state on policies and implementations. It seems that civilian elected governments haven’t had real power to administer the army which has played important roles both on security and development, especially

³ The objectives of development in this policy are to strengthen the economy and society based on the needs and the ways of life and the initiations from local people, to distribute capital for investment into communities on the ground, to develop the capacity of people for the jobs in their localities and in other areas including jobs abroad, to support the investments on businesses that are in conformity with community lives to increase employment in local areas, to increase the role of community and local people to manage natural resources, to create the balance ion natural resources between utilization and sustainability, and to improve and provide more opportunities on education based on identity and local ways of life.
development projects in the region based on the King’s Sufficiency Economy discussed later. This gap leads to weakness and inefficiency in the administrative systems and provides the full power to the army. Under the special laws, Martial Law and Emergency Law announced in southernmost Thailand, many suspected villagers were detained by military without subpoena. Several of them have been brutally beaten and tortured, and some have even died during detention in army bases. There are also several killings allegedly committed by security forces, including extrajudicial killings. Fortunately, during the past few years the tortures and human rights abuses have been decreasing because of the campaigns by human rights organizations and the civil society sector. However, the delay in the justice process and the court’s refusal for bail for the accused persons leaves many villagers in prison for years before verdicts come, and in several cases the accused persons are proved not guilty. Weak administration also makes it easy for the officers, formal community leaders, and influential persons in the southernmost region to take advantage from illegal businesses, especially drugs, or to corrupt state budget. This makes the conflict and violence in southernmost region more complicated and harder to resolve.

There are obstacles from insurgent side as well. The lack of unity among insurgent groups is significant. This is not only about diverse organizations but also diverse generations among insurgents. The senior generation usually lives abroad including in the neighboring country of Malaysia, and the fighters who are in the young generation live and work in the southernmost provinces. Therefore, it is hard to gain consensus among them, especially when it comes to the peace dialogue with the Thai government. Importantly, the violent means utilized by the insurgents is also the main obstacle. Their operations often cause many innocent people, including women, children and elders, and both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists, to die or get injured. Recently even human rights organizations condemn violent methods employed by the insurgents. The famous peace researcher, Chaiwat Satha-Anand, calls for the insurgents to stop the use of violence and challenges them to use non-violent methods instead. For Satha-Anand, the insurgents have to bring and formulate their political agenda into the public sphere both in local and national contexts to gain political solutions. By doing so, the operations of insurgents will be less destructive for the whole society and will make the peace process possible (reported in Deep South Journalism School 2012).
Development by Thai State in Southernmost Thailand

Since the period of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat’s administration, the view that poverty is the main factor causing enmity toward the Thai state among Malay Muslims has been the basis for state interventions in southernmost Thailand. Thai elites believed that Malay Muslims of southern Thailand always compare their quality of life to the higher one of their counterparts in Kelantan, Malaysia. That approach was also applied in other regions, especially when national security was threatened by communism since 1970s. To prevent its peoples from cooperating with the communist movement, Thai state, through the National Economic and Social Development Plans, aimed to increase income of people in rural areas. In doing so, the structure of the production, particularly that of the agricultural sector, needed to be transformed to increase the export rate. Apart from supporting farmers in growing primary cash crops according to the demand of global market, the Thai state placed emphasis on irrigation systems to distribute water to farmers, especially for second crops to increase farming production for national export (The Office National Economic and Social Development Board).

This approach has continued up until now in viewing poverty as the cause of the unrest and violence in the southernmost region. The national statistics indicate that the monthly average of income per person in the southernmost provinces is much lower than the national one. For example, in the year 2009, it was $139 in Pattani province, $190 in Yala province, and $108 in Narathiwat, while for national level it was $238 (National Statistical Office). This is as shown in the speech by Tavee Sodsong, the director of SBPAC under Yingluck Shinawatra’s government, given to local community leaders in the network of the CSS and international organizations like Oxfam and EU saying that:

“If we accept that poverty is the threat to peace, it is the time to cooperate to each other to solve poverty problem. We have more than 366 villages in southern border provinces which are under ‘jor por thor’ (minimum criterion of household’s access on basic needs). Do we pay attention enough to people who are on ‘Zakat’ list (people who are extremely poor and then are on the list as receivers of Islamic annual merit making done by people who are well off.)? We (SBPAC) don’t have knowledge to solve the problems. We need helps from you…” (Saronee 2012)

Importantly, in this speech, Tavee Sodsong emphasized that to solve poverty is the way to solve unrest and to make peace in southernmost Thailand. It is also important
to note that SBPAC under Yingluck’s government has been working closely with local academics, NGOs, and the civil society sector. Then, it is not surprising that his speech expresses new discourses utilized in dealing with southernmost regional problems—such as ‘peace building’, ‘food security’, ‘community-based development’, and ‘people participation in development’—which is different from the old approach focusing on top-down development and the use of armed force. However, with the new concepts, the preconceived notion that poverty as the main cause of conflict and violent in the southernmost region is still continued.

It may be true that poverty, especially “old poverty” identified Rigg as mainstream carried by governments and multilateral agencies viewing poverty as an inheritance of the past caused by remoteness and the lack of access to market, state, and infrastructure, was the main factor pushing Malay-Muslims antagonism toward the Thai state. Also the remoteness made it easy for insurgents to work safely beyond state suppression. However, after several decades of rural development including the improvements of infrastructure and transportation and the expansion of the market economy, rural areas in the southernmost region have not been as remote or backward as in the past anymore, and rural Malay-Muslims have already attached to the market economy. Of course, there must be people who are relatively poor, or even extremely poor, because they are not able gain advantages from the development process and market economy. According to Rigg, NGOs workers and radical scholars usually see these poor people as victims of development and the market which leads to another concept, ‘new poverty’. Nevertheless, for the new round of the unrest and violence since 2004, it is hard to relate the decision of local people in supporting insurgency simply with ‘new poverty’.

From the media coverage when some insurgents surrender and put down weapons joining amnesty projects provided by the Thai army, the main reason for their decision that ‘the repentances’ gave when media interviewed them is usually that they have economic difficulty after attending insurgent groups. Because they have to escape from state security forces, it is hard for them to work to provide for their family. This means that they are poorer because they attend to the insurgency, and this doesn’t mean that because they are poor so they attend insurgency. In addition, there has not been any demand sent by insurgent groups mentioning economic issues and poverty even in leaflets, usually scattered and posted around by insurgent groups as the only way they
can express their manifestoes, warnings, and clarifications to others, particularly to local residents. The exception is the latest flier distributed in some districts in Yala province in February 2013. In that the insurgents claimed they wanted more open economic opportunity for local residents to be hired or promoted by the Thai state and to gain budgets and factors of production for free from governments. It is said in the leaflet that local residents should be grateful to them (the insurgents) because economic opportunity is increased by their militant performances which make the Thai government budget a lot more money for job hiring and development programs to try to stop the unrest and violence. Then, according to the leaflet, the local residents must not tell the authorities when they notice the insurgents. Thus it seems that the group making the leaflet sees economic opportunity as an outgrowth of their main mission. Otherwise, it can be assumed that the insurgent groups have not yet seriously thought about economic issue or poverty.

Moreover, amidst unrest and violence during the past decade, the economy of southernmost Thailand has been growing actively, apart from the huge amount of budget provided for the southernmost region on development and security which results in more jobs and money flow. The special low interest rate for loans provided by the government and the special tax reduction also help promote the economic growth of the region. When combined these factors are combined with the existing economic base, especially from rubber related closely to market economy, many people have more purchasing power including income from working restaurant business in Malaysia, thus the economy of the southernmost region has been growing amidst the unrest and violence (Pattani Forum 2013). It is important to note that even though the benefits from the economic growth are uneven, thus some people are in poverty, the significance of poverty for the conflict and violence has not thr main cause as usually conceived. However, amidst the economic growth and changes, when the Thai state implements rural development at the village level, especially on farming and natural resources, it still carries the same approach from the period of Field Marshal Saritd in viewing poverty as the cause of unrest and violence. This next section will examine the perceptions and practices of the Thai state’s interventions for development of rural Malay-Muslim communities in the southernmost region. Also this section will try to understand why the misconception regarding the relation between poverty and unrest has continued until now.
Mainstream Development Approach

Wetland Development and Water Management

State projects on wetland development and water management have long been pervasive and prominent in southernmost Thailand. According to the “old poverty” concept of Thai elites, wetland development and water management were started to enhance the economy to improve living conditions of the Malay-Muslims as a way to halt conflict and unrest in the region. It is important to note that the Thai monarchy has played a very important role in initiating many of these projects.

During his first stay at Tamnak Taksinrathchaniwet in 1973, King Bhumibol found that there were many wetlands in the southernmost region that couldn’t be utilized for agriculture. He also found that people in Bajoh and Muang districts of Narathiwat province, especially those living along wetlands, had always faced flash floods coming down from the mountains after heavy rains. The annual floods are said to damage 60,000 rais (23,722 acres). The King then gave his ideas on flood prevention to the Royal Irrigation Department (RID), which in turn responded by building a 5.6 kilometer long drainage canal in the area. One year later, when there was a heavy monsoon, it was widely publicized that because of the King-initiated canal, the rain water in the wetland, where the main component is peat swamp, was drained through the canal into the sea perfectly and as such there was no flood. It is also said that it was for the first time over the past five years that local people in that area could grow rice for their household consumption and for sale, and rice production increased up to 100%. The media reported that during the construction of the drainage canal, the King was very worried about this project because it was not a regular project run by government and as such might face some budget difficulty. In 1975, right after recovering from illness, the King and his family went to the southernmost region to oversee the construction. When the project was done, he presided over the opening ceremony by opening the water-gate to drain ‘rotten water’ from the wetland to the sea.

The approach viewed wetlands as useless, unproductive, and wasteland with only waterlogged acid soil and causing flooding. The solution was to transform wetlands by draining water out of them. The land would then have greater productive value, as prominently displayed in the Bajoh project. This then became the main principle for other wetland development projects in the southernmost region. It is
important to note that these projects ignored any concerns about the ecological values of wetlands which have been well known as among the most productive ecosystems in the world, comparable to rainforests and coral reefs (Ornes and Hogan 2010). In addition, for the Thai state it seemed to be unavoidable to transform wetlands entirely. This is because wetlands, especially peat swamps as inundated areas, are different from other types of natural resources in the difficulty of exploiting them for economic purposes. While it takes only a minimal introduction of a new technology to exploit or develop other types of natural resources such as marine animals or montane forests, a whole transformation is required to be able to make use of wetlands.

A few years later, however, the problems of the Bajoh project started to appear because the soils in the peat swamps where water was drained out became acid and then it was not feasible to farm them. The lower layers of peat soil have a high concentration of pyrite that can cause oxidation and then turn the soil into acid sulphate when it dries out. The King recognized the problem and then came up with another development project to render peat soil capable of agriculture production. The Land Development Department (LDD) played an important role in implementing the King’s idea on peat swamp soil improvement. Initially this department experimented with planting grasses in dried swamp areas to transform them into grassland for grazing and thereby gain manure to improve soil conditions. Also dry weeds were harvested for fuel. Later on LDD experimented with growing cash crops and vegetables using several kinds of fertilizers. The research findings were applied to other areas. After that the King pretend ideas on founding the Cooperative Village Project to create a fully developed village on dried swamp land. The project allocated 30 rais (12.25 acres) of dried peat swamp to each settler and supported them in doing agriculture (The Royal Project Foundation).

In ecology, wetlands perform significant economic benefits to human society for natural products and foods, ecosystem services, flood protection, and so on. Wetlands are also actually part of the wider ecosystem having a complex set of relationship with other ecosystems in the watershed. A watershed is a geographic area in which water, sediments, and dissolved materials drain from higher elevations to a common low-lying outlet or basin which is a point on a larger stream, lake, underlying aquifer, or estuary. Moreover, many of wetlands are influenced by tides and often by freshwater from runoff, rivers, or groundwater for their water levels or their inundating attribute and their inflow of nutrients and organics from surface and/or tidal water (Ornes and Hogan 2010).
In 1991, the Office of Royal Development Project Board (RDPB) founded Pikulthong Royal Development Study Center. Apart from coordinating several development projects on wetlands, especially peat swamps with different governmental agencies, the Pikulthong Center aims to disseminate research findings among farmers on how to utilize acid land from dried peat swamp. Importantly, Pikulthong Center has recently appropriated discourses of sustainability and participation of local people, which had never been mentioned before over the past 20 years of wetland development. However, although sustainability discourse has been added to wetland development projects, the drainage and irrigation projects have still been running and the impacts of these projects on the ecosystem haven’t yet been in a concern of state agencies, especially the Royal Irrigation Department (RID).

RID has 17 branches all around the country. Its main mission is not only to carry out its own irrigation projects, but also to take care of the royal projects. The 17th Irrigation Office is in charge of irrigation in the three southernmost provinces. More than 60% of its projects is about wetland, which includes building the dikes to prevent river water from coming into wetlands, and building the system to drain water out of wetlands. It is impossible to separate the work of RID from the royal projects, as RID is a key organization following the development projects initiated by the King. RID provides budget for the royal projects as well. When local people do royal petitions asking for help from the King on irrigation and when the petitions are approved by the King, RID follows up by evaluating their feasibility and then doing the construction. Moreover, RID’s own projects in the southernmost region are based the King’s ideas as well.

There are two significant points about the royal projects on wetland development and water management in southernmost Thailand. The first one is about the political context of these projects which involves the power struggle among elite groups in Thai society in general. The King started the projects in the early 1950s amidst the power struggle between the monarchy and an anti-royalist autocratic leader Field Marshal Plaek Pibunsongkram. During that period, the royal projects were just the king’s personal projects and didn’t get much support from the government. However, the situation changed after Field Marshal Sarit came to power in 1958. As part of his political strategy, Field Marshal Sarit restored the revered status of the monarchy as a
crucial part of national ideology. After decades of competition and distrust, the military and the monarch have now become close allies. In the context of the communism threat, the royal projects were used to obstruct the expansion of communism in rural areas. As such, the royal projects not only got more cooperation from government agencies, but also got financial support from foreign governments that worked against communism (Chitbundit 2007).

The royal projects became a main task of most government agencies when RDPB was founded in 1981 by royalist Prime Minister Prem Thinasulanon. RDPB works as an intermediary between the king and government agencies aimed to transcend the limitations of bureaucracy such as red tape, lack of cooperation among government agencies, and budget delays. RDPB’s main objective is to supervise and ensure that the royal projects are taken care of by the government agencies in the way the King wants them to be. For some departments, 80% of their work is devoted to running the royal projects. When the sustainable development discourse captured public and international attention, the Royal Development Study Center was founded in every region to carry out royal development projects in full scale. The centers draw together government officials from various departments and academics to conduct research and development projects. The centers also provide training courses for local villagers to ‘improve their lives’. Now there are more than 3,000 royal projects carried out across the country, and 56.4% of them are about water resource management or irrigation. The Royal projects receive special budgets from the government and a huge amount of donation money (Chitbundit 2007).

Another significance of these royal projects for wetland development and water management is about the conflict and unrest in the southernmost region. It is about how the projects have worked to transform local inhabitants who are Malay Muslims from an ethnic minority in Thai state to the King’s subjects in the Kingdom of Thailand.

After political recovery in 1958, the monarchy has been promoted as one pillar of the national ideology. The King has been portrayed as a kind and caring father who transcends any ethno-religious differences of his subjects. This is particularly the case in southernmost Thailand where ethno-religious differences are seen by the Thai state as the main cause of the long-standing conflict and violence. Since his first visit to the region, the King has committed himself to being a good and caring patron of Islam as well as Muslims. It has been widely said that the King as well as other royal family
members allow Malay Muslims not to practice royal courtesy such as not to bow or stand still when the royal anthem is played, whereas the rest of the people in the nation are required by law to do so. The case of Poh Wadeng (grandfather Wadeng), an old Malay-Muslim villager of Pattani who the king regards as his close friend, illustrates so clearly how much importance the monarch gives to the establishing of rapport with Malay Muslims, while he has never done this in other regions or with other ethnic groups.

Illustration 2.1 The King and Poh Wadeng (The photo taken at Thung Kej village, Paseyawoo sub-district, Talubah district, Pattani province in 1992) (Matichon Online 2012)

Two concepts are at work here. First is ‘pasoknikorn’ or the royal subjects. Second is ‘tai pra boromphodhisomphan’ or being under royal protection. In Thailand, to be a citizen of the Thai state or to be a ‘true Thai’ is the same thing as being a royal subject. Regardless of ethnic and religious differences, everyone can be a royal subject as long as he/she acknowledges the royal sovereign’s power over his or her lives. To acknowledge the royal sovereign power in turn provides one with royal protection and prosperity in the kingdom, and this process is accomplished via the king’s charisma. As
an ethnic minority of a different religion in the Thai state, Malay Muslims of southernmost Thailand are specifically subject to these two concepts. It is through the royal projects on wetland development and water management that the two concepts have materialized. Once participating in the royal projects, Malay Muslims become royal subjects and gain well-being through royal protection like other groups of people in the kingdom.

Wetlands, and especially peat swamps, lends itself to the materialization of the two concepts in several respects. Ecologically speaking, peat swamp is a complex ecosystem which doesn’t allow a modification of a specific spot without yielding an impact on the whole ecosystem. To transform peat swamp then requires a huge amount of resources, budgets, and technologies, which are beyond individual capacity. In terms of property regime, peat swamp contains an area regarded as common property, though not acknowledged by the law, whose modification requires collective actions. Therefore, only those who possess authority or sovereignty over the territory, either the state or the monarch, are capable of transforming peat swamp on a large scale. This goes along very well with the representation of peat swamp and other kinds of wetlands as waste land and those living nearby as the incapable, uneducated, and poor people who need urgent help in wetland transformation. To gain status as Pasoknikorn or royal subjects by participating in the royal projects on wetland development under the royal protection or tai pra boromphodhisomphan then becomes the way through which local inhabitants are helped and the wetlands are developed.

Being a royal subject under the royal protection, however, has its price. To render local inhabitants who are seen as being uneducated, poor, and helpless to suit the royal patronage means ignoring a complex local ecological history. Local residents in the southernmost region have utilized wetlands in various ways, ranging from rice growing and cattle grazing to fishing, each of which is in accordance with the changing nature or the annual cycle of the wetland ecosystem. Also a major characteristic of wetlands such as seasonal flooding doesn’t cause any problem to local residents, unlike the view highlighted by the royal projects.

The Promotions on Cash Crops
Cash crop promotion is an important way to decrease ‘old poverty’. By doing so rubber has been the main focus of the Thai government since the branch of the Office of the
Rubber Replanting Aid Fund (ORRAF) in Pattani was founded in the mid-1980s. ORRAF is a non-profit enterprise which is under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. It was established in 1960 according to the Rubber Replanting Aid Fund Act when Field Marshall Sarit was the prime minister. Although ORRAF also works to develop operation systems and marketing, and to establish and develop agricultural institutes, its main mission is to encourage farmers to replant existing rubber varieties by the good breed ones and to promote rubber planting among farmers who have never planted rubber trees before. The Budget for ORRAF is mainly from the Relief Fund (CESS) approved by Thai cabinet and charged from international rubber exporters (Office of the Rubber Replanting Aid Fund).

The works of ORRAF have been very helpful to Kampong Ai Hetae residents as well as to most rubber smallholders in Thailand. According to Jefferson M. Fox (2010), Thailand is one of the rare cases of rubber producing countries where most rubber plantations are owned by smallholders with full control over their lands, and smallholder’s rubber production is a viable and effective proposition in moving households out of poverty. By contrast, in Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar, the rubber plantation business is mostly owned by foreign investors through concession arrangements and contract farming supported by the government. Therefore, most villagers are struggling, selling their lands, becoming rubber workers, or planting rubber with only a limited amount of knowledge transferred.

Since ORRAF has long made rapport with Malay-Muslim villagers on its own, it can work directly with each individual member without the need for assistance from formal community leaders like other development projects. This helps solve the problem that most benefits from governmental projects have always been concentrated among formal leaders and their relatives or intimates. Several of ORRAF field staffs can speak local Malay fluently, while it is hard to find Buddhist-Thai government staffs of today who are able to speak local Malay. One ORRAF field staff said that ORRAF has provided training on Malay language for more than 30 years already. The rapport between ORRAF and local residents has been built and maintained continually for several decades from distrustfulness in the beginning by villagers thinking that the Thai government wanted to take their lands through the works of ORRAF.

ORRAF is not the only agency triggering the increasing amount of rubber planting in southernmost Thailand. In 1964, the Department of Public Welfare under
the Ministry of Interior founded several self-help land settlements in Yala and Narathiwat provinces. The aim was to draw the poor and landless people who are Buddhist Thais from other regions, especially from the northeast, to pioneer hill areas in the southernmost region to plant rubber. In 1973, there were 9,964 households or 50,807 people living in the 181,440 rai (71,735 acres) of the self-help land settlements in the two provinces and also in Satun, another Muslim majority province. It is interesting that the self-help land settlements were a part of the effort of the Thai state to assimilate Malay Muslims hoping that the Buddhist Thai immigrants would change the population structure in the southernmost region (Atchawanijjakul et al).

Also the increase in rubber planting area can come from the policies of each government which go beyond the responsibility of ORRAF. For the planting of new rubber plots in former paddy fields, which is normally outside of the conditions to get support from ORRAF, recently locals have been encouraged by the special program called, *Thai Khem Kheng* (Strong Thai Program) by the government under Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva during 2008-2011. *Thai Khem Kheng* aimed to enhance the growth of the economy in all regions of Thailand. In the southernmost region, the residents who transformed their deserted paddy fields into rubber plots during that time received some support from the government even though the benefits from the project were not as much as those provided by ORRAF (Patipatkarn Thai Khem Kheng 2010).

Apart from rubber, oil palm is another important cash crop promoted by the Thai state in southernmost Thailand. Oil palm farming has been of interest to smallholders after the Board of Investment of Thailand (BOI) supported the founding of oil palm refineries. These made palm oil into a consumer good for everyday cooking by people who previously used the shortenings from coconut, peanut, and lard. However, oil palm planting in the south increased from 2004 onward when the government under Thaksin Shinawatra’s administration launched the palm oil and oil palm development plan for the years 2004-2029. The plan aimed to increase the oil palm planting area to 10 million rai (3,953,686 acres) in 2029 to make Thailand the main palm oil exporter and to produce biodiesel blended with petro-diesel as an alternative energy for sustainability and to reduce national petroleum importing. In 2010, the oil palm planting area in Thailand was 4.077 million rai (1.58 million acres) of which 3.55 million rai could be already harvested, and of which 87% was in southern Thailand including the southernmost region (National Information Center).
In the southernmost region, most oil palms have been planted in the rim of wetland areas as well as in previous paddy fields. The Bajoh Cooperative Settlement, which is a part of the royal project, became a huge area for oil palm planting a decade ago. After around 90,000 rais (35,583 acres) of wetland in Bajoh were dried to solve flooding according to the King’s idea in 1974. The dried wetland was allocated to several thousand people. However, it had never been successful in doing farming on the heavy acid soil in Bajoh as the impact of dried wetland. Even though there have been several agricultural research studies to make farming possible and many supports going to the settlement’s members to farm on the allocated land, it has still continually failed. As the one member who is in the first group coming to Bajoh Cooperative Settlement said that:

At that time the land here was so bad. When I first arrived here I was able to plant rice for only 3 years, and two years later we couldn’t get any production. After that I didn’t plant anything. I made a living as in wage labor in the city of Narathiwat leaving home in the morning and coming back home in the evening. Once we tried to plant annual vegetables but without success. The staffs from Phikulthong Development Center didn’t believe that the vegetables couldn’t grow on this land, but when they tried to plant themselves they realized the truth.

The situation had been like this until 1999 when Pikulthong Development Center did the research and found out that oil palm can grow in such a dried acid soil. After that the whole area of Bajoh Cooperative Settlement has been transformed into a huge oil palm plantation. This is the first time the settlement members received substantial return from their allocated farmlands after the long years of failure. Although oil palm has been represented as a good solution for the deteriorated wetlands, oil palm planting in the Bajoh Cooperative Settlement requires complex techniques including using chemical fertilizers to restore the soil with high cost which small holders can’t afford without subsidies from the Cooperative Office. Another problem is the environmental impacts from underground water decreasing which causes frequent fires in this settlement’s plantation.

It is important to note that NGOs working in the southern region have long been criticizing the promoting of cash crops. They point out that the cash crops of rubber and oil palm have destroyed biodiversity, which not only causes environmental impacts by loosing local varieties of plant species and by destroying soil quality and sources of
water, but also decreases the food security of the local communities causing more households’ expenditures on foods. ORRAF has been condemned for its rule not allowing other kinds of local plant to be planted in rubber plots funded for replanting. Some NGOs tried to work with ORRAF to make it change the rule. Luckily, ORRAF later on has paid more attention to biodiversity in rubber plots. Moreover, the CESS of rubber export tax, which is the main source of budget for ORRAF to support smallholders for replanting, has been seen by NGOs as being bad to smallholders as the exporters always push the tax burden onto the smallholders. They have also emphasized the lack of power of smallholders in the market economy having no way to negotiate on the price of their products, while governmental price interventions haven’t yet provided enough access for smallholders, especially those in the southernmost region (Humanities and Social Science Research Center 1999).

NGOs also point out the oil palm invasion into ecological sites, especially wetlands, and the transformation of paddy fields into oil palm plots, which can cause food security problems in the near future.

‘Alternative’ Development Approach

During the past two decades the Thai state has adopted an ‘alternative’ development approach to utilize in the southernmost region. This approach seems to be different from development in the past aiming to promote cash crops and market economy. The alternative approach is based on environmentalism and the value on self-sufficiency of local communities as seen in the practices of the Thai state in environmental conservation and Sufficiency Economy.

Environmental Conservation

The advent of the global trend in the sustainable development approach started a few decades ago and has brought some modifications in state development projects including on wetlands in the southernmost region. The environment has started to be among the main concerns of Thai state agencies instead of emphasizing only how to utilize natural resources such as forests and wetlands for economic returns.

Under this new approach, wetlands in the southernmost region have been classified by the state into three categories: (1) Preservation Area, such as reserved wetland forests and wild-life sanctuaries; (2) Conservation Area, such as deteriorating
swamp forests requiring research on plant varieties, plant maintenance, and forest rehabilitation and protection; and (3) Development Area, which is degraded swamp areas or parts of the swamps which have been transformed by local inhabitants for agriculture. In 1991, the 126,625 rai (50,063 acres) of *Phru Tho Daeng* (Tho Daeng Wetland) covering the area in four districts of Narathiwat province was declared a wetland wildlife sanctuary, and later on the name was changed to the Princess Sirindhorn Wildlife Sanctuary. The sanctuary’s aim is to protect wild animals, plant communities, and ecosystems. To achieve such a goal, the sanctuary, primarily through an armed ranger unit, attempts to prevent local inhabitants (5,328 households living in 34 villages within 2 kilometers around the sanctuary) from hunting and gathering in the sanctuary’s territory (Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation).

Interestingly, the new category of wetlands is based on the prioritization of pristine wetland forest over other components of wetland ecological system and on the degree of deterioration thought to be caused by local inhabitants, different from the local classification which is based on different modes of usage. Only the primary wetland forest is highlighted while other parts of the wetland ecosystem are left unaddressed. Worse still, non-primary wetland forest is identified as ‘the wetland forest surrounding area’ which is seen as a reverse evolution of primary wetland forest. That is, primary wetland swamp forest is destroyed and invaded by local inhabitants, then becomes a secondary wetland forest before eventually being a deteriorated grass field. This is to ignore how different parts of the wetlands are related to one another as an ecological system.

In addition to this classification that ignores the ecosystems of wetland, a flat environmentalist discourse and the sanctuary singularize the causes of wetland deterioration and especially wild fire. In 1998, there was a severe wild fire in the Princess Sirindhorn Wildlife Sanctuary. The fire lasted for 3 months and caused a lot of smoke, which resulted in respiration difficulty among the locals. Interestingly, although wetland development projects that have been carried out since 1976 caused not only acid sulfate soil but also wildfire as they drain water out of the wetlands, the local residents are singled out as the main cause of wildfire through either their grass and weed burning in their farmlands or their water drawing from wetland forest. Moreover, the local residents are also accused of poachers hunting wild pigs, langurs, birds, and other animals as well as illegal wood cutting. In addition, buffalo grazing is seen as a
problem because the sanctuary officers believe that cattle would step on soil and tree roots thereby damaging the forest and transforming the forest into grassland. The local residents are accused of illegal land occupation around the edge of the sanctuary as well.

The founding of the sanctuary can’t be separated from the existing royal wetland development projects. Although founded by the Royal Forestry Department by law, the Princess Sirindhon Wildlife Sanctuary is closely associated with the Pikulthong Development Study Center of the Office of the Royal Development Projects Office Board (RDPB). So far the main missions of state agencies working in this sanctuary is to keep water in the wetland forest to prevent wildfire, and at the same time they have to deal with the problem that water stored in wetland forest often flows over into villages nearby in the rainy season and then causes flooding. More than 10 water control buildings, long dykes, and check dams as well as several ditches were built in the sanctuary, as shown in map 2.1. The agencies have also worked on the prevention of intrusion into the sanctuary, which apart from prosecutions has provided help on alternative careers for the invaders.

These works are in accordance with the recent charge of Princess Sirithon in 2010 given to state agencies while doing a field trip in a village nearby the sanctuary; namely, the agencies should ‘manage the water in Toh Daeng wetland forest to benefit the forest and to not cause any impacts to communities’ (the Office of the Royal Development Projects Office Board). This means that the sanctuary, closely related to royal projects, works to legitimize the role of the monarchy as a protector of the wetland ecosystem for future generations. The royal kindness is also shown through the representation that the swamp forest protection measures and the use of wetland resources are negotiable in some degree, and even invaders still get support or funding from the project for their alternative occupations.
Sufficiency Economy

After 2004, Sufficiency Economy has become the new development approach of the Thai state to stop violence and unrest resurrected in the southernmost region. Sufficiency Economy, the approach formulated by King Bhumibol Adulyadej, has been vigorously applied in national policies during the past decade and has become the course or guideline for all state agencies working on agriculture and community development, including those in the southernmost region. There has been also an effort to embed Sufficiency Economy as national culture by incorporating its values and methods into the school curriculum. Sufficiency Economy claims to offer a way to cope with unavoidable realities of market and globalization in the contemporary world. With its three key principles—moderation, wisdom or insight, and the need for built-in resilience—individuals are able to gain a certain measure of self-reliance to deal best
with the market, and countries are able to gain so in dealing with globalization (United Nations Development Programme 2007).

On December 4, 1997, the King made his usual birthday address to a nationwide audience. That was the first time that the Thai people heard about a Sufficiency Economy that:

“Recently, so many projects have been implemented, so many factories have been built, that it was thought Thailand would become a little tiger, and then a big tiger. People were crazy about becoming a tiger… Being a tiger is not important. The important thing for us is to have a sufficient economy. A sufficient economy means to have enough to support ourselves… It doesn’t have to be complete, not even half, perhaps just a quarter, then we can survive… Those who like modern economics may not appreciate this. But we have to take a careful step backwards.” (The King’s address at Dusit Palace, 4 December 1997 - in United Nations Development Programme 2007)

After that the whole speech and the key phases were recounted and rerun in various media, then they became popular. Several government agencies and other institutions adopted the principle of Sufficiency Economy enthusiastically as shown in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report:

“The Ministry of the Interior adopted the principle of sufficiency, launched into a major programme to educate its own personnel on its meaning, and earmarked a large slice of its budget for programmes on the theme. The Royal Thai Army embraced the sufficiency principle and began planting rice plots for military consumption. Political parties in both the ruling coalition and the opposition espoused the king’s ideas, as did several leading monks and many prominent social commentators. In 1999, the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) adopted the King’s idea as the guiding principle for the next five-year development plan, and the country’s leading economic think tank, the Thai Development Research Institute (TDRI), selected it as the theme for its prestigious annual conference.” (United Nations Development Programme 2007: 20)

It is said that although the King’s ideas always command respect, this reaction went beyond the usual. A major reason was obviously the economic crisis that had struck in July 1997, five months before the speech. Since then foreign capital had fled the country, the currency had plummeted, massive numbers of companies had become technically bankrupt, consumer spending had dropped by a fifth, over two million people had lost their jobs, and the economy was shrinking at a rate far faster than it had ever grown. It has been said that the King’s speech touched a chord with all who were
disadvantaged, dismayed and disoriented by this unprecedented shock. Interestingly, after economic recovery started several years ago, the King’s ideas continued to spread until now (United Nations Development Programme 2007: 20-1).

Even though the idea of Sufficiency Economy had been spreading since after the King’s address in 1997, its significance greatly increased after the Royal Thai Army staged a coup against the elected Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on 19 September 2006. The coup-maker appointed government led by a retired General Surayud Chulanont, who later on was appointed to be a privy council member, as the premier (October 2006-January 2008), changed the national economic development approach from the liberalism promoted by Thaksin Shinawatra, the former prime minister, to Sufficiency Economy. General Surayud said that a Sufficiency Economy as the idea from the King would help Thailand get along with globalization wisely, and the people could rely more on themselves.

Sufficiency Economy has not been only the ‘alternative’ which is totally opposite from the economic development approach carried by Thaksin’s administration, also it has been utilized as a political apparatus to justify the coup and the coup maker appointed government whose way to come to power was not from a democratic way, but by overthrowing the government who won an overwhelming majority vote. It has been pointed out by the supporters of Thaksin that ‘Thaksinomics’, which is a term used to refer to an economic set of policies of Thaksin, had played an important role in Thailand’s recovery from the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. Thaksinomics consisted of two parts called ‘Dual Track Policy’: the first track is to increase the export, foreign investment, and tourism to draw foreign money into the country; and the second one is to arouse the grassroots economy by supporting the production of small and medium entrepreneurs and household consumption via various populist policies.

Through the promotion of Sufficiency Economy, Thaksinomics was portrayed as an evil political and economic system increasing consumer indebtedness and trade deficits as well as involving severe corruption from mega-infrastructure projects which was the core of Thaksin’s second-term economic policy. At the same time capitalism and globalization promoted by Thaksinomics were viewed as an exploitation system over poor and powerless people. Sufficiency Economy with its, claims of sustainability,
human development, and community strengthening, seemed to be morally superior to Thaksinomics.

According to McCargo (2008), the serious upsurge of violence in southernmost Thailand from January 2004 was mainly linked to domestic political factors. It is important to note that two years before the 2004 resurrection, Thaksin dismantled the existing army-led security structures, notably SBPAC created by the chair of Privy Council and his allies in the early 1980s. It was argued that the old insurgency had degenerated into mere banditry and thus the police were placed in charge of maintaining order. At that time Thaksin saw the southernmost region as hostile territory for his Thai Rak Thai Party, a sub-region dominated by officials loyal to Prem, the palace and Democrats Party.

After a wave of extra-judicial killings and disappearances, almost a thousand people were killed in violent incidents in the southernmost region between January 2004 and mid-2005. Also the two most serious incidents occurred in 2004: Hetkarn Krue Sae (Krue Sae Incident) on April 28, 2004 with the death of 32 Malay Muslim men amid the siege of Krue Sae historic mosque, and the Hetkarn Takbai (Takbai Incident) on October 25, 2004, when 84 Muslim demonstrators were killed because of suffocation after being piled in several layers in army trucks. Then the King signaled his disapproval of Thaksin’s policies in the region. He elevated government critics via the Privy Council, and privately urged prime minister Thaksin to adopt a conciliatory stance. However, instead Thaksin backed hardline measures including the use of martial law further inflaming the situation.

Finally, following the February 2005 election, General Prem made the remarkable public intervention urging Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to accept advice from the King and Queen by adopting a peaceful and cautious approach to the problems of the southernmost region, rather than hastily sending in force without any proper understanding of the situation. General Prem’s speech referred directly to the King’s address in 2004 advocating ‘khao jai (understanding), khao thueng (accessibility), and pattana (development)’. Within days, the government created a National Reconciliation Council (NRC) to deal with the unrest in the southernmost region. This according to McCargo was a complete departure from the previous policy of securitization. Interestingly, the new body was chaired by the former Prime Minister.
Anand Panyarachun, with the ubiquitous Prawase Wasi as vice-chair. Both of these individuals are influential figures of the CSS (more details later). The latter according to MaCargo are a part of the network monarchy. It has been charged that Thaksin created the NRC simply to neutralize his critics while using state power to regain the upper hand over the network monarchy.

After the September 19, 2006 Coup, the royal Sufficiency Economy and the royal strategy, *khao jai* (understanding), *khao thueng* (accessibility), and *pattana* (development), have been promoted and implemented extensively in the southernmost region by all state agencies with a large budget. There are four points in the Sufficiency Economy relating to the previous approach of economic development focusing on economic growth. Firstly, after the coup, the Sufficiency Economy has overtaken the measures and direction of expanding the market economy initiated by the ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Shortly after the January 4, 2004 Incident when a group of armed attackers raided an army camp in Narathiwat and looted about 350 weapons, then apart from the martial law imposed on the area, a comprehensive economic development package under the instruction of Taksin Shinawatra, the Prime Minister at that time, was launched immediately to cover poverty eradication, economic growth, and transportation links as well as social and human resource development in an urgent attempt to stop the unrest and violence. The government also targeted the expansion of the agricultural sector, border trade, *halal* export, and tourism as well as providing land to landless farmers (Kavin Chongkittavorn 2004: 273). However, later on, after the September 19, 2009 Coup, even though the budget for economic development projects in southernmost Thailand had been substantially much more than that provided during Thaksin’s administration, it has been mainly for state employment and activities for the Sufficiency Economy rather than for the growth of production and the economic sector.

Secondly, while the Sufficiency Economy has been praised since 2004 as a royal idea to stop the unrest and violence in the region, this has been done separately from the royal development projects in the past. As mentioned earlier, previously the royal projects on wetland development also supported the growth of the commercial economy by trying to increase household production for the market, something contrary to a Sufficiency Economy which focuses on production for household consumption with less dependence on the market economy. Interestingly, the
background of the previous royal projects was never mentioned in the subsequent discourse on the Sufficiency Economy.

Thirdly, even though, according to General Prem’s address, the King seems to promote a peaceful and conciliatory stance to stop the unrest and violence in the southernmost region instead of using aggressive military force, the number of army troops sent to the southernmost region continued after the coup in 2006, even when the coup-maker appointed prime minister and later on the Democrat party, which both have been favored by the Palace, were in the power. The most interesting thing is that the military troops have become the main extension agents in promoting the Sufficiency Economy in the southernmost region. Lastly, every government after the September 19, 2006 Coup, even the ones of Thaksin’s political party, has aimed to promote the market economy and investment recovery in southernmost Thailand. This has transpired in spite of efforts to respectfully implement the royal strategy of khao jai (understanding), khao thueng (accessibility), and pattana (development) for the Sufficiency Economy as the guide for their policies and their implementation (The Government Public Relations Department).

Civil Society Sector and Development in Southernmost Thailand

‘Civil Society’ in the National Context

‘Civil society’ is widely known as a general term referring to the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious, or philanthropic considerations (The World Bank). However, civil society in Thailand is far more complicated and unique, and has been closely related to Thai politics. Moreover, in Thailand the significance of the civil sector is not as a general term, but it is as specific term used to call the network named ‘Pak Prachasangkom’, which literally in English is CSS (CSS). CSC includes a number of not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations, foundations, institutions, and community groups. CSS has played the important roles in Thai politics and development in the southernmost region.

During the past two decades the CSS has become the dominant part of social movements in Thailand. The CSS has played an important role in strengthening local
communities on the ground as well as in scaling up and organizing dispersed local communities including NGO work in a national network. It also proposes to government various laws, regulations and public policies on sustainable development, decentralization, community rights, and so on. Even though the CSS is not part of the government, organizations/institutions/groups of the CSS have been managed and administered through state-funded independent organizations which were founded by its leaders through negotiations with government agencies to gain endorsements and state budgets.

The CSS was initiated and has been led by well-educated urban elites and professionals, especially medical doctors and scientists, who want to be social engineers, including political scientists, senior NGOs, senior social workers, and senior bankers and businessmen. These figures are well-known as *khon dee* (people with goodness) having moral superiority to others and being beyond dirty political power and greedy capitalism. They are also well-known for their social concerns for making Thailand a better society. These leaders have been perceived by the public as the ‘think tank’ of Thai society and some of them are called *ratsadon awusoo* (the nation’s senior intellectuals) proposing the paradigm to bring Thai society out of all kinds of crisis. Interestingly, although themselves refraining from politics and bureaucracy, these elites have a close relationship with or are part of some state power institutions. Some of these leaders also have close rapport with the monarchy, which also identifies itself as not being a part of the government and bureaucracy. These leaders who are royalist intellectuals and who are identified by McCargo as the ‘network monarchy’ work as connectors between the non-governmental organizations/institutions and local communities on the one hand, and on the other the royal ideology and royal approach in development (Albrittion and Bureekul in Supyen 2004, McCargo 2005, Ungpakorn 2010, Chitbundit 2007).

It is important to note that the rise of the CSS as a dominant component of Thai social movements has been happening concurrently with the fall of the People Sector Movement, which was the main component of the Thai social movement before. Since the 1980s, after the collapse of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), NGOs in Thailand emerged and started working together with local communities on various issues ranging from soft issues like social welfare and community development to contentious issues caused by inappropriate/unsustainable/unfair state’s policies and
development projects such as dam construction projects and land and natural resource management. Thai NGOs did very well in organizing and empowering local communities to solve the problems they are facing. Through the support from NGOs local communities are able to negotiate with government agencies and also gain cooperation from other groups such as academics, the media, and middle-class social activists who later on become the leaders of the CSS.

It has been almost two decades already since foreign funding sources have moved other poorer countries, so most Thai NGOs now are funded by state-funded independent institutions/organizations from the CSS. However, becoming a part of the CSS wasn’t caused only by funding, but also by Thai NGOs agreement on development ideology produced by the elites of the CSS in opposing globalization and capitalism, and instead focusing on self-reliance, communalism, and nationalism. This has coincided with the role of the King in development and his idea of the Sufficiency Economy. In addition, along with the focus on promoting the neo-liberal economy through its populist policy the Thaksin’s government provided several kinds of social welfare to the grass roots in Thailand. As a result the government gained high popularity among these people who are mostly in the lower class. It has been pointed out by several political scientists that currently Thailand has come to the political stage that low income people have more power as a political actor being able to negotiate for national policies for their own benefit through their votes. This also creates a direct connection and rapport between the political party and grass roots, and then weakens the People Sector Movement and decreases the roles of NGOs in solving the problems of local communities. For some NGOs, the only way to recover the wilted movement was to ally with the network monarchy in opposition to the Thaksin’s government.

After the military coup of February 23, 1992, and the bloody military crackdown of May 17-20, 1992, through popular protests in Bangkok the need for a governing system with accountability was apparent and necessary for resolving the country’s political crisis. At that time the main problems of Thai politics were: (1) how to separate military from political power, and (2) how to stabilize elected political power/governments. However, it was soon realized that elected political power and parliament are in the hands of greedy and corrupt businessmen or capitalists. Then political reform which means people participation, transparency, decentralization, and community rights became Thailand’s national agenda. The leaders of the civil society
sector, which at that time had not yet become fully established and stabilized as it is today, in cooperation with NGOs, played an important role in forcing political reform. This led to the 1997 Constitution which is called the people's constitution, because it was the first time the constitution was drafted by a Constitutional Drafting Assembly which was popularly-elected.

Through the political reform process the CSS grew to have more influence and became involved in proposing several laws, regulations, and national policies such as the National Economic and Social Development Plans. At the same time, the elites of the CSS initiated the establishment of several state-funded independent institutions. Apart from the Thailand Health Promotion Fund (THPF) there are also the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) and Community Organization Development Institute (CODI) to solve the crises of Thai society. It is believed that these independent institutions have more efficiency than bureaucratic agencies and can provide more opportunities for local communities, minorities, and marginalized people to participation in development projects and policies. The most significant one of the independent institutions is THPF, the main budget source for non-profit foundations including NGOs in Thailand. According to the law, some of the “sin taxes” collected from producers and importers of alcohol and tobacco go directly to THPF. During the past decade, the budget of THPF was increased markedly from 22,551,910 baht ($751,730) in 2001 to 1,262 million baht ($42 million) in 2010.

The CSS criticizes Thailand’s liberal democracy for its inadequate efficiency, transparency, and legitimacy in the supposedly representative and parliamentary system. It views that liberal democracy as centralized and obstructing the participation of its members, especially the marginalized. At the same time, they think that liberal capitalism, which is always promoted by liberal democracy, as weakening the sustainability and self-sufficiency of local communities. Therefore, the CSS aims to control both liberal democracy and liberal capitalism to make them just and fair. The CSS focuses on reducing the role and power of the state and then on trying to increase the role and power of the social sector instead (Atchawanijjakul and Jarisomboon 1997, Tungchollathip 1997, Chareonsin-oran 1997, Laothammatasna 1997, Puangsamlee 1997). Importantly, the CSS sees liberal democracy with a representative system as not real democracy because of the focus only on the majority and election. The latter is
based on vote buying by corrupt politicians and vote selling by the poor, selfish, short-sighted, and uneducated rural villagers.

While suspecting liberal democracy, the CSS seems to favor and to be a part of conservative power in the Thai state (McCargo 2005, Giles2010). It is important to note that the Thai state consists not only of an elected government and its bureaucracy or administrative units, but also traditional/conservative establishments, especially the military and groups of aristocrats and technocrats with the monarchy at the center. These establishments are hardly accountable to elected governments and parliaments yet have still been playing important roles over political, economic, and social issues in Thailand (Handley 2006, Hewison 2008, McCargo 2001 and 2005, Ungpakorn 2010). However, today traditional/conservative power is faced with many challenges: their own internal conflicts; the insecure future of succession in the case of the monarchy; international pressure favoring democracy and freedom of expression (especially in the case of the Lese-Majeste Law or the Article 112 of the Criminal Code); the growth of the people movement demanding equality and liberal democracy; and the dissatisfaction of the ordinary people with the economic, social, and political privilege of the conservative ones in power.

Amidst the current national political conflict, the CSS has been severely criticized as supporting traditional/conservative power (Kitirienglarp 2010, Thaothavin 2010, Rakyuttitham and Thai Social Movement Watch 2010; McCargo  2005; Ungpakorn 2101). When the populist political party, Thai Rak Thai (Thai Love Thai), of Thaksin Shinawatra, won the 2005 general election again for the second time with a landslide victory allowing the party to form a single party government, the focus of the CSS shifted from civic virtue and civic voluntary mind to participatory and deliberative democracy as the opposition of representative democracy and as public and political space for civic people who are not able to compete in representative democracy because of not having enough money to buy votes (Tantiwitayapitak 2007).

When the military started in the September 19, 2006 Coup to oust Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the CSS endorsed the coup. After the coup, some leaders of the CSS were appointed to be members of the National Legislative Council and even ministers of the government were appointed by coup-makers. Furthermore, the CSS has always kept their distance from other people’s political groups that demanded the representative democracy demolished by the coup. Significantly, it has ignored the
massacre by the Thai state during April-May 2010, when Abhisit Vejjajiva as a Prime Minister ordered the crackdown on the Red Shirt protestors calling for dissolving the parliament and a new election. The crackdown caused the death of 93 protestors and a thousand persons were injured. The CSS certified the rightousness of the mass killing by working on the Thailand Reform Process, which was utilized by Abhisit’s government as the apparatus to conceal its guilt and to distract the public from its mass killing (Kitirienglarp 2010, Thaothavin 2010, Rakyuttitham and Thai Social Movement Watch).

Southern Border Civil Society Assembly (SBCSA)

After facing the great and endless loss of deaths and injuries from the new round of unrest and violence since 2004, there have been various groups of people, consisting of local academics, community leaders, activists, college students, NGOs, Islamic intellectuals, local journalists and media, businessmen, and so on working in various activities to solve the problem. These groups have been working on various issues: human rights, alleviation of the suffering of the lost and injured families, woman and youth empowerment, community development, economic development, knowledge production and public communication for better understandings of the situation in the area, and education-religion-culture promotion. Later on these groups came together to make a network called the Southern Border Civil Society Assembly (SBCSA) (Patan 2012).

The groups or organizations under the SBCSA civil society are diverse and may have different views in comprehending the situation of the region and may have different strategies to pursue: some of them cooperate with state agencies well; some of them challenge or oppose the violence utilized by both Thai state agencies and armed insurgents; some may operate on liberal democratic values and principles; and some may focus on religious values and principles. However, as a whole the SBCSA has been recognized by Thai government agencies as well as by international organizations. Importantly, it has played an important role in dealing with conflict and violence as a neutral space between the two opposing sides in the great conflict, the Thai state and the insurgent groups. The neutral space, as a process of peace building, is expected to be a safe and free zone for all groups including ordinary people to raise their voices, their needs and ideas to solve the problems of the region. Also it has supported and been
involved in peace dialogues between Thai authorities and various groups of the insurgents to stop the violence (Patan 2012).

Even though SBCSA has emerged specifically in local contexts and has been worked out and run by local people, they have some connection with the CSS at the national level. Through the existing connections with local academics and NGOs working on development and environmental issues, after the resurgence of the unrest and violence in 2004, the establishment institutions of the CSS, such as the THPF and the TRF, have played a role in cooperating, funding, and supporting various activities of organizations and groups of SBCSA. After the massacre during April-May 2010, the CSS expanded their work on the Thailand Reform Process initiated by Abhisit’s government to distract attention from the massacre into the southernmost region by establishing the Southern Border Reform Assembly (SBRA) working closely with the existing SBCSA on sustainable development and decentralization. Recently, the SBRA and the SBCSA held 200 focus groups collecting proposals from them in the region about the forms of an administrative and governing system suitable to specific ethno-religious attributes of the region and to resolve the conflict and violence. At the same time, the Reform Assembly drafted the Royal Decree to Establish the Institution to Promote Local Community Recovery and Development in Southern Border Provinces, and proposed it to Prime Minister Yingluck’s government to establish a new special organization to work on sustainable development with more participations from local communities. The royal decree is based on the Civil Society Sector’s view that government agencies can’t work efficiently on development, and then this becomes one of the causes of the conflict and violence in the region.

Even though SBCSA and the CSS, a network on national level, have been cooperating in various activities, they are in some degree slightly different. As mentioned before, amid the current national political conflict since before the September 19, 2006 Coup, the CSS has been inclined to support conservative establishments and the military against representative electoral democracy. However, to encourage the peace building process and to stop violence in the southernmost region, it is inevitable to question the political power structure of the Thai State where the monarchy and its network and the military are at the center. It also needs to question the nation state ideology that maintains that the state is the Buddhist Kingdom of Thailand, a single sovereign nation or unitary state that cannot be separated. This is
because, under this power structure and ideology assimilation measures, both forceful and benign ones, have been used on the Malay Muslims leading to ethno-religious resentment among local residents. At the same time this power structure and the nation state ideology seem to be incompatible with the idea of self-determination proposed by the SBCSA to facilitate the cultural and political lives and rights of the Malay Muslims as the way to halt the unrest and violence and to build peace in the southernmost region.

Unfortunately, the conservative role and nationalist approach of the CSS has never been criticized or questioned seriously by the SBCSA. Concern about the political power structure of the Thai state and nation state ideology as the causes of the unrest and violence in the region has not been raised by the SBCSA. Moreover, the political power structure and the nation state ideology have also been reproduced inadvertently by the SBCSA while working closely with the CSS, as in the case of their efforts on development, agriculture, and natural resource management.

**The SBCSA and the CSS and Development in Southernmost Thailand**

A few years after the resurgence of the unrest and violence in 2004, several organizations of the CSS from Bangkok started to run their programs in the southernmost region by cooperating with local academics, local NGOs, and community leaders who had worked on community development, sustainable agriculture, and environment issues before but had to halt their activities for few years for safety reason.

**Local Community Movement before 2004**

In 1992, being worried about the impacts of the Talubah Dam Construction Project, especially about flooding in villages, Malay-Muslim local inhabitants campaigned against the project. In doing so, they received help from and collaborated with local NGOs, and then with academics. They founded the People’s Organization Protecting Talubah River Basin (POPSRB).

The feasibility studies of the project were started in 1987 by the RID two years after the King visited the area and said that there should be an irrigation dam at the Talubah River to obtain water for agriculture and household consumption. The Talubah Dam Construction Project is a 100 million dollar project, consisting of eight 12.50 x 6 meter floodgates with the controlling building. It has been widely known among local residents that the project does not only aim to provide water for agriculture, but it is also
a part of the bigger scheme in draining water out of the wetlands in the region. The project aims to block the Talubah River to get fresh water to cleanse acid sulfate soil in dried wetland under the Royal Project in Narathiwat’s Bajoh district. It is important to note that the acid sulfate soil is a direct impact of draining water out of the wetlands, the main task of the royal wetlands development project a few decades ago. The King’s idea to establish the Talubah Watershed Development Project, of which the dam construction is just one part, to extent water distribution system to support agriculture at the nearby wetland area, has been often cited by the RID to legitimize the dam construction project, especially when local residents oppose the dam construction.

It is worth noting that the POPSRB emerged in the context of the community rights movement in Thai society. Although community rights cover a wide range of rights ranging from education rights and farmers’ rights to ethnic rights, central to the movement are the rights over natural resource management. The movement gained momentum in the 1990s and culminated in the people’s version of the Community Forestry Act that is aimed to allow community, in collaboration with the state, to use and manage forest sustainably and according to local culture and experiential knowledge. The movement also culminated in the founding of the Assembly of the Poor that called primarily on the state’s endorsement of community rights over resource management, and in the so-called People’s First 1997 Constitution where the principles of community rights were codified in almost ten articles. The community rights movement provided a political context in which Malay Muslims can express their grievances without being seen as separatists or insurgents. Prior to this, it is almost unimaginable for Malay Muslims to express their grievances about the Thai state in a civil manner.

The POPSRB joined the Assembly of the Poor to launch their campaign on the national level. Through the assembly, its demands reached the minister in charge and eventually were met when the minister decided to cancel the dam construction project. It is one among a few cases in which the government’s dam construction projects were canceled. The reason behind this is not so much about ‘scientific facts’ or ‘empirical data’ as about a politics, as the Thai state found it too costly and risky to launch a project most local inhabitants disagreed with while conflict and violence in the region has not yet been settled. A wide range of Islam and Malay-ness had been practiced and encouraged during the campaigns and the flood over kubo (graveyard) was one of the
main reasons to protest against the dam construction. In addition to the Assembly of the Poor, the POPSRB, through the rally, had created an alliance with the Alternative Agriculture Network (AAN). After the long rally, POPSRB participated in the AAN’s project on sustainable agriculture.

Despite the POPSRB’s seeming success, any open questioning and criticizing of the approach on freshwater wetland development initiated by the royalty and run through the royal projects has still been limited. Although the POPSRB, local academics, and NGOs realize the impacts of the development approach, they found it difficult to work on the issue. All they could do was just to conduct research in some areas to explore how villagers had utilized wetlands in various ways such as for grazing, fishing, gathering, and farming. Although they found that the number of those making use of wetlands is steadily declining due to changes in the wetland caused by the 4Ds (dam, dike, dredge, and development), they found it difficult to deeply discuss the real cause in public.

In addition, the escalation of the violence in the region since 2004 has exacerbated the problem. The POPSRB had not been able carry out their activities as they did before for 3-4 years. This is partly because it was not safe to do so and partly because they might be suspected of being insurgents. In addition, under the martial law and emergency law, many of the POPSRB leaders and members were suspected of being insurgents or their sympathizers. Some were arrested and held without trial. Others fled their homes and never returned. Importantly, in 2005 the RID tended to resume the Talubah Dam Construction Project and worked with some influential figures or “big-men” to help it implement the project. These big-men also gain personal benefits from the project. As such, to openly protest against the project this round seems to be too dangerous for the POPSRB.

The SBCSA and The CSS after 2004

The activities of the POPSRB as well as of its supporters, local academics and local NGOs, had ceased for around three years after the resurgence of the unrest and violence in 2004. However, their activities on development, farming, and natural resource management started to be resumed little by little later on, even though the violence has continued up until now. Although safety has been still the main concern, support from the CSS through its established organizations and leaders who are public
figures make possible the resuming of the activities of the POPS RB, local academics, and local NGOs in the southernmost region.

After 2004 with the drastic increase of injuries and deaths, the unrest and violence in the southernmost region has become the most crucial problem of Thailand. The leaders and main institutions of the CSS working on community development, sustainable agriculture, and natural resource management, such as the Social Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University, TRF, Local Development Institute (LDI), and Mahidol University’s Research Center on Peace Building, realized that they must play a role to tackle the problem of the region. The high social and political status and political connections of the leaders and organizations of the CSS make it easier for their activities to obtain cooperation from governmental agencies. This helps decrease the anxiety of local residents regarding suspicion from state agencies when these agencies act to prevent their rights over natural resources or to work on development. At the same time the local residents have learnt that as long as their activities do not affect the insurgents or conflict with the interest of influential figures or ‘big-men’, then it is fine for them to attend the activities of the CSS.

For the CSS as well as local academics and NGOs in the southernmost region, development and ecological/environmental issues, such as environmental changes and conflicts over natural resources, are very important contributors to the unrest and violence in the region in three related ways. First, environmental impacts of state development projects, which cause poverty and resentment among local people, have been one of the main causes of the unrest and violence in the region. Second, the unrest and violence is seen as a distraction that the Thai government has to pay serious attention to instead of paying more attention to the agricultural and environmental issues of the region. Third, an environmentally sound and community based development approach is the way to solve not only economic and environmental problems, but also the conflict of the region. The CSS from Bangkok and the local academics and NGOs, which are in the SBCSA, have been working together to hold various activities with local residents on ecological and environmental issues such as training programs, workshops, and community based research.

There are three interesting points about the roles of the CSS working on development, agriculture, and natural resource management in the southernmost region. First, when the CSS, a national network, comes in to tackle the problems in the
southernmost region it has carried the ideology favoring conservative political power with it. While promoting the peace building process and the respect and tolerance of people of different ethnicities and religions, the leaders and leading organizations of the Civil Society Sector, discursively and practically, to some extent help maintain the hegemony of Thai nation state wherein the monarchy and military are the center of power. For example, they promote concepts like the unity of the Thai nation state which they believe can accommodate all ethno-religious differences. Therefore, it is not surprising that when working on development, agriculture, and natural resources, they emphasize the royal strategy, *khao jai* (understanding), *khao thueng* (accessibility), and *pattana* (development), and the King’s Sufficiency Economy as ideal development approaches without having to think about the local and regional politics of these royal initiatives. Moreover, while supporting the peace process to stop the violence in the southernmost region, the leaders of the CSS paradoxically justified the mass killing by army troops in April-May 2010 in Bangkok, which caused the death of 93 Red Shirt protestors. This is just only because they viewed the Red Shirts as a threat to conservative political power and the network they have been a part of (Pinprateep 2010).

Second, even though the attempt of the CSS working on development, agriculture, and natural resource is to consider the voices of grassroots in policy formulation, there are several factors preventing the CSS from obtaining representative voices of the villagers or a deep understanding about them. The CSS always depends too much on its toolkits, which it believes can get voices of the grassroots and gain data/information to understand situations and the community lives in a very short period of time. Apart from questionnaires, the toolkits mainly consist of focus group and brainstorming. These methods are rooted in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) which, despite its goal to empower local residents through incorporating them in the research process, contains several weak points (Rambo 2009: 8-10). Spending a short time talking to villagers or having villagers brainstorm or speak out through focus groups in artificial situations with the PRA method or pushing them to be something that they are not familiar with, such as being ‘nakvijai chaoban’ or villager researchers, does not offer anything approaching ‘a close to firsthand experience’ of villager’s lives and communities. This is particularly the case when it comes to the question of power relations, which can only be examined by long-term and in-depth studies.
Moreover, these toolkits raise many serious questions: How participatory is it to use these toolkits? Who participates in the process? Under what social constraints do people participate in the process? This means that through the toolkit only voices of certain groups of people, mostly those of community leaders and local intellectuals who are able to communicate with or speak the same language as the CSS, were heard, whereas those of many others, especially ordinary villagers, were largely ignored. In addition, rather than looking for ideas from the ground, the CSS always comes to the local community with popular concepts such as peace, nonviolence, cultural diversity, sustainable development, sufficiency economy, and social capital to solve problems. Their potentials and contributions notwithstanding, these popular concepts may not be able to capture the complexity of the lives and thoughts of ordinary people who at the same time find it difficult to appreciate these concepts as they live their lives quite differently from the advocates of the CSS or.

Third, since it is not able to representative voices of villagers or deep understandings about them, what the CSS perceives and represents about the lives of local residents, their farming practices and natural resource uses are usually far from the actual situations on the ground. The CSS has portrayed the market economy and capitalism as bad influentes pushing local residents into modern and intensive farming practices and unsustainable resource uses, and then these make the lives of local inhabitants economically insecure with high dependence on outside factors. At the same time the romantic view about the local community, representing their lives and uses of the ecosystem and natural resources peacefully, happily, and in accordance with nature, has been emphasized as in opposition to the market economy and capitalism.

According to the romantic approach of the CSS, the Malay Muslim community has been represented as collective, communal, and homogenous, and importantly as being primordial by associating it with images of the past rural village livelihood in contrast to modernity, capitalism, and urbanity. *Dusong*, traditional mixed orchards where each plot is owned by a kin group, and *hoh orae ama*, the common natural resources, such as grassland and swamp forest, have been highlighted as they have persisted through time from the past because of the community’s proper social rules and modest life as Muslims. At the same time, some senior local residents, who have much experience and knowledge about farming and resource use, have been celebrated by the
CSS as ‘prad chaoban’ or villager intellectuals, and their life stories have usually been published and broadcast nationwide in media in the network of the Civil Society Sector.

This romantic approach leads the CSS to operate on the idea that the subsistence economy and life in harmony with nature are desirable and good for local Malay Muslims. However, this noble wish does not seem suitable for the real lives of local residents on the ground where most farmers in the southernmost region have been doing cash crop intensive farming, using chemical substances, and highly dependent on the market economy for long time already.

**Conclusion**

The long history of conflict and violence in southernmost Thailand has made the region unsettled in the eyes of Siamese/Thai elites. Development to eradicate poverty of Malay Muslims has been utilized for more than a half decade as a tool to subdue the unrest.

It is important to note that during the past few decades the rural area in the southernmost region has been far from ‘old poverty’, which means the poverty caused by the remoteness and the lack of access to infrastructure, state services, and market. On the contrary, today rural Malay Muslims are close to the market economy and living in modernity. Even though change has made several people faced with new poverty, which means the poverty caused by more contact with the market and development processes encouraged by state, there is no clue about the relation between this new poverty and the current unrest and violence in the southernmost region. In particular, the economy of the region as a whole has been growing in spite of the severe conflict and violence that started in 2004. However, it does not seem to matter if this rural area and the character of poverty have been transformed, the Thai state still considers poverty, especially through the old poverty approach, as the cause of the unrest and violence in southernmost Thailand. In addition, contrary to the belief by the Thai state, poverty is actually an obstacle to local residents participating with insurgent groups, instead of a factor pushing them to do so.

This chapter points out the political power and structure of Thailand as a country with a special constitutional monarchy where the monarchy has played significant roles in politics and has been a center of the nation state ideology. Under this political
system, the monarchy has played a central role in development projects in the southernmost region, especially on wetlands which are pervasive in the region. Also, when taking political conflict among Thai elites into account, the development projects in southernmost Thailand has been seen as the way to bolster the political status of the Thai monarchy.

Political ecology with its focus on political knowledge is useful here in examining conventional ideologies of the Thai state regarding development related to the ecosystem and natural resources, especially in wetlands. The long-term conflict and unrest, which means unsettled sovereignty of Thai state over the region, makes it necessary for the Thai state to work on territorialization and state making through resource control. (See the discussion on state control over resources, territorialization, and state making by Vandergeest and Peluso 1995). By doing so, modern knowledge and technologies have usually been utilized. In other cases, modern cartography, land title system, and land zoning are utilized as a part of the state making process, which provides the authority of states to claim rights to stewardship over lands and resources that they do not own and to regulate and delineate how and by whom resources in each zone should be used (Peluso 2000, Neumann 2004, and Scott 1998). In the case of wetlands in the southernmost region, apart from technologies on water management and soil improvement, the discourses and narratives of the three main conventional ideologies help the Thai state to gain legitimacy over the unsettled southernmost region.

The first one is the development ideology dominated by the modernization approach viewing wetlands including other resources as being useless and unproductive, and as such they must be transformed into more valuable ones. The second one is technocratic ideology, which has been utilized by the Thai state to problematize wetland and local inhabitants in order to favor the knowledge owned by Thai elites. Ecological knowledge, which in this case includes environmental problematization, always comes in from the top down. Also, it is usually related to the social construction of local inhabitants. In this case the Malay-Muslim have been constructed as not having any ability to utilize wetland resources without help from the Thai state. This is even though there is no scientific evidence to show that the state problematization of wetlands and develop projects are the most appropriate. Third is the environmentalist ideology which emphasizes population growth and individual self-
interest as major causes of environmental degradation as shown in the case of the founding of the wetland wildlife sanctuary. These three ideologies combined together to work on resource control by the Thai state which leads to the state’s territorialization and state making in the southernmost region.

The chapter also examined the current development trend of the Thai state, the idea of the Sufficiency Economy, which is the royal approach to solve problems of the previous development. However, the new approach is still serving the same function in promoting the status of the monarchy amid political conflict against popularly elected governments. At the same time, the Sufficiency Economy has helped justify the role of the military in suppressing unrest in southernmost Thailand, instead of promoting peaceful and conciliatory stance as claiming by those in the network monarchy. Moreover, the Sufficiency Economy distracts and conceals negative impacts caused by the previous development projects, of which most have been under the royal development approach.

Apart from the Thai state, the CSS plays an important role in development by supporting an environmentally sound and community based development approach as the way to solve not only economic and environmental problems, but also the conflict and violence of the region. It is interesting that the CSS in Thailand is actually a part of the conservative faction in the power structure of Thai politics. The Thai CSS views liberal democracy and economic liberalism as the main causes of all crises in Thailand. In particular, representative democracy has been viewed as not a real democracy because of the corrupt politicians and vote buying sold by the poor and uneducated rural people. When it comes to the southernmost region, the CSS still reproduces nation state ideology and stabilizes the power of conservative institutions. This is transpires even though the nation state ideology which aims to assimilate people of different ethnicity and religion is actually the root of conflict and violence in the region.

At the same time, the Sufficiency Economy and royal strategy to subdue the unrest in the southernmost region, khao jai (understanding), khao thueng (accessibility), and pattana (development), are promoted by the CSS without any concern about the politics behind these development discourses and practices. In addition, apart from ineffective methods and toolkits to try to understand the rural Malay-Muslim community, their romantic approach of seeing rural Malay Muslims as living in a subsistence economy that is opposite to the market economy and capitalism
makes the roles of the CSS unhelpful for local residents whose lives have been closely involved in the market economy and capitalism.

The next chapter will examine development projects in Kampong Ai Hetae. These development projects on the ground have been under wider contexts and development approaches carried by both by the Thai state and the CSS already mentioned in this chapter.
CHAPTER 3
DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND

Thai state projects implemented in Kampong Ai Hetae are explored in this chapter. In particular, it demonstrates how the state approaches development in this contentious southernmost region and the problems involved. State approaches have been based on the idea that the promotion of the well-being of Malay Muslims is the way to solve the conflict and violence in the region. However, state development projects on the ground carry several drawbacks caused by their ineffectiveness and the lack of ecological concern. The chapter also examines the role of formal community leaders as important actors in state development projects. Leaders play a role in proposing projects to state agencies as well as in adjusting some projects initiated by the state. In addition, the chapter will examine the role of local academics and NGOs in Kampong Ai Hetae in promoting environmental conservation and sustainable agriculture. Later on they have been working closely with the Civil Sector Society as well. The failure and discontinuity of their work in this community will also be discussed in this chapter.

Development by State Agencies

During the past five decades the Thai state’s intervention in the southernmost region has been transformed from a forceful assimilation approach to the utilization of socio-economic development in order to foster loyalty and to capture the heart and soul of the Malay-Muslim people toward the Thai state as the way to stop the conflict and unrest in the region. Previously the Thai state paid attention to Kampong Ai Hetae only to try to maintain order and security through census registration and crime subjugation.

At that time state authorities greatly distrusted local residents and saw them as opponents because Kampong Ai Hetae was one of the areas under the influence of the individual Khru Razak. His associates were often front page stories in the newspapers during the 1970s. They were the Thai state’s most wanted persons involved in many illegal activities and viewed as national security threats because they participated in separatist and communist movements. Many incidents of arson, ransom of Buddhist Thai school teachers, intimidations for a protection fee from merchants and plantation
owners, and ambushes targeting state authorities in this southernmost region were identified as being done by Khru Razak and his subordinates. Khru Razak was a resident of the Luboh Luwah subdistrict, which is adjacent to Village Tiga of Ai Hetea subdistrict. Luboh Luwah and Village Tiga are connected to each other by dense swamp forests that were suitable for Khru Razak and his followers to hide from being arrested, apart from living in a camp in the nearby mountains. In the eyes of the Thai authorities at that time Ai Hetea was “a secret place for ganging up of wrongdoers”.

Even though Ai Hetae was not a home village of Khru Razak, the proximity both in terms of its kinship network and geography caused the residents to unavoidably to get involved in assisting Khru Razak and his followers to hide from the searches of the authorities. When Khru Razak and his group stayed in swamp forests close to my host family’s house in Village Tiga, they couldn’t come out to get food. Ayah and Ibu, my host parents, had to bring foods and water to feed them. Doing so was so scary, especially for Ayah, because at that time he was a head of village Tiga who was supposed to work for Thai authorities. However, even though Khru Razak had been respected by Ai Hetae residents, it was respect because of fear. The residents were threatened by Khru Razak to not tell authorities the truth about where his camp was located. By the way, the fear of Khru Razak didn’t lead to rancor among local residents, when compared to how Thai police in the past so badly treated them. Since Village Tiga is very close to the swamp forests and the surrounding area of low hills, the police often came there to violently threaten the residents to reveal where Khru Razak and his subordinates were hiding or which direction they just used for escaping.

The fear and distrust of Ai Hetae residents toward Thai authorities can be seen from their effort to escape from state control. For example, in the case of conscription, Saad a 60-year-old man, told me that he and several men of the same age didn’t attend conscription, even though it has been a requirement by law for all Thai men when they are 20 years old. Luckily, there were no authorities sent to arrest him. Moreover, the state’s control through census registration was also avoided by some residents. Forty-six years ago, after her son died when he was just a two-year-old infant, Mah Husna gave birth to a new baby boy. She did not register the death of her son who passed away nor the birth of her new son. Instead, she used the birth document of her son who passed away for her new born baby because she didn’t want to face the usual
difficulties in dealing with Thai state officials. Even when the government school first arrived in Kampong Ai Hetae, the residents still felt uncomfortable with it and tried to avoid the school. Although at that time elementary education was already compulsory all around Thailand, most people around the age of 60s today had been in school just 1-2 years or didn’t attend school at all. Several elders told me how they felt uncomfortable with the government school and tried to escape such as by giving the teacher bamboo pillars and partitions to build sheds for classrooms in exchange for not having to go to school anymore.

The distance and distrust between local residents and state agencies mentioned above are now just stories about the past. Today the Ai Hetae subdistrict is already “settled” and the local residents are close to state agencies in various respects through the state’s development programs on health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure as well as through the governing and administrative system. This section will discuss development projects, especially the ones related to agriculture and natural resources on the ground in Kampong Ai Hetae. These projects to improve the quality of life of local residents are part of the objectives of the Thai state to incorporate Malay Muslims as the way to solve conflict and violence in the southernmost region. The next section will also examine the results of these projects to see if they have been able to promote higher quality in the lives of local resident as planned and whether or not the projects have helped create to peaceful southernmost Thailand.

**Main Stream Development Projects**

During the past four decades there have been various state’s development projects aiming to enhance the economy of rural areas in southernmost Thailand. The first one the elders of Kampong Ai Hetae remember well and are satisfied with its benefit. It involved road building with ‘*Krongkarn Nguen Puun*’ (Money Shifting Project) which is the first populist policy in Thailand initiated in 1975 by Prime Minister M. R. Kirkrith Promoth. The projects aimed to distribute state budget directly to villagers in rural areas including in the southernmost region by hiring them to work for the government’s constructions of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and canals.

In the past there was no road for travelling. When residents from Village Tiga wanted to come to Village Satu, the center of Kampong Ai Hetae today, they had to use
a very small pathway and then walk across the main waterway using a small wooden bridge. At that time the residents had to fix the bridge every year. Interestingly, the residents from the Buddhist Thai village nearby came to help fix the bridge as well because they shared the route when they travelled to Buluh, the nearest big market which is far from Kampong Ai Hetae, around 15 kilometers. Construction of the first non-asphalt road in Kampong Ai Hetae used 500,000 baht from Krongkarn Nguyen Puun. At that time a village head beat a bamboo slapstick as a signal to call residents to get together to work on the road. After the first road that connected Village Tiga and Village Satu was finished, the second one under the same project, the road passing the subdistrict health station and the subdistrict primary school, was started. Later on more roads were gradually built in the Ai Hetae subdistrict including the main road which is an inter-district one. It is important to note that these roads have significantly blocked and changed the natural water flow of water in the wetlands in this area.

The most important way to enhance the economy of the southernmost region is to promote modern rubber planting. In the low hill zones of Kampong Ai Hetae the government invested a lot of effort into making local residents replace their tradition rubber plots with modern ones. Around 30 years ago, the ORRAF officers first came to Kampong Ai Hetae, and at that time the residents ran away and didn’t want to get involved. Ayah, my host father, told me that no one believed that the government would give them money and other components of production for free. People believed that the government wanted to take away their land. One Buddhist Thai ORRAF field staff, who has been working in the southernmost region for 25 years, told me that in the beginning he and his colleagues had to stay overnight at village head’s houses in various villages to hold meetings with villagers and had to do film screening at night to show how to start planting modern rubber or how to plant rubber in the correct way. Since then rubber has become the economic base of Kampong Ai Hetae and has brought the residents in far closer connection with the market economy.

Today in Kampong Ai Hetae, there are around 50 households getting support from the ORRAF. Most of them have joined the ORRAF since it first launched the project in this area. Their current replanted rubber plots used to get support from ORRAF 25-30 years ago to transform their traditional rubber plots to modern ones with
high yield rubber varieties and chemical fertilizers as monocrops. Some of these plots are in the process of the second replanting after 25-30 years from the first replanting.

ORRAF staff came to the Ai Hetae subdistrict regularly every 2-3 months to inspect member’s rubber plots. ORRAF wanted to make sure that each member who received replanting support from ORRAF took good care of their plots. Normally rubber trees can provide latex for around 25 years. For the villagers whose rubber trees are getting old and are starting to provide less latex, the decision to cut down old trees and replant the area with new ones is not easy because it takes 6-7 years for rubber trees to grow up and produce latex. During the 6-7 years one may lose the main source of income. However, the decision becomes much easier because of support from ORRAF which provides money for replanting in the amount of 16,000 baht ($533) per rai (0.39 acre). ORRAF also provides fertilizers for replanted plots. Money and fertilizers from ORRAF are distributed eight times during six years in conformity with the period needed to apply fertilizer according to the appropriate way to plant rubber. Each time of payment, rubber farmers have to prove that they applied fertilizers for the current round already, and then ORRAF staff deposit checks into each one’s Agricultural Cooperative account under the Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC).

Another important kind of state project aiming to promote economic development in the rural area of the southernmost region is on water management including water storage and distribution. Because most grassland areas of Baroh Ai Hetae or Ai Hetae wetlands is public land, the projects on water storage and distribution have been run freely without limitations on the land. In 1984, when Bae Reza, a son of my host family, was 12 years old, he and other residents fled in fear because they thought a helicopter was crashing at the grasslands nearby the village after it flew closely over their houses and then there was very loud noise of the fall. Most left their houses to run to the scene. There they found that the helicopter carried a big heavy sign made of cement for the large earthen reservoir, which was a project of the Office of Accelerated Rural Development (OARD) and was the first reservoir in Baroh Ai Hetae (See the illustration 3.1 and 3.2).

Later on there have been several other constructions for reservoir and irrigation in the grasslands of Baroh Ai Hetae. However, these projects have hardly provided any
benefits to the residents as claimed by the agencies who run them. The aim of the first reservoir in 1984 as described above was to provide water for herds in the Ai Hetae grasslands during the dry season. First there were cement containers put around the reservoir so that the herders could pull water from the reservoir to them for their herds to drink. However, this was not practical, so no herders did so. Then, the cement containers started to disappear. In addition, a few years later there was the construction of another reservoir nearby the first one. This one was even worse because it is a concrete reservoir with very steep edges, so some buffalos and cows drown in this reservoir (Illustration 3.3).

Illustration 3.1 The first reservoir in Kampong Ai Hetae constructed in 1984.

Illustration 3.2 The sign of the first reservoir carried to Baroh Ai Hetae by helicopter.
When I first enter the field in January 2011, the irrigation project consisting of a pipeline system and an electronic pumping plant was being constructed in Baroh Ai Hetae. It was a project of the RID aimed to increase productivity of rice farming by providing water for early rice farming in wetland areas. At that time the residents hoped that they would be able to get water from the project during that year. However, the project construction was not completed in that year. It took so long for the Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA) to expand a high voltage distribution system to the site and to install electric meter. Also, the project construction was suspended for several months after the engineer and his wife were shot dead at the construction site. Later on in mid-2012, the construction was finally completed. However, when I went back to the field in August that year, which was around three weeks after transplanting early rice, I found that the project was still not in use, even though at that time Kampong Ai Hetae farmers was faced with severe drought. Some residents said that the electronic pumping machine installed was too small. No one knows when the project can start to provide water for their paddy fields (Illustration 3.4 and 3.5).
Illustration 3.4 and 3.5: The irrigation project for early rice farming consisting of the electronic pumping plant and pipeline system.

These infrastructure constructions are just some examples among various cases of the failure of state projects in Pru Tung Krabue or the Tung Krabue wetlands, a freshwater wetland ecological system of which Baroh Ai Hetae is a part. Most projects for a reservoir and water distribution system and have been run by two big and powerful agencies with large budget: the RID and the Land Development Department (LDD). After the new round of conflict and unrest started in 2004, both RID and LDD have still continued to run the projects in Pru Tung Krabue and Baroh Ai Hetae, although after 2004 there have been many efforts to obstruct their work such as by setting fire to machines or distributing leaflets to threaten contractors not to continue constructions.

It has been widely known among local academics and NGOs that many of the construction projects spending a lot of money such as water blockades, sluices, waterways as well as the projects on dredging, draining, and filling of wetlands, which are all around Pru Tung Krabue, hardly benefit local residents. Instead commonly the projects have had negative effects on the wetland ecological system. It is so normal to find the cases where the construction projects have changed waterways, caused permanent flood, destroyed bush forests and useful vegetation, and at the same time increased weeds. However, these projects seem to benefit government agencies that gain credit from the constructions. The projects also benefits contractors, and most of
them are ‘big men’ or influential persons who at the same time are formal local community leaders in the locality of the construction.

Aamir, a 58-year-old villager, who lives in a village nearby whose residents share the Ai Hetae ecological system and who is a leader of a conservation group said:

“Wetland management by Thai state is the way to seek benefit from policies. It is to use wetland, which is a common resource, for money laundering. Villagers here see each project in the wetland like footmarks of a chicken, a goat, and an elephant which are walking into the wetland which is muddy. When a chicken comes, there are chicken’s footmarks. When a goat comes, goat’s footmarks bury chicken’s footmarks. When a bigger project which is like an elephant’s footmarks comes, it buries the footmarks of chicken and goat. Finally all projects can’t be examined, and then villagers are faced with the impacts of these projects on their own.” (Makarapirom 2010: 222).

Although these infrastructure constructions in Pru Tung Krabue and Baroh Ai Hetae have failed and caused negative impacts on the ecosystem, nevertheless they are based on the objective of improving living condition for local residents by increasing productivity and economic growth in the area. It is important to note that the improvement of the economic status of local residents has been viewed by the Thai state since several decades ago as the best way to suppress the unrest from the ethno-religious conflict and win the hearts and souls of the Malay Muslims in this southernmost region.

As mentioned earlier, the projects in Pru Tung Krabue and Baroh Ai Hetae have been run mainly by the RID and the LDD, which have long been in service of the royal projects implemented through the king’s ideas on development in southernmost Thailand. In chapter two, the significant roles of the royal projects over wetlands in the region were described. Although Pru Tung Krabue is not a direct area under royal intervention, the projects run by the RID and the LDD in Pru Tung Krabue including Baroh Ai Hetae have been based on the same objectives and the same kinds of activities as those areas under royal projects for wetland development. They are operating under the same ideas; namely, viewing wetland (except those peat swamps and wetland forests that have been designated as Protected Area) as useless waste land. Then this kind of wetland needs to be developed mainly though water management to control the flow of water and even to drain the water out of the wetlands. Accordingly, the ecological values of the wetland haven’t been of any concern at all.
Another way to encourage economic growth of the region is to promote tourism. However, the project in Baroh Ai Hetae called sarcastically by Kampong Ai Hetae residents as Tsunami failed and wasted a lot of money. In the middle of the grassland of Baroh Ai Hetae, there is a pronounced four meter high elevated piece of 10 acres. Tsunami was the project of Pattani Provincial Office at a cost of 8,000,000 baht ($260,000) (Pattani Provincial Office). The objective was to develop Baroh Ai Hetae as a tourist attraction, especially during the flood season when all the grassland areas are full of water and become a very beautiful lake. In this plan a four kilometer long elevated road would be built starting from the main inter-district road to the Tsunami so that during flood season people from outside the area could come to enjoy the lake, and then local residents could get income from selling food and drink. However, because of the conflict and violence during the construction the project was threatened from unknown armed groups and backhoes working on the project were burned. Thereafter the project has been suspended until now and the remainder of the project is the piece of huge elevated and useless land called Tsunami which is even hard for herds to climb up.

At the same time in 2004 the Indian Ocean Tsunami just happened along the west coast provinces in southern Thailand, and Kampong Ai Hetae residents received a lot of news about it. They ridiculed the project saying that the Provincial Office might want to build a refuge when Tsunami comes, while Baroh Ai Hetae 50-60 kilometers from any coast, thus it is impossible that any tsunami would affect people here. Some were also sarcastic that the office planned to have jetskis running in Baroh Ai Hetae during the flood season (Illustration 3.6 and 3.7). However, in another way it might be lucky that the construction was not completed. If the project had been finished, then it would have caused more severe damage to the ecosystem, especially from the long elevated road as planned. This is because not only the landscape of Baroh Ai Hetae would be changed from land digging and elevating, but also the road would block water flow during the flood season and thereby decrease the grazing area which would cause even more problem for herders.
Illustration 3.6 and 3.7 The ‘Tsunami’ during flood season.

**Sufficiency Economy**

The Change of Development Approach

During the past decade the development approach by the Thai state has been changed from supporting local residents to become more involved in the market economy for the increase of their income to focusing on the King’s Philosophy on Sufficiency Economy. Under Sufficiency Economy, development projects by several government agencies in Thailand have focused on providing knowledge and factors of production to villagers aiming to strengthen the capability of households in producing goods and foods for their own consumption to reduce the household’s expenses and dependency on the market. Since 2004 when the new round of unrest and violence in the region erupted, the King’s Philosophy on the Sufficiency Economy has been used as the best way to solve the problem.

Amid the arrival of the Sufficiency Economy, development projects on infrastructure and cash crop promotion have been still going on. Moreover, some of these projects are labeled or reinterpreted to suit the philosophy of the Sufficiency Economy. Yet the activities of development projects under the Sufficiency Economy actually are not any different from what has been done before by governmental agencies in Thung Yang Daeng district, especially by the Community Development Department (CDD), the Department of Livestock Development (DLD), and the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE). These previous projects aim to increase the income of villagers by providing them training for additional careers and funds to support farming.
activities such as to build common herd stables or to raise fish in streams and swamps. However, when these development projects came under the Sufficiency Economy, what has been emphasized as never before is the ability of local community to not depend too much on the outside market economy. One prominent project in the southernmost region according to the Sufficiency Economy is to recover deserted paddy fields, which has been done in many areas including Kampong Ai Hetae to reduce the expense of households in buying rice.

In Kampong Ai Hetae, there is a project supporting early rice or double rice crop farming run by the Office of Padae Kuwing Merah District Agriculture (OPDA) under funding and supervision from the SBPAC. It has been three years already that OPDA supports Kampong Ai Hetae residents who join the project by giving them for free tractor ploughing and providing them some rice seeds and fertilizers. In other subdistricts or districts, the projects help restore deserted paddy fields, while in Kampong Ai Hetae most paddy fields are still in use. Anyway, the support from the project has made Kampong Ai Hetae residents more enthusiastic to do early rice or double crop rice farming with less hesitation about risks such as drought or flood. Therefore, during my fieldwork period the wetland paddy area was filled with rice planting. Even the ones who didn’t intend to do so before changed their minds abruptly after learning that they would be supported with almost everything from OPDA.

Development projects under the Sufficiency Economy do not only encourage people to not rely too much on the market economy, they also promote organic farming or sustainable agriculture which is different from the mainstream and chemical agriculture which Thai state agencies used to promote in the past. Recently, under the global trend in environmentalism, several government agencies have started to run the projects on organic farming. During my fieldwork year, the OPDA encouraged Kampong Ai Hetae residents to use non-chemical methods to eliminate Golden Apple snails, the main pest of an early rice crop, by giving the residents money in return for snail picking at five baht ($0.16) per kilogram. In addition, the OPDA gave members non-chemical pesticides for free to eliminate the snails.

Furthermore, the District Public Health Office (DPHO) is another agency supporting organic farming. The DPHO has supported village health volunteers in organic farming of watermelons. During my fieldwork year each volunteer was given
six cans of watermelon seeds for free in exchange for not using chemical pesticides in their plots. Mussah as a village health volunteer and an agriculture volunteer joined the program for her thee acre watermelon plot at the rim of the grasslands. While using chicken manure to enrich the soil before starting to plant like other farmers did, Mussah and Ghalib, her husband, skipped to use Carbofuran which is a very dangerous toxic pesticide while other several residents mixed Carbofuran with watermelon seeds before planting them. This year Mussah and Ghalib also experimented in the use of lime that they obtained from the Queen’s Model Farm located in the adjacent subdistrict on another side of Phru Tung Krabue in order to reduce acid in the soil.

In addition, there have been projects to train Kampong Ai Hetae residents in organic farming, especially by newly arrived agencies like Mobile Development Unit 99 (MDU 99) which is a military operation. The training has been useful enough to make some residents specialize in making organic fertilizers to sell or distribute to their relatives or neighbors. Salamat, a 36 year old man, has attended the training programs on organic farming several times from various state agencies. He also loves to learn organic farming, and then he has applied the knowledge in farming his watermelon plots. He has also distributed and sometimes sold liquid fermented fertilizers to his relatives and neighbors. Salamat then became a Village Agricultural Volunteer appointed by the OPDA. Moreover, after the arrival of the MDU 99, Salamat and a dozen local residents in Kampong Ai Hetae were hired by the unit for two years as employees, earning a monthly wage of 4,500 baht ($150). They are assigned to work in the MDU44’s training and career development center, which provides training on farming techniques such as artificial insemination, goat raising, and hydroponic vegetable farming.

Economic Failures

There have been several development projects following the Sufficiency Economy in Kampong Ai Hetae. Unfortunately, some of them seem to not be useful for the residents. Signs with the phrase Sufficient Economy Family were hung in front of some houses whose owners were chosen as role models for others since it is believed that they maintain a subsistence mode of production. However, the sign doesn’t at all represent the real life of the household members who are not living in an agricultural
sector fully producing food and the four requisites on their own anymore. One of the families who had the sign earns their main income from the husband work as a teamster and the wife is a cleaning worker at the Padae Kuwing Merah District hospital. The husband and wife also work in rubber tapping. Another case is a house of an old couple whose main income is from their children who are running a food stall and working for state agencies.

For some projects of the Sufficiency Economy that support funding or factors of production still haven’t been able to benefit substantially the residents. In the case of the Agriculture Community Development Program according to the Economy Sufficiency Philosophy Plan initiated by the SBPAC and implemented by the OPDA which had been operating already for three years when I was in the field, what the project did was only to distribute up to 5,000 baht ($161) to the “poor” villagers. This amount of money is too little to be utilized to invest in any production. Also the promotion of organic farming, which has been becoming the mainstream of several state agencies as part of the Sufficiency Economy, seemed to be ineffective. Most of these initiatives, especially those that Kampong Ai Hetae residents have experience with, are mainly about training on farming techniques, such as for non-chemical treatment of plant disease and insect pests or making organic fertilizer. These are mostly one time or short programs without any support or monitoring system to promote organic farming to be a regular practice or part of the everyday life of farmers.

At the same time the Sufficiency Economy is a way for state agencies to avoid responsibility in helping villagers with the market or in sell farm products by saying that their duty is only to help reduce the villager’s expenses in household consumption. In 2011, when the OPDA launched the project supervised by the SBPAC to support double rice cropping to promote the Sufficiency Economy, several Kampong Ai Hetae residents joined the project with high expectation of securing more income from the crop. However, after harvesting they found that they lacked enough access to the market, thus they have to sell the paddy with an unsatisfactory price. Hamnah, who joined the project and got around a hundred sacks of paddy from a double rice crop at that time and was waiting to sell them for a better price than proposed by only one middleman who came to Kampong Ai Hetae, was faced with the problem that the sacks of paddy put in the first floor of her small brick wall and tin roof house were going to
be flooded soon because wet season was approaching. At that time, in October 2011, apart from Haman, there were around 15 persons who were also still waiting for a higher price. These residents also tried to get access to the Rice Pledging Scheme that was announced by the new government led by Yingluck Shinawatra a few months after her party won general election in June 2011. Unfortunately, this Scheme hadn’t been implemented in the southernmost region at that time and also the OPDA promoting the double rice crop didn’t try to take responsibility in market.

Apart from the projects on the Sufficiency Economy coming directly to Kampong Ai Hetae, there was the new large project of the Sufficiency Economy, founded in Phru Thung Krabue which Baroh Ai Hetae is a part of, aiming to provide benefit to people of several villages in this area. It is the Rumoh Phaya-Luboh Luwah Model Farm Project of the Queen. The project is famous as a center practicing the Sufficiency Economy in order to try to solve problems of the region. The project was founded in 2006 because the Queen was very worried about people who suffered the impacts from violence since 2004. Therefore, she ordered the deputy chief of the royal guard to find a piece of land to start the project (Royal Irrigation Department). The project then utilized 138 rai (54.5 acre) of grassland of Phru Tung Krabue which at that time had been utilized for educational purposes by the Prince of Songkhla University (PSU), Pattani Campus. The project has hired 150 local residents of nearby villages as laborers at a daily wage of 150 baht ($5). Apart from the reason that the land is state public land, another reason this area was chosen is that it is close to a Buddhist Thai community. First, the project aimed to hire only Buddhist Thais. In addition, the project has also been very concerned about security measures to save its workers from any threat by terrorists. Therefore, an army troop has been stationed in the project site for security for the site and for the nearby Buddhist Thai community. Later on more local Muslims have been gradually hired to work for the project.

The Model Farm Project planted various kinds of “safe vegetables” although not yet organically farmed, raised non-native species of milk goats for pasteurized milk production in the near future, raised non-native species of duck, and raised aquatic animals. Farming products from the project have been sold in local markets through a street stall nearby the Buddhist Thai community. Although according to what has been
reported in various Thai media, the project has been doing great and it becomes the visiting and study center for the Sufficiency Economy, in reality it is still far from successful. The residents who benefit from the project are only from a few villages adjacent to the model farm, while hardly anyone from more distant villages come to work there. In Kampong Ai Hetae, which is around 7 kilometers from the project, the residents don’t want to go to work there because the wage is too low to be worth the cost of traveling to work. Therefore, there is only a couple from Kampong Ai Hetae working at the project and the couple is called by other residents *khon mai tem baht* or feeble-minded.

Moreover, although one of objectives of the Model Farm Project is to “provide a chance for residents to learn the right methods in agriculture, livestock, and fisheries,” the project officer admitted to me during an interview that the best the project has accomplished is just to hire local residents as daily wage laborers. There is hardly any systematic training on proper farming for employees. Moreover, the aim of the project in encouraging employees to bring farming knowledge and skills back home to develop their own plots is not practical. This is because most employees of the project are landless, they do not even have any piece of land for farming. Besides, most employees are middle age or older, which is already too late for them to started farming or even to find other jobs. This is the reason why they still work for the project as wage labors even though the wage is so low.

**Sufficiency Economy and Enclosure**

I think in the next 5-6 years we will not be able to let our buffalos graze in the wetland anymore. So far government agencies have encroached on the grasslands more and more. They came and put barbwire. Then, cows and buffalos can’t graze there anymore. I think the encroachment into the grassland by state agencies is more serious than the invasion of land by local villagers.

Even though several projects of the Sufficiency Economy have failed to improve the quality of the lives of local residents let alone solve the conflict and violence in the region, the failures have not yet effected local residents except when it comes to the enclosure of land that they use to make a living as Hamnah talked about in the above quote.
Although most of Phru Tung Krabue including Baroh Ai Hetae, especially swamps, marshes, and grasslands, was announced as state public land several decades ago, the residents have still been able to use these wetlands for their living, especially the grasslands for grazing. There have been no government officers to prohibit the residents from utilizing the wetland as long as they do not occupy the land permanently. Moreover, although the Ai Hetae subdistrict and nearby area were announced as the Padae Kuwing Merah minor district and then as a district, and this led to the arrival of several state agencies like the police station, hospital, and secondary district school, consuming some of the upper parts of the wetland to build offices and housing for their staffs, the difficulty in utilizing the state public land hadn’t yet arisen. This was because the area of the wetlands is very large.

The difficulties for the residents of Kampong Ai Hetae in using the state public land started after 2004. Since then a huge amount of money and many state officers have been sent into the southernmost region to stop the unrest which is considered to be the most serious threat to the national security of Thailand. The military sent an enormous number of personnel, weapons, and machines to occupy the area everywhere. Specifically, in Padae Kuwing Merah district several army bases have been established especially the Mobile Development Unit 99 (MDU) which occupies a huge area of grassland in Baroh Ai Hetae. This includes the new royal school and the Model Farm Project mentioned earlier.

Interestingly, the Sufficiency Economy is the main focus of these new arrival state agencies. Also the Sufficiency Economy helps them justify their occupation of the huge area in Pru Tung Krabue. This is the case of the Rajsadornnukul School, the Thai boarding school, which was founded right after the new round of violence started in 2004 through cooperation among the Ministry of Education, Royal Thai Army, and Rajsadornnukul Foundation under the Royal Patronage of the King’s foundation to help relieve disaster victims since 1962. The main objective of the school is to help students in the southernmost region who are affected from the new round of violence, especially orphans and students from destitute families. The school was also built to celebrate

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5 There are branches of the 25th Pattani Special Unit under the 1st INF BN of the 153th INF REG, the branch of the 44th Thai Army Ranger (Thahan Pran), and the 99th Mobile Development Unit (MDU 99).
King’s 60 years on the throne as of 2006. In 2012, the school had around 350 students from grades one to 12.

Rajsadornnukul School occupied 90 acre in the south of Phru Tung Krabue in the area of a Rumoh Phaya subdistrict of Raman district in Yala province. The reason why the school covered such a huge area of land is that one of its objectives is to promote the King’s ideas on New Theory and the Sufficiency Economy. Therefore, the school was planned to be a learning center for not only students, but also people from outside about the New Theory and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. It also required the huge area of land for a model farm and reservoirs for the farm. Before the arrival of the school, the area was used by the residents of Rumoh Phaya for grazing. Also during the flood season, herds from Baroh Ai Hetae came to stay and graze in this area. Then, the occupation by Rajsadornnukul School has decreased the grazing area for these residents.

The arrival of the Model Farm Project of the Queen in some degree affects the local residents in using the wetlands. Although in the past the area where the project is located was owned by a university, there was no problem with villagers grazing their livestock in the area. However, the project covering 245 rai (97 acres) has reduced the size of the grazing area. Furthermore, the project requires a water source and to built a water management system that the Yala Irrigation Project under the RID was responsible for. The work on the water system consisted of the construction of new reservoirs, the improvement of existing reservoirs, the constructions of water gates and waterways to control water delivery, the placing of pipes through roads and to a pumping station, and the construction of an earth water blockade to prevent the project from flooding (Illustration 3.8 and 3.9). The water management system in some degree affects the existing flow of water in Phru Tung Krabue.
Illustration 3.8 and 3.9 The improvement of existing reservoirs and the construction of new reservoirs for the Model Farm Project of The Queen (photos courtesy of the Royal Irrigation Department).

The encroachment into the wetlands of the Rajsadornnukul School and the Model Farm has not yet affected much the residents of Kampong Ai Hetae because these two projects are still far from Baroh Ai Hetae. However, after the arrival of the Mobile Development Unit 99 (MDU 99), the enclosure started to happen in Baroh Ai Hetae to a significant degree.

MDU 99 is under the Fourth Region Development Agency, which used to be under the Division of National Security, the organization playing an important role in fighting though psychological action against the communist movement in Thailand during the Cold War period. After 2004, the unit was ordered to move everything (personnel, weapons, and machines) from Nakhonsritammarat, which is the upper south province, to do relief missions for people in the southernmost region. At first the temporary base was set at the nearby district, and then in late 2005 it was moved to the permanent site in the area of Village Lima of Ai Hetae subdistrict which is a part of Baroh Ai Hetae. Because MDU99 is a development unit, not only a military one, it requires a huge area of land for keeping its machines as well as for its model farm for agricultural training activities on and for the section on artificial insemination of animals and livestock support. Consequently, grasslands and bush areas of Baroh Ai Hetae were occupied not only just for the office building of the unit but beyond a huge
area was also closed with barbwire to reserve it for other unit activities. However, most of this huge area has not yet been utilized.

The work of MDU 99 consists of infrastructure constructions, agricultural developments, and disaster relief. From the MDU99 budget plan year of 2010 as an example, there are six kinds of activities: (1) constructions of a road for around 6-7 kilometers; (2) providing a water supply; (3) other developments (focusing on artificial insemination of animals); (4) integrated agriculture; (5) drug prevention; and (6) installation of fiberglass tanks. At the same time MDU 99 founded the Sufficiency Economy Learning Center at its base to train local residents on: (1) expense reducing activities such as detergent and shampoo making; (2) additional occupations such as food processing, camphor oil making, and picture framing; (3) global warming reducing; (4) agriculture including composting and growing vegetables as well as fish raising; and (4) artificial insemination of cattle and breeding development. Especially for the Ai Hetae subdistrict, which is the area where the unit is located, it has received additional benefits from the unit, especially the construction or improvement of several roads in the area including the ones in Baroh Ai Hetae. Moreover, many Ai Hetae residents received more opportunities to obtain jobs from the unit and get training from the learning center, more than members of far away villages.

It is important to note that while the objective of MDU 99 is to develop the life of people through economic and career support, the enclosure of Baroh Ai Hetae by the unit has highly affected Kampong Ai Hetae residents, especially the herders who greatly depend on access to grassland for grazing. It is not only that grassland for grazing has rapidly decreased, but other people also no longer have access to the MDU 99 enclosed area to find wood or firewoods. It is obvious that the MDU 99 doesn’t care and ignores the way local residents utilize wetlands and natural resources to earn their living. Wetlands including grasslands, which are a valuable resource for local residents are dismissed by MDU 99 as only wild and useless, conditions to be overcome. In MDU 99’s website, it describes the settling of the unit in Ai Hetae:

“Here at Village Lima, Ai Hetae sub-district, Padae Kuwing Merah, Pattani, is the new location base in the field of the Blue Warrior 99. Our base has been grown and developed from swamp wilderness to the new neat and beautiful base—the house of more than 150 lives. Blue Worrier 99, the warriors and developers.”
The arrival of MDU 99 has caused negative impacts on Kampong Ai Hetae residents, especially for the herders who have lost the area and access for their cattle to stay during the flood season. Although the residents can still use some resources from the land occupied by MDU 99, especially the areas that have not yet been used, they have to obtain permission from the authorities. When the residents prepare to plant a double rice crop or to plant watermelon, they need to use many small pieces of wood to make fences to secure their farm plots from the herds. The residents have to get permission and quota to cut wood in the area occupied by MDU 99 from their village heads, which also have to get the permission from MDU 99. However, I heard the complaint that not everyone could get wood this way, but only the ones who are close to village heads. (The changes on grazing and resource uses caused by the enclosure by MDU99 will be discussed more in detail in the next chapter).

**Development by Formal Community Leaders**

In general, formal community leaders, particularly village heads and subdistrict heads including the executives of the Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO), are part of the Thai state. Therefore, these leaders are required by the state to incorporate with state agencies running development projects on the ground as part of stat making and stabilization over the restive southernmost region. However, several studies on anthropology of the state such as Li (2005) and Akhil Gupta (2006) point out that the state territorialization or state making process in which development is the main tool is not necessarily monolithic and cohesive, depending on various actors at the local level such as local bureaucracies or state development brokers and extension agents. Therefore, the state is not somehow up there with stored power ready for deployment. Instead of absolute power from the top down to the local, every day practices of actors on the ground are among the most important ingredients of state making. In the case of southernmost Thailand, it seems to be more complicated because it is not local bureaucracies sent from Bangkok who play an important role in running development projects. Instead, formal community leaders, who are local residents capacitated by the Thai state, take perform that role. This is because violence prohibits local bureaucracies from access to work at the village level, except through the assistance from these formal
community leaders. Importantly, these leaders sometimes are able to propose or negotiate with local bureaucracies which projects should be run or should not be run in their villages or subdistricts. They are even able to make their own decisions and to spend budget on development projects, especially in the case of the SAO executives. The next section will examine the roles of the formal community leaders of Kampong Ai Hetae on development related to farming and natural resources.

**Village Heads and Sub-District Head**

For many decades if not longer governmental agency officials who are mostly Buddhist Thais from other regions of the country have not been able to run development projects at the village level in the southernmost region without the assistance of formal local community leaders. This is mainly because of the language barrier that, particularly in the past, many local Malay Muslims couldn’t speak Thai and most Buddhist Thai officers couldn’t speak local Malay. Even though recently increasing numbers of local Malay Muslims have achieved higher education and work in various government agencies, and increasingly Malay Muslims can speak Thai because of the expansion of state compulsory education, it is still hard for local bureaucratic agents to work by themselves on the ground, especially after the resurrection of the unrest and violence in 2004.

During the sporadic violence in southernmost Thailand, Buddhist Thai officers, both security and civil authorities, have long been the main targets of harm including killing. When the situation gets intense, then local officers working on development projects are unable to go freely to villages. Consequently they must have formal community leaders, who are subdistrict heads or village heads to assist them on many things ranging from holding meetings with villagers to facilitating or even running projects. If local officers have to go to the field and if they are in high rank positions, there must be security authorities or the territorial defense volunteers guarding them. Therefore, most formal community leaders in southernmost Thailand have played an important role in manipulating the development projects. Whether or not the needs of ordinary residents would be heard and taken into account in the decision-making process on development projects, and whether or not ordinary residents would be able to
benefit from the projects greatly depends on their connections with formal community leaders.

For a long time formal community leaders in southernmost Thailand have been either “big men,” influential persons, or their associates who may well be not only respected but dreaded by ordinary residents. In the case of Khru Razak, the highly influential person who already passed away, he shaped the influential system of communities around Phru Tung Krabue. Even though Khru Razak’s home village is in Luboh Luwah, which is a subdistrict nearby Ai Hetae subdistrict located on the other side of Phru Tung Krabue, when there were recruitments or elections for formal community leader positions in Ai Hetae, the candidate must be approved or supported by Khru Razak or his associates. Ayah, my host father who was the head of Village Tiga, also had to secure approval from Khru Razak, and that helped him gain the office without any other candidates to compete with in the election. This kind of situation also happened in other subdistricts and districts nearby.

Although Khru Razak passed away 20 years ago, his descendants and his confidants still remain influential figures and have been occupying several leading positions. These leaders always get involved in infrastructure construction and other development projects in this area in several ways. Formal community leaders, as state officers, not only work to facilitate government agencies running projects in the area, but several of them utilize the power and position authorized by Thai state to gain personal benefit. Some of them run business as contractors on construction projects and some of them gain benefit from commissions on the projects. Therefore, local community leaders always promote or initiate construction projects in their governing or administrative areas. In the case of Phru Tung Krabue, which is a wetlands area with most of it being state public land rather than owned privately, it is almost certain that construction projects can be initiated without any disputes with land owners and/or with any need to pay some compensation for expropriation.

However, some construction projects, initiated by formal community leaders in the wetlands area didn’t go smoothly and caused severe conflict between the leaders and other residents who suffered negative impacts from the projects. Kah Mariyah, the eldest daughter of my host family, told me that one day seventeen years ago, Ayah, her
father, arrived at home and told her that there was a group of people with machines
digging the land owned by my host family. This piece of land was in Village Tiga and
was full of bush and swamp. My host family hadn’t utilized it for several years. When
Kah Mariyah and Ayah went back to the scene to check, those people told them that it
was a project of *Ror Por Chor* or the Office of Accelerated Rural Development (ARD).
Also the Ai Hetate subdistrict head told Kah Mariyah and Ayah that they would dig to
make only a small waterway passing through my host family’s land to drain water in
Baroh Ai Hetae to decrease the duration of the floods during the wet season. Then Ayah
and Kah Mariyah allowed them to dig on the land because they thought the project
would be good for whole community. However, several days later they found that the
digging by backhoes had continued all day and night. They realized that this is not just a
small watercourse, but a huge reservoir which would take a whole plot of their land.
Ayah asked them to stop digging but without success. Ibu, my host mother who is hot-
tempered, took a big knife to slash backhoe drivers so they had to run away, but they
came back shortly and continued digging.

At that time Kah Mariyah didn’t know at all how to solve the problem, so she
just cried and cried. Luckily, Ajarn Somsak, a biologist and assistant professor from a
local university, came with his team to do a biological survey in Baroh Ai Hetae.
Therefore, the family got a lot of support from him in opposing the project. Kah
Mariyah, then, did many things to stop the project. She filed a complaint at the
provincial office. She had to prove the piece of land was not state public land but her
family’s property. She strongly rebuked corrupt officials and formal community leaders.
A number of Ajarn Somsak’s college students also came to Village Tiga for camping to
occupy the spot which was dug as civil disobedience. By so doing, the project has not
been continued up until now. However, this caused deep conflict and hatred between
my host family and formal community leaders, which has not been limited to the formal
leaders of Ai Hetae subdistrict but also involved the Luboh Luwah subdistrict head who
wanted to complete the project since it covers the area of both two sub-districts which
are adjacent. Kah Mariyah believes that these formal community leaders received
personal benefit from getting involved in the construction contract for the project. At the
same time, the conflict with formal community leaders obstructed the activities of Ajarn
Somsak and his team for wetland conservation in Kampong Ai Hetae which couldn’t go as smoothly as in other communities where he and his team have worked.

There are also the cases that infrastructure constructions initiated by formal community leaders don’t benefit the residents when the projects are done or cause even more problems. For example, the concrete irrigation watercourse built around six years ago in Village Satu to support early rice farming in non-flooded areas hasn’t been used at all up until now and the residents still do rice farming in that area with natural water flowing down to their paddy fields. This is because some parts of the water course are installed higher than the water level and then water from the stream can’t pass through the line. The watercourse also blocks the way natural water flows and causes some permanent flooding in some plots and it’s has not been possible since then to use these plots (Illustration 3.10).

Illustration 3.10 The concrete irrigation watercourse which has been impracticable.

However, from a decade ago the significant role in initiating construction or development projects of formal community leaders like subdistrict heads and village heads, as state officers under the Governing Provincial Office, has been continually decreased after the emergence of Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO) according to the decentralization policy in Thailand. The SAO executive team is voted on through an election by residents in a subdistrict. By law, the SAO has a certain degree of autonomy and amount of budget to administer a subdistrict. The SAO executives then play an important role in making decisions and running the
infrastructural constructions and development projects in their subdistrict. These projects happen either by using the SAO money or by cooperating with other governmental agencies that have more budget to work on the projects.

Nevertheless, the existing formal community leaders have still played a significant role in running several government development projects such as career training programs, development funds, and so on. This is especially so after 2004 when the new round of unrest and violence started and as a consequence development projects from many governmental agencies have come to villages in southernmost region. These projects can be run at the village level only with the assistance and management both from subdistrict and village heads. Moreover, in several cases the occurrence of the SAO doesn’t mean any decrease of power and influence of subdistrict or village heads because the SAO executives are usually family members or relatives of these existing formal community leaders.

Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO)

In 1997, according to the decentralization policy, Kumpong Ai Hetae residents, for the first time, received the rights to vote for the SAO members for their own subdistrict. Residents of each village could vote for two persons to be the SAO legislative members, even though during the first two years the subdistrict head at that time was appointed automatically to be chief executive of the SAO, which at that time was called District Council according to the Transitional Provision. Later on the SAO Chief Executive has been elected directly from residents of a subdistrict, and then the SAO Chief Executive selected persons to work as members of his/her executive team. The SAO so far has played an important role in Kampong Ai Hetae resident’s lives ahead of other governmental agencies.

Ai Hetae SAO has a wide range of responsibilities ranging from infrastructure constructions, especially for agricultural development such as ditches, dams, reservoirs, and pumping plants, to pre-school education, religious maintenance and missionary activities, sanitation like garbage collection, and IT services (internet service and wireless hotspot). However, it seems that most activities done by the Ai Hetae SAO are on infrastructure construction, even though these projects are small ones because the SAO doesn’t have much money in comparison to other governmental agencies in the
region like the RID or the LDD. For bigger projects beyond the capacity and budget of the SAO, the Chief Executive often works as a mainstay endorsing the projects for other governmental agencies to do, and accommodates any construction for these projects.

Importantly, amidst the danger and violence, and especially after 2004, it is not easy for outside agencies and contractors to run construction at the local level, thus assistance from the SAO is very important. On the afternoon of May 2011 when I was pulling rice seedlings with Hamnah and her daughter near her house, we heard gun shots. Yet we still continued our task because we always heard gunshots, often from afar, and some are just gunshots from fishing in Luboh or the permanent lake. Around 20 minutes later Hamnah’s son-in-law came to us with a countenance of concern and told us that the two Buddhist Thais were shot dead near the wetland paddy area which was not very far away from where, just around two kilometers. Hamnah then became worried and wanted me to go back home immediately, and she quickly accompanied me there. A few hours later when the confusion was unraveled, we learned that the two Buddhist Thai victims were a couple, the husband was an engineer and the wife was on the staff of the Pattani RID. They came to Baroh Ai Hetae that day to check the construction site for the electronic pumping plant, which was just starting construction a few months before. This case is just one among others happening to construction projects in the southernmost region. Therefore, the SAO is very important in assisting or initiating construction projects of other governmental agencies.

There are three interesting issues about the role of the Ai Hetae SAO on development. The first one is that the decision and management of these projects have been in control of a handful of leaders for a long time. The participation process in setting policy from ordinary people is very low for the Ai Hetae SAO. The SAO Chief Administrator told me that it has been almost three years already since the Ai Hetae SAO has held Wae Tee Pra Cha Kom or a community meeting, which is a kind of public hearing usually held in each village yearly to allow residents to propose and rank policies or projects they need and then the SAO collects the results to consider in developing their working plan. The Chief Executive told me that since the SAO budget has been so limited, then the SAO cannot follow the plan. Therefore, for the current year the plan of the Ai Hetae SAO is modified from the previous one, which still has many projects yet to be accomplished. If the SAO holds Wae Tee Pra Cha Ko every
year, the villagers’ expectation would be so high that they would be disappointed when the SAO couldn’t accomplish what they proposed.

The second one is that even though most infrastructure projects by the Ai Hetae SAO are small ones different from those run by other state agencies, especially the RID, the LDD, and newly arrived agencies like the MDU 99, all are similar. They all lack environmental concern about the Ai Hetae ecological system. Even though the projects on organic farming by some agencies can be categorized as dealing with the environment, these projects have been actually about technical training from a blue print with little relation to the exiting farming and ecological systems of the locality. The projects on organic farming are also superficial and temporary. For the Ai Hetae SAO it is hard to see investments by the SAO that promote the environment or ecological system. In the case of waste disposal, it have been six years already since waste from households in the subdistrict, including from two scheduled markets and the Selasa market center, has been collected by the SAO garbage truck and then just dumped at the edge of the grassland, as shown in the illustration 3.12. Only a little garbage at the dump has been burnt perfunctorily. During the flood season every year, the dump is flooded and garbage is dispersed widely which is unhealthy. There has not yet had the plan by the SAO to improve the dump site to even be just a landfill, which is the oldest form of waste treatment.

Illustration 3.11 Waste disposal in the Ai Hetae subdistrict.
The third problem is that by focusing on the construction of infrastructure as the way to improve the quality of life of its members, the Ai Hetae SAO has given little attention to other kinds of development. Babysitting teachers always complained that the SAO doesn’t pay much attention to the Pre-School Children Development Center that was relocated by the government to be under the administration of the SAO a few years ago. The budget that the center has received from the SAO is very little and there has not been any official from the SAO directly in charge of the center since that time. This is not to mention the projects on sustainable agriculture or sustainable natural resource management. Moreover, the SAO Chief Executive explained to me that the SAO used to provide the funds for career development for residents gathering in groups, but when the residents got money they didn’t repay the debt, so the fund collapsed. Since then he had never again provided the budget for this kind of development project.

It is very interesting that even ordinary villagers themselves also think about infrastructure construction first when they have to express their opinions or to vote for some development projects. The first priority for the residents is not a kind of development project for career training, occupation funding, or sustainable agriculture. I learned this from my observations at a Village Satu meeting held by the staff of the district office. It was a meeting for Village Satu members to make a joint decision about what they wanted to do with the money they received from Krongkarn Panom or the Project to Develop Quality of Life at the Subdistrict Level, Southern Border Provinces, the project proposed by the National Security Council since 2007. According to the project, state budget has been allocated to every village in the southernmost region at 228,000 baht ($7,400) each for development projects or activities proposed directly by local residents via Wae Tee Pra Cha Kom or a community meeting. The meeting on that day started with an explanation by the assistant chief district officer about the project, which was short because this was not the first year of the project and everyone already knew about it. When it came to the open discussion part of the meeting, it was very interesting that the attendees agreed very quickly that they would like to use the money to build a concrete pathway connecting the main road of the village to one site of paddy fields.

Although during the meeting two or three people tried to propose to use money to set a fund for household water pumping, other attendees who mostly were female
briefly argued that it would be difficult to manage the fund and there would be only a few people who would benefit from the fund because the budget is minimal. Several of them said that the pathway will be convenient for several people who have paddies in that area to ride motorcycles to their plots, especially when it rains and the ground is so muddy. They also think that the road will become public property of the whole community. Also, the two persons who proposed the idea of the fund didn’t try to justify their own proposal strongly at all. After the meeting, I asked Kah Nada, a 45 year-old woman, why no one wanted other kinds of development projects and wanted another paved road. She said other projects, especially the fund for career development, would lead to conflict among villagers because not everyone would benefit from them. For her, the construction of infrastructure is a better way to go.

From what I saw in the meeting, it is not surprising that the emphasis of the Ai Hetae SAO on infrastructure constructions has not been questioned by members in term of what is the best direction of development. Instead, what the Kampong Ai Hetae residents pay attention to on the SAO is about the transparency on the budget used by the SAO executives. Their attention can be seen from frequently widespread rumors all around the community that have been increasing according to the noticeable higher economic conditions of the SAO executive members after coming to power. However, the rumors are just whispers and gossips. It can’t be transformed into influential factors in improving the work of the SAO.

**Development by Local Academic and NGOs**

Beyond the state sector, consisting of the monarchy, government, and local bureaucracies as well as formal community leaders, local academics and NGOs, which recently have been part of the Southern Border Civil Society Assembly (SBCSA) and the Civil Society Sector, have played significant roles in development in the southernmost region. Their work has been based on ecological concerns consisting of environmental protection and the construction of knowledge on wetland ecological system. At the same time, they have promoted the participation of local residents, particularly the ordinary people who don’t have much political and economic power when compared to the formal community leaders. However, their roles have some
limitations and can’t operate very well in the Kampong Ai Hetae as discussed in this next section.

Wetlands: Conflict over Land Rights

After being able to stop the Talubah Dam Construction Project, Ajarn Somsak, a biologist from a local university, and his team consisting of NGO workers, his colleagues, and his research assistants were still working with several communities around the Talubah River. They agreed that sustainable natural resource management and sustainable agriculture are the most effective ways to stop the dam project in case it is resurrected in the future. Later on, this area became one of targets of the NGO for the Southern Watershed and Coastal Resource Management Project under the support of The Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development (DANCED). Ajarn Somsak himself not only worked closely with the NGOs, but he also conducted his own biological survey of the birds of the wetlands where one of his fieldwork sites was Phru Tung Krabue.

Although while working to protest against the Talubah Dam Construction Project, Ajarn Somsak had become familiar with the Phru Tung Krabue and several communities around it, he hadn’t yet had a chance to come to the Kampong Ai Hetae. One day he and his team came here to do a bird survey and then he met with Kah Mariyah who was suffering from being abused on her family’s property by the Ba Thu Swamp Improvement Project or the project to dredge the swamp. This was the start of Ajarn Somsak and his team working in the Kampong Ai Hetae. Kah Mariyah said:

When Ajarn Somsak first came here, I was crying. Those people were taking our land. I didn’t know what to do, so I just cried and cried. Ajarn Somsak asked me why I was crying. I told him. He asked whether this piece of land is state public land. I said no. I said this is my land. We have a land title. He said I don’t have to cry. He introduced himself and told me that we will go to police station to report this. The next day Pi Kung (Ajarn Somsak’s assistant) came here. After that many things have happened.

Because of the support from Ajarn Somsak and his team, Kah Mariyah and her family gradually learned how to solve this problem. She also said:

At that time I didn’t know and didn’t understand about our rights. We didn’t know what rights we have. When the incident happened I didn’t dare to do
anything. Although I used to study in the city, Yala, I didn’t know this kind of situation. When Ajarn Somsak came he told us that we have the rights.

Apart from Somsak and his team, there were also people from nearby villages in the Phru Tung Krabue who worked with Ajarn Somsak earlier who came to give Kah Mariyah and her family moral support and then the family didn’t feel lonely and helpless anymore.

The success in stopping the Ba Thu Swamp Improvement Project seemed to be a victory for my host family and Ajarn Somsak. However, it seemed to be a short term victory, which brought another conflict between my host family and formal community leaders who pushed the project. Kah Mariyah told me that actually the project was planned to dredge Baroh Ba Thu (Ba Thu swamp), which is in the Luboh Luwah subdistrict of the district of Ramana in Yala province. However, the residents in Luboh Luwah didn’t allow the project to be done there, so the project was moved to an adjacent area which actually is the Baroh Tiga (Tiga swamp) of Village Tiga of the Ai Hetae subdistrict. Then, the Luboh Luwah subdistrict head cooperated with the Ai Hetae subdistrict head to verify to the Office of Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) that Baroh Tiga is Baroh Ba Thu and was a state public land, so that the project could run smoothly. When Kah Mariryah with help from Ajarn Somsak’s team could prove that the project did wrong by complaining to the high ranking officers of several agencies then the construction couldn’t be continued. Then, the formal leaders, who were prevented from benefiting from the contractor, were disturbed. Then this led to an effort by the Ai Hetae subdistrict head to propose the dissolution of Village Tiga where my host father was the head at that time, and instead to combine it with Village Dua where the Ai Hetae subdistrict head was also the village head.

The conflict over the Ba Thu Swamp Improvement Project had been recognized by several levels of government agencies ranging from the district to the provincial and national levels. This is because there had been hardly any resistance to any state development projects like this before in this area at that time. From the website of the Department of Provincial Administration, I found the list of the problems or obstacles against government development projects in Pattani province during that time and The Ba Thu Swamp Improvement Project in the Ai Hetae subdistrict (See below):
Problem Number: 0002

Problem Name: Problem on Ba Thu Swamp Improvement Project

Background –

Problem Category: Land and forest problem

Agency Responsible: District Governing Office, Pattani Province Tel. 349-517

Result: District agency did land survey, but it failed to reach a conclusion because the borderline had been changed and is not clear now. Later, in August 1998 the inspector general of the Ministry of Interior came to have a meeting to solve this problem and ordered a survey and to make the borderline more clear. However, some ‘Rathsadorn’ (Thai word means people of the state) still didn’t agree and then the problem is still going on.

Obstacles:

1) Borderline had been changed and is not clear.

2) NGOs came in to guide, instruct, and persuade ‘Rathsadorn’

The language used in the list shown in the website of the Ministry of Interior demonstrates the antagonistic feeling of state agencies toward villagers who opposed the abuse of their rights by the project. At the same time local bureaucracies, especially through the District Chief Office, had good rapport with formal community leaders who also had negative attitudes toward the residents who opposed the project or whom they called puek anurak or conservation group. Moreover, when the formal leaders didn’t like puek anurak, then it was easy that other members of Kampong Ai Hetae who were in the leaders’ cycle to be reluctant, sometimes refuse to join the activities, or even refuse to accept the role of Ajarn Somsak and his team, whom they called NGOs.

Wetland as an Ecosystem

Although Ajarn Somsak and his team were not welcomed by state agencies in the locality, formal community leaders and residents in the leaders’ circle, they still could work to some extent in Kampong Ai Hetae. There had been at least 15-20 households attending activities with Ajarn Somsak on environmental conservation for several years. Because of his sincere, nice, and humble personality, Ajarn Somsak was
quickly accepted, respected, loved, and trusted by *phuek anuruk* in Kampong Ai Hetae. Then, Baroh Ai Hetae became another home for him. Kah Mussah told me that:

> It was often that when Ajarn Somsak was free and got bored in his office on campus he rode his motorcycle here in the afternoon and stayed overnight at our pavilion in their grassland. He was familiar with us. He went around taking pictures of birds.

At that time Ajarn Somsak and his colleagues managed to bring students from their classes to do fieldwork in Kampong Ai Hetae and other villages around Phru Tung Krabue. The students were distributed into small groups to stay in each village for a few days in resident’s houses to learn the biological characteristics of the wetland and also to learn how local residents utilized and lived with natural resources. There were also conservation activities by the students. Bae Reza recalled that during that time students from PSU came to monitor if someone caught fish during their egg laying season. There were also environmental camps for several times in several villages. Ajarn Somsak’s graduate students and his teaching assistants also came to Baroh Ai Hetae often to do research on biology and science. This is what Kah Mussah said:

> Nong Kai (brother Kai), who was Ajarn Somsak’s assistant, collected and recorded varieties of plants and fish and measured water level in swamps and in different spots of Luboh.

It is important to emphasize here that the arrival of Ajarn Somsak and his team is the very first time Phru Tung Krabue including Baroh Ai Hetae is viewed as a meaningful ecological system. Through their actions and research in cooperating directly with villagers and their effort to publicize the local knowledge on wetlands, and especially the way that local residents make a living from the diverse resources of the wetlands, Phru Tung Krabue was the first time recognized as a valuable natural resource. Moreover, they also pointed out that each resource and each component of the wetlands were connected and depended on each other as a whole ecosystem. It is the first time that several small Baroh or wetlands located adjacent to one another in the Ai Hetae subdistrict and a few other subdistricts nearby were understood as a whole wetland ecosystem that has been known in public as ‘Phru Tung Krabue.’ These small *baroh* or wetlands consist of

- Baroh Ai Hetae of Ai Heta subdistrict
- Baroh Ta Kuba of Luboh Luwah subdistrict
- Baroh Ba Thu of Luboh Luwah subdistrict
- Baroh Toh Buru of village Toh Buru of Luboh Luwah subdistrict
- Baroh Lawah in Taloh Kah Da subdistrict
- Baroh Tiga and Baroh Buddha\(^6\) of Village Tiga

(Map 3.1)

The name of each wetland is based either on their community’s name or the attribute of each wetland. Although each small wetland seems to belong to each community and members of each community recognize that other neighboring wetlands belong to their neighbor communities, they are able to utilize other community’s wetlands such as sometimes for grazing their herds.

Map 3.1 Several Baroh or small wetlands in ‘Phru Tung Krabue’

Interestingly, many of the local residents in these communities did not use the term Phru Tung Krabue as a designation for the whole wetlands area combining the Baroh or small wetlands together. For almost two decades already Phru Tung Krabue has been known by many outsiders, such as media, researchers, NGOs, and the CSS as a

\(^6\) The name ‘Baroh Buddha’, which sounds Buddhist even though the Baroh is in a Malay Muslim village, is from an interesting legend. The legend says that a long time ago during flood season Buddhist Thais from Village Samoha located in Phru Tung Krabue loaded a Buddha from somewhere else into a boat to install at a temple in their village. While paddling past Village Tiga, the boat sank and the Buddha disappeared. When the flood season was gone, people still could not find the Buddha. However, later on local residents of Village Tiga found that sometimes on the Buddhist Holy Day, the Buddha floated above the water surface and shined a golden light. Since then the residents, even though they are Muslims, of Village Tiga and nearby called this swamp area Baroh Buddha.
huge freshwater wetland of more than 6,000 acres at the border area between Yala and Pattani provinces covering 14 villages of six subdistricts in two districts. However, many local residents have not yet known what Phru Tung Krabue is. When I first decided to study in the Kampong Ai Hetae which I thought is a part of Phru Tung Krabue, then I told that some of the people in another village which is only around 12 kilometers from Kampong Ai Hetae about my plan, several of them, except the one who had been working with Ajarn Somsak, didn’t know what and where Phru Tung Krabue was. Not only people from nearby villages, but also many of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents, were always confused and wondered what was talking about when I mentioned Phru Tung Krabue.

The sound of the words thung krabue is similar to ta kuba, the name Luboh Luwah residents call the wetlands in their area. Buddhist Thais in Samoha, a village adjacent to Luboh Luwah, call this part of wetlands ta kuba too, but when it was pronounced by Thais the sound was distorted to be tung krabue which are Thai words. Also baroh, the local Malay word which means wetlands, is phru in Thai. The reason that ta kuba or thung krabue became the name used to refer to the whole 6,000 acre wetlands is not because Baroh Ta Kuba is bigger or more important than other small wetlands, but because several of Luboh Luwah residents have joined conservation activities since the beginning with Ajarn Somsak and his team. Since then ‘Phru Tung Krabue’ became the term for the whole 6,000 acre wetlands ecosystem. In addition, based on the fact that each wetland here has been full of buffalos everywhere, so the word tung krabue, which means buffalo field, seems to be easy for Thais to remember and pronounce.

It is important to note that apart from inundated areas which are marshes, swamps, swamp forests, and grassland, Pru Tung Krabue is interconnected with the adjacent upland and low mountain areas that are never flooded. Therefore, the ecological system of Pru Tung Krabue consists of marshes, swamps, swamp grove woods and grasslands in the lowlands and then gradually slopes up to reach low hills surrounding the inundated area. These hills are the water sources of streams in Pru Tung Krabue.
Bhuminiwet Lumnam Saiburi: Talubah Watershed Geo-Ecological Area

Phru Tung Krabue is not only important as a wetland ecosystem by itself, but also as a part of wider ecological system, the Talubah Watershed, which consists of three interdependent ecological components: (1) mountainous and forested area (the origin of the Talubah River and other streams); (2) plains, flooded and non-flooded areas (wetland is the main component of the flooded plain); and (3) coastal area. Only wetland conservation is not enough to promote the quality of life of residents who make a living from natural resources because the richness of wetland depends on the richness of other ecological parts within a watershed system. Therefore, Ajarn Somsak and local NGOs were very concerned and tried to promote sustainable development at the watershed level. In 2000, they launched the project on sustainable agriculture in the Talubah Watershed under The Pilot Project to Develop Sustainable Agriculture of Small-Scale Farmers, a nationwide project run by the national NGOs Sustainable Agriculture Foundation (Thailand) (SAFT) and Alternative Agriculture Network (AAN).

The Pilot Project came from the demands from long negotiations between the Thai government and the Assembly of the Poor (AOP), where AAN has been involved along with other networks of marginalized people or people who suffered negative impacts from development projects such as dam construction and forest conservation measures. The call to stop the Talubah Dam Construction Project was one of the cases proposed through AOP to the government. After the 99-day protest occupying the area in front of the Government House in 1997, several agreements were reached. Among them was the proposal by AAN. At that time, AAN could make an agreement with the government that the government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives has to support sustainable agriculture after several decades of neglecting that and focusing only on chemical agriculture. By so doing, it required the Ministry to provide a budget of 633 million baht ($20,420,000) and to give full rights to farmer organizations in each region to manage the fund under the Pilot Project supervised by SAFT. The Pilot Project was based on the idea that farming development under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives has failed for a long time to support sustainable agriculture. Then this is finally the time to let farmers do it for themselves by utilizing
state budget, which is one kind of ‘common resources’ that farmers had barely had access to in the past.

Through the connection between local NGOs and the SAFT as well as the ANN, the villagers protesting against the Talubah Dam Construction Project got a chance to join the Pilot Project. Since the project aims to develop agricultural systems that are suitable in each kind of ecosystem, the farmer groups who joined the project from various regions of Thailand were divided into several geo-ecological areas called in Thai with the newly invented word *bhuminiwet*. In the southernmost region there were 200 households from various farmer groups in twelve subdistricts of seven districts of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat provinces joining the Pilot Project. These areas cover mountainous and forest zones that are the source of the Talubah River and most streams and also cover plains or lowland zones including seasonally flooded areas like Phru Tung Krabue. It is important to note that these subdistricts were grouped as the *Bhuminiwet Lumnam Talubah* or the Talubah Watershed Geo-Ecological Area. This is again how the ecological system of the wetlands has been emphasized and reproduced. Since then the *Bhuminiwet Lumnam Talubah* has become a term used by academic organizations as well as the CSS up until now.

In the Kampong Ai Hetae 12 households joined the Pilot Project by establishing the group named the Phru Tung Krabue Conservation Group of the Kampong Ai Hetae. By joining the project they received training for sustainable agriculture. This not only involved sustainable farming techniques, but also the concept and ideology of it. The trainings also focus on self-reliance; that is, being less dependent on the market economy as well as on learning about the policies that have affected small-scale farmers for so long. Importantly, the project members received financial support of around 20,000-30,000 baht ($650-950) per household to transform their farms into more sustainable systems. For example, this involved adding more perennial plants and fruit trees in their plots to increase biodiversity; installing water systems to enrich integrated orchards; and buying lawn mowers to replace chemical weed killers. Each member had to sign a contract with the committee of the *Bhuminiwet Lumnam Talubah* or Talubah Watershed Geo-Ecological Area, in which all are villagers who have been engaged in protest against the dam construction. The contract was used to guarantee a commitment that members would pay their loan incrementally over three years. This regulation is
based on the idea that after three years of doing sustainable agriculture, the members should be able to get some returns and be ready to repay their debt.

Ideally, the returned money would be managed by the committee of the Geo-Ecological Area for activities on sustainable natural resource management and to distribute to other farmers who wanted to transform their farms into more sustainable agroecosystems. In addition, through attending the Pilot Project the Kampong Ai Hetae residents made connections with people in other communities around the Talubah Watershed Geo-Ecological Area from the mountains to coastal areas by joining several activities together since before the Pilot Project was approved by the government. Several of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents had rotated in joining the AOP to occupy the Government House in Bangkok with others from other subdistricts (Illustration 3.13 and 3.14).
Illustration 3.12 and 3.12 Malay Muslims from the communities around the Talubah River attending the 99-Day Protest by the Assembly of the Poor (AOP) in front of Government House in Bangkok in 1997.

The duration of the Pilot Project was from 2001-2004. Shortly before the end of the project the new round of violence in Thailand’s southernmost region erupted. It was not possible anymore for NGOs or people from outside to work at the village level for a few years after the eruption. Everyone was shocked and confused with the marked increase and spread of violence including shootings, killings, burnings, and bombings. The violent incidents led most villages in the southernmost region to keep to themselves. Automaticall the activities of the Pilot Project in Talubah Watershed Geo-Ecological Area were halted. Ajarn Somsak and Pi Kung, the NGO worker who looked
after the project, couldn’t go anymore to follow up on farming activities of the members in the Kampong Ai Hetae as well as in other villages. Pi Kung said:

At that time it was not possible anymore for us to go around freely to hold meetings in villages. Our members also didn’t want to travel for meetings at night. If we held a meeting in town we had to finish it in the early afternoon so that everyone could go back to their homes safely. Also during that time one of our leading members was shot dead. Moreover, several members had to seek refuge somewhere for safety reasons. People did not feel like focusing on the Pilot Project anymore. We had to step out and just observe from afar what was going on.

Even though the conflict and violence had still been going on, however, around three years after 2004 the work of Ajarn Somsak and the NGOs with the Talubah Watershed Geo-Ecological Area revived with support from outside organizations. After the new round of unrest and violence started in 2004, a number of personnel and the budget from the Thai CSS and international NGOs was drastically increased. Ajarn Somsak and his team received support from the European Union, TRF, and the Peace Studies Center of Mahidol University. In 2008, they started a big research project titled The Project to Develop the Participation by People in Managing Talubah Watershed. The research project covered many villages of 35 sub-districts. The project had 51 researchers who were local residents from each subdistrict and also ten researchers who are academics and NGOs. The first phase of the research finished in year 2011, and now the second phase is under way.

Interestingly, although other communities in the Talubah Watershed Geo-Ecological Area, including some around Phru Tung Krabue, which used to work with Ajarn Somsak and his team as well as with NGO workers through the Pilot Project, have joined the research project actively, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents didn’t join the research project. Also, since the Pilot Project was halted Ajarn Somsak and his team haven’t tried to develop any activities in the Kampong Ai Hetae. Violent incidents in the Kampong Ai Hetae have happened often, and in some cases were especially horrible, such as group killings and the killing of women. Also during recent years the Kampong Ai Hetae has been notorious for drug distribution and related killings. Therefore, these may be the main reason that both residents and outsiders have felt insecure in Kampong Ai Hetae. Ajarn Somsak said:
I feel that the villagers especially with whom we are familiar don’t want us to go to Kampong Ai Hetae. I feel like they are hiding something from me. One time when I visited the village, I felt like someone was following my car for a while.

This is in accordance with Ghalib, the leading member of *phuek anurak* or the conservation group, who said:

“\text{I have not attended activities with Pi Kung and Ajarn Somsak for several years already. I don’t want to do any activities anymore because if I do so I have to go to attend meetings, to do study trips, and to stay overnight somewhere often. If I left the village often, I would be suspected both from the authorities and from ‘them’ (the insurgents - author).}"

Although Ajarn Somsak and his team have not worked with the Kampong Ai Hetae residents for several years, still they have stopped by Kampong Ai Hetae sometimes to collect questionnaires, bring in groups from outside to see the Baroh, and to interview some farmers. However, the visiting each time is always short, not more than a half day.

Interestingly, local residents did not express any demand to bring back local academics and NGOs to work in their community. In addition, while the ecological value of ‘Phru Tung Krabue’ as a whole ecological system of which Baroh Ai Hetae is a part has been promoted widely in the media of the Civil Society Sector, not many of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents recognize the existence of Phru Tung Krabue. At the same time, modern and intensive farming, which is not in accordance with sustainable agriculture promoted by local academics and NGOs have been widely practiced in the Kampong Ai Hetae including by the ones who used to be *phuek anurak* or the members of the conservation group before. Even though some residents may realize that *karn anurak* or the activities for environmental conservation by local academics and NGOS is a good thing, they don’t know how to connect *karn anurak* to their changing farming system, which is getting more specific and more dependent on only one or two activities such as rubber farming or fishing, not on every part of the ecosystem as in the past.

**Conclusion**

It has been around 40 years by now that the Thai state has utilized the development approach aimed at promoting the market economy as the way to solve the
conflict and unrest in this region. The approach has been exercised on the ground in the Ai Hetae subdistrict through modern rubber promotion by ORRAF and the water management mostly run by the RID and the LDD. However, most water management projects, that mostly are the construction of reservoirs and waterways, have failed to benefit local residents in term of economic conditions as claimed. Also with the Royal approach viewing wetlands as waste and useless areas far from the recognition of any values and the complexity of the ecological system, these projects have severely changed the wetland ecosystem.

Although having significant drawbacks, however, these projects have been continuing. This is because they are mainly done in the huge wetland area of the Boroh Ai Hetae and Phru Thung Krabue which are state public land, so they can be run without having to get permission from land owners and pay for land compensation. In addition these projects have been always supported by formal community leaders, who usually receive personal benefits from them. These local leaders as state functionaries and who are in some degree big men or in the circle of local big men play a significant role in development projects, especially in the restive southernmost region. It is not only that the formal community leaders follow and assist the Thai state and local bureaucracies on the projects ordered from above. These leaders sometimes are able to propose or negotiate with local bureaucracies which projects should be run or should not be run in their communities. They are even able to make their own decisions and to spend budget on development projects, especially in the case of the SAO executives. Nevertheless, the projects proposed or decided by these local leaders are still not different from the ones run by state agencies in the way that they all focus on construction and lack any concern for ecological values. Moreover, most of these projects have not been in use because the construction is low in quality and they also cause several negative impacts such as permanent inundation in some areas.

Interestingly, even though the failure of these projects have been so prominent, especially the ones under the responsibility of village heads, subdistrict heads and the SAO executives, these failures have not yet aroused serious dissatisfaction among community members. There has not been any conflict or question about a better development approach for their community. The conflict in the case of Kah Mariyah is not usual, but it happened because her family’s private land was abused. There might be
gossip over the lack of transparency in the construction projects run by these community leaders, but there has not been any effort to check these cases. Moreover, most of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents agree that if there were no dishonesty of state agencies and formal leaders, then the construction of infrastructure is the way to improve their quality of life.

Since these projects following the mainstream development approach have failed to improve the economic status of local residents, it is impossible that they could be successful in decreasing the conflict and unrest in the region. However, the arrival of the King’s Philosophy on the Sufficiency Economy seems to be a new hope. During the past decade there have been several projects promoting households to gain self-reliance in food production and to decrease their dependence on the market economy. Interestingly, the Thai military has played an important role in promoting the Sufficiency Economy, as in the case of the MDU 99. Nevertheless, most projects on the Sufficiency Economy in the Kampong Ai Hetae have worked only at discourse level and then failed to provide substantial support for the residents to transform their farming systems to be more self-reliant. Moreover, the Sufficiency Economy seems to be far from the real life of the people that rely highly on the market economy and income from the non-farming sector. Focusing on the Sufficiency Economy helps state agencies to avoid their responsibility to help residents to solve the problem of price and market which go beyond the production for household consumption. Importantly, state organizations working on the Sufficiency Economy, especially the new ones settled after 2004 like the military base and the model farm, have enclosed public areas long used by local residents for grazing. This caused herders more difficulties. This is the paradox, that while claiming to strengthen the economy of the household and the local community, the organizations working on the Sufficiency Economy actually weaken the existing occupation of local residents.

Local academics and NGOs tried to remedy the negative impacts from these problematic development projects. They obstructed unfair construction project encroaching on the private property of ordinary residents. They worked on environmental conservation and sustainable agriculture. Importantly, they pointed out the ecological values of wetlands as a complex ecological system and as a part of the greater watershed system. They also emphasized the dependence between local
residents and these ecosystems. These activities challenge the development approach carried out by state agencies in viewing the wetlands as no more than waste and useless areas. However, the local academics and NGOs couldn’t work smoothly in the Ai Hetae subdistrict because local bureaucracies and formal community leaders have felt antagonistic toward them and all conservation activities. When combined with the danger from the violence after 2004, the local academics and NGOs haven’t been able to continue working in this community. Also the recovery of development projects by them, which is now the CSS in the Kampong Ai Hetae is beyond the interest of the residents because the projects are far from their real lives in the market economy and their immediate needs.

The next chapter will explore the changes in the Ai Hetae ecological system and the changes in farming practices of the residents under the development approaches and practices from various outside agencies in the context of conflict, unrest, and violence in the region.
CHAPTER 4
ECOLOGICAL AND FARMING CHANGES

This chapter describes the attributes today of the Ai Hetae ecological system and farming activities in each ecological zone. Also the chapter will examine the changes in the ecological zones: wetland, grassland, flooded-plains area, and non-flooded plains area, and low hill area, which are mainly caused by state construction projects and the expansion of state agencies into the region, especially after 2004. In this chapter, the resident adaptations in response to the changes in the ecological system, including market incentives, will be examined both as the consequences and the causes of the ecological changes. At the end the chapter will examine the complexity of adaptation to the changes in the ecological system by local residents which can’t be separated from other factors such as the increase of population causing the decrease of farmland as well as more specifics of the farming activities, and to show how complexity affects the way local residents recognized the changes in the Ai Hetae ecological system.

Today Ecosystem and Farming

Kampong Ai Hetae is located in a complex ecological system consisting of inundated areas which are marshes, swamps, swamp forests, grasslands, and flooded plains as well as non-flooded plains and low hill areas. The low hills are the the water source for streams running down into the wetlands. The Kampong Ai Hetae residents have utilized each part of the ecological system differently for their farming and other activities (Table 4.1).
Table 4.1: Farming Activities of Each Zones of the Ai Hetae Ecological System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecological Zones</th>
<th>Farming Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swamp, marsh, swamp forest</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grassland</td>
<td>Grazing, annual crop planting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flooded-plain</td>
<td>Early rice farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-flooded plain</td>
<td>In-season rice farming, Mixed orchards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low hills</td>
<td>Modern rubber plots, mixed orchards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The uses of each component of the Ai Hetae ecological system have been diverse based on their attributes as well as the inundation of much of the Ai Hetae ecological system. In the Ai Hetae, there are around four months of flood season starting in early November. During this flood season water covers almost all of the lowlands including grasslands and the early rice paddy as well as the young rubber plots at the edge of the grasslands. Illustrations 4.1 and 4.2 show the difference in the same lowlands of the Baroh Ai Hetae during flood season and non-flood season, and illustration 4.3 shows early rice farming in the same lowlands. The residents do early rice farming during non-flood season and have to harvest in early November before the flood come.
Illustration 4.1 Baroh Ai Hetae in January, the second month of flood season.

Illustration 4.2 Baroh Ai Hetae in March, the flood just left.
The inundated nature of the Ai Hetae ecosystem is caused by water and flood in two ways. The first one is from the hills and few main streams in an adjacent subdistrict running down through several smaller streams to grasslands, marshes, and swamps in the lowlands which are the ending point of these streams. The second one is from the high tide through the Talubah River and other main streams from the Gulf of Thailand. The cycle of farming activities in a year of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents depends on the inundated nature (Table 4.2).
Table 4.2. Farming Activities in Each Geographical Area in Kampong Ai Hetae during a Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Seasons</th>
<th>Swamp and Lake</th>
<th>Grassland</th>
<th>Seasonal-Flooded Plain</th>
<th>Non-Flooded Plain Lowland</th>
<th>Low-Hill</th>
<th>Other Farming Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Flood water covering huge area of swamps, scrub lands, grasslands, and lowland paddies</td>
<td>Fishing*</td>
<td>Fishing**</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Tapping Rubber, Herding*** Maintaining</td>
<td>Tapping rubber (travelling daily to rubber plots by boats)</td>
<td>Supplying chicken manure for watermelon planting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Flood water decreasing</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Fishing, Plowing (some areas which water gone) and starting to plant watermelon,</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Tapping rubber, Herding, Harvesting double-crop rice (only around 15 households doing)</td>
<td>Tapping rubber</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Fishing
** Fishing, Plowing
*** Herding
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Seasons</th>
<th>Swamp and Lake</th>
<th>Grassland</th>
<th>Seasonal-Flooded Plain Lowland</th>
<th>Non-Flooded Plain Lowland</th>
<th>Low-Hill Other Farming Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Almost all flood water gone and water going down to <em>Luboh</em> (the permanent lake)</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Herding, Planting and maintaining watermelon sprouts</td>
<td>Herding, Picking mushroom (under Samed trees or Melaleuca cajuputi)</td>
<td>Tapping Rubber</td>
<td>Tapping Rubber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Flood water gone</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Herding, Maintaining watermelon plots</td>
<td>Herding</td>
<td>Tapping rubber, Harvesting in-season rice crop</td>
<td>Tapping rubber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Dry season coming</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Herding</td>
<td>Herding</td>
<td>Tapping rubber</td>
<td>Tapping rubber</td>
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<tr>
<td>Months</td>
<td>Seasons</td>
<td>Farming Activities in Each Geographical Area</td>
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<td>Swamp and Lake</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grassland</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seasonal-Flooded Plain Lowland</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Non-Flooded Plain Lowland</td>
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<td>Low-Hill</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other Farming Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Dry season (but still having enough water from streams for double-crop rice farming)</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Herding,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planting annual crop (vegetables)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Herding,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Transplanting double-crop rice seedlings</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Herding,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Applying fertilizers in rubber plots</td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Dry season or Drought (depending on rain)</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Herding,</td>
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<td>Harvesting annual crops</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Herding,</td>
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<td>Maintaining</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Herding</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Tapping rubber</td>
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<td>Tapping rubber</td>
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<td>Applying fertilizers in rubber plots</td>
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<td>Months</td>
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<td>Swamp and Lake</td>
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<td>Non-Flooded Plain Lowland</td>
<td>Low-Hill Lowland</td>
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Dry season or Drought (depending on rain)</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Herding, Harvesting annual crops</td>
<td>Herding, Maintaining double-crop rice fields</td>
<td>Tapping rubber, Herding, Plowing for transplanting in-season rice seedlings</td>
<td>Tapping rubber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Swamp and Lake**: Drilling underground water before broadcasting in-season rice seeds.
- **Grassland**: Double-crop rice fields.
- **Seasonal-Flooded Plain Lowland**: Herding, maintaining double-crop rice fields.
- **Non-Flooded Plain Lowland**: Tapping rubber, herding.
- **Low-Hill Lowland**: Tapping rubber.
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*For professional/specialized fishing
**Fishing in flooded grassland and plain lowland areas during flood season can be done by many residents apart from professional fishermen since fish can be caught even in shallow water, so it doesn’t require high skills and expensive equipments.
***Herders need to be very careful to not let their herds invading into in-season rice paddies when rice plants are growing.
****After the in-season crop rice is harvested, more herds, especially cows, are released into the fields to eat paddy stubble left after harvesting.
*****The herds are moved from grassland and lowland areas which are flooded to non-flooded area during flood season.
Apart from the farming and other activities shown in the Table 4.2, gathering has been another way that the residents utilize the natural resources from the Ai Hetae ecosystem for a long time. It is possible to trace how the residents did so in the past from what elders of today are doing, which they have continued doing for decades. Almost every time when going to tab rubber Ibu, my host mother, collects some edible leaves including wild beans which is not only pa tai but also yue ring (Archidendron jiringa), and na ring (Arkia timoriana Mer.). She found these in her own plots and on the way back home in the Baroh Ai Hetae. These plants have grown naturally by themselves since a long time ago without having to plant them. The natural products Ibu collects are not only for daily food but also for special occasions. For example, the leaf of pahong palus or the fan palm (Licuala sqinosa) that has been used for wrapping tum pah or ka tum pat, sticky rice cooked with coconut oil mixed with a little of sugar and salt (Illustration 4.4 and 4.5). Tum pah is the main food for important religious festivals, especially Hari Raya or Eid-ul-Fitr and Raya Hajyi or Eid al-Adha.

In addition when Ibu is not busy she always cuts sue gu wea or screw pines (Pandanus odoratissimus Linn.f.), which is abundance in the grasslands with no private owner. It is used to weave mats. At my host family’s house, there are several mats made from sue gu wea kept in reserve. These mats are used in the household and some are sold or given to other people. Sue gu wea mats have long been used for wrapping a dead body for funeral rites (Illustration 4.6 and 4.7).

The natural materials that Ibu has been gathering and using both from her plots and common area has are commonly practiced by people since long ago in the past. Also the knowledge on how to do so has been transmitted from previous generations. However, now there are only a few elders doing so and it is no longer a common practice for most residents.

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7 The Muslim holiday that marks the end of the Islamic holy month or Ramadan

8 The ‘Festival of Sacrifice’, which is an important religious holiday to commemorate the willingness of Abraham (Ibrahim) to sacrifice his son as an act of obedience to God, before God intervened to provide him with a sheep to sacrifice instead.
Illustration 4.4 and 4.5 Pahong palus or fan palm for wrapping tum pah.

Illustration 4.6 and 4.7 Sue gu wea or screw pines for mat weaving and basketry.

The ecosystem and farming by the Ai Hetae residents today have been through the changes gradually caused by some important factors which result from state interventions, the expansion of the market economy, and the decisions of the residents themselves to change or transform their farming practices. The transformations of each ecological component and farming practice or resource uses will be discussed next in this chapter.
From Wetland to Permanent Lake: Toward Intensive Fishing

Swamps, marshes and watercourses have been the main components of the Baroh Ai Hetae and Ai Hetae ecological systems. Fishing has been done all year around in these areas saturated by water regularly. The fertility of fish here results from the characteristics of wetlands which is full of immense biodiversity in the species of plants, fish, and other organisms based on complex and dynamic relationships among them referred to as food webs and chains.

Apart from the swamps, marshes, and watercourses, fishing has also been done seasonally in grasslands and lowland paddy fields during the flood season, the period that fishing markedly increases. During this season, water is abundant covering a huge area of the grasslands and lowland paddy fields. Therefore, the residents have more area for fishing during this period with easier methods since it doesn’t require complex or expensive fishing gear to fish in very shallow water. The residents, even the elders, have been able to make their own fishing gear, such as bamboo fish traps or fish hooks from natural materials around them. Also, in the past, women could fish in troughs under trees and bushes.

Various types of fish and other aquatic species such as Lanchester’s freshwater prawns and river snails were always abundant during the flood season in the Baroh Ai Hetae. Fish and these other aquatic species were not only used for household consumption, but also for selling, mainly within the community. Some fish have been processed as ekae masae, or pickled fish with salty and sour taste made with salt along with crushed and roasted rice and then left for three weeks in a jar before cooking. Ekae masae has been the well-known food preserved product of the Kampong Ai Hetae and nearby villages around the Phru Ai Hetae. All of the Kampong Ai Hetae women who are in the 60 years or older know well how to make Ekae masae. Budu dakrah is another preserved food made from fish fermented with salt and then left for a month to become liquid which is similar to fish sauce. Since in the past that ekae masae and budu dakrah have been the main foods of the Kampong Ai Hetae households, especially during non-flood season, when most of them don’t do fishing.

The huge area of swamps including marshes and watercourses of Baroh Ai Hetae were transformed drastically 25 years ago. Previously although the areas was saturated almost all year long, the level of water in each season was different based on
water flow, which depended on water from nearby hills during the flood season and the high tide of the Talubah River. Then it became a luboh or a huge permanent lake full of water all year even during the non-flood season. The change resulted from the obstruction of the natural water flow by the dyke built as a road connecting Village Dua and Village Tiga. The dyke stopped the flow of water from swamps, marshes, and small watercourses running into lower areas, even though one floodgate and some drainpipes were installed under the road. The dyke was one of the early development projects in the Baroh Ai Hetae and the Pru Tung Krabue. After the dyke construction was finished and the road was improved gradually until it became a paved road, the swamps, marshes, and watercourses along with the forest grooves have gradually been inundated.

One day Poh Hafid, a 65 yea old man, took me and Kah Muskan, who is a daughter-in-law of my host family, with a small engine boat to see luboh according to my request. I was so stunned with the very huge area of luboh. After we left the bank for around 10 minutes, Kah Muskan, who moved from Yala to the Kampong Ai Hetae ten years ago after getting married and who hardly comes to the luboh, and I, felt lost since we didn’t know at all where we were or which direction we should be heading toward. Water with a scattering of the tops of dead trees was around us and every direction looked the same (Illustration 4.8). This was different from Poh Hafid, who knew luboh well everywhere. Most of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents who are now in 50 years of age or older always know the places in luboh because they remember them from what had been before everything became permanently inundated.
Before being covered by water, *luboh* used to be swamps, marshes, and watercourses full with perennial trees in scattered patches. During the flood season when water was everywhere, each patch looked like an island of a small forest called in local Malay *Pu La*. Poh Hafid told me that the forests were full of *pong khau lae* (*Syzgium cinereum* (Kurz) Chantar. & J. Parn) and beehives. When the flood season retreated and the water level decreased, some areas turned dry and some marshy, while some deeper areas remained filled with water. Each area had a specific name given by the residents since a long time ago which represents either each area’s natural characteristics or the way local residents utilized the natural resources from each place before. After the dyke construction was completed (Illustration 4.9), the existing natural circle of water disappeared and perennial trees started dying after being in the water for years leaving only dead tree tops standing around the *luboh*. 
It has been said by local academics and NGOs or the CSS that the changes in the wetlands ecosystem as happened in the Baroh Ai Hetae has decreased the diversity and number of aquatic animals. This may be true in some degree, but there are some details that need to be considered in order to understand how residents have adapted themselves to the changing wetlands. What has happened is that becoming a permanent lake has provided more area and duration for the Kampong Ai Hetae residents to fish in as a main occupation all year long, not only during the flood season. During the past 20 years after the dyke construction was accomplished, several landless residents who haven’t had income from farming products became full-time or professional fishermen getting their main income from fishing. At the same time they have had to invest more in fishing gear such as bigger and stronger boats, boat engines, and more efficient fishing gear, which previously had not been necessary for fishing. Also the main reasons that fishing has become the main occupation for several residents is the growth of the market economy and the arrival of roads built by the Thai state, which helped expand the fish market. In addition, with the rapidly increasing number of residents who own motorcycles and pickup trucks, they have greater access to the market to sell fish.
Fish from the Lu Boh of Baroh Ai Hetae have been sold both among residents in the village and in local markets, especially in the two weekly scheduled ones of the district (Illustration 4.10, 4.11, 4.12, and 4.13). A couple in their thirties, Zoya and Mahad, are the biggest fish traders in the Kampong Ai Hetae. Every morning from 8:30 to 11 is the time that Zoya, the wife, stays in front of her house to wait for the ones coming in to sell fish to her. During this time, fishermen always come back from picking fish trapped by stationary fishing gears that they put out overnight in luboh. In the mean time, Zoya prepares these fish for selling by sorting them by size and price. She ties together small fish with ropes into assorted bunches. The leftover fish from yesterday are kept in ice boxes. Zoya transforms them to be ‘instant ready-to-cook fish’ by cleaning and cutting them and applying crushed turmeric, garlic, and salt, and then packing 2-3 pieces of each into a plastic bag to be sold at 20 baht ($0.7) each. Beyond selling fish at scheduled markets two days a week, Mahad, who is her husband, also travels around nearby subdistricts or districts almost every day by a motorbike trailer to sell fish.

Apart from Zoya and Mahad, there are other smaller fish traders. These smaller traders have someone in their households do fishing. They collect fresh fish and processed fish from their neighbors and relatives and sell them at the markets. In front of Hamnah’s house, there is a small pavilion where her husband and her relatives bring fish. They clean and sort fish here preparing them for sale. Sometimes Hamnah brings fish to sell by herself at scheduled markets in the district. Other villagers, especially women, who come back from rubber tapping in the late morning, always stop by to buy fish for cooking their lunch. These women don’t have anyone in their families doing fishing, so they can get fish from here at a lower price than those in markets. It is interesting that these women including my host mother hardly buy fish from Zoya and Mahad since the couple sells fish to other villagers at the same price as they sell in markets, which is 30-50% more expensive than the village price. However, for Kah Nada, a relative of my host family, she thought this is understandable because the couple’s main income is only from fish trading, so it is necessary for them to not lower the price even though selling in the village.
For the fish from the Baroh Ai Hetae sold in markets, some are big and expensive, and these fish are caught mainly by professional fishermen such as *Ekae Kue Ling* or Walking Catfish (*Clarias batrachus*), *Ekae Bowh* (*Hemibagrus wyckioides*), and *Ekae Wae* or Common Snakehead (*Channa striata*). For these fish, even the village price, not market price, is always as expensive as around 100-120 baht ($3.2-3.9) per kilogram as well as freshwater shrimp from *luboh*, which is 300 baht ($9.6) per kilogram. However, during the flood season there are a lot of smaller and cheaper fish which can be caught by not only high efficiently and more expensive fishing gear by the professional fishermen, but also by cheap and simple handmade fishing gear such as a small parcel fishing net, bamboo fish trap, and hook. Each species of these cheaper and smaller fish are always mixed and tied with a string for around 8-10 fish a bunch and then sold 20-30 baht ($0.7-1) each. However, during flood season, these fish are very abundant, thus the residents processed them for *ekae budu* which is sold in the village
for around 80-100 baht ($2.5-3.2) per kilogram and in markets outside the village for around 130-150 baht ($4.2-4.8) per kilogram.

Grassland, Resident’s Uses, and State Enclosure

Grassland and Livestock

Grasslands are another component of the Ai Hetae ecological system. Different from swamps and marshes, the grasslands of the Baroh Ai Hetae are not inundated all year long but only for four months during the flood season, although some parts of grasslands can be slushy all the time. When flood comes, most grass and plants in the grasslands are able to survive. Then, when the flood is gone, the grassland turns into a huge area available for grazing.

The scenery in the late afternoon at the grassland of Baroh Ai Hetae is always striking. The countless cattle mostly are buffalos heading from several directions back to the stables scattered at the rim of the grassland close to the edge of Pula, a cluster of the Kampong Ai Hetae (Illustration 4.14, 4.15, 4.16, and 4.17). This does not to include the herds of sheep and goat raised at the rim of the grassland. Every day, except during the flood season, after finishing Asr, the late afternoon prayer of Islam, cattle owners, all men, gradually gather at a big wooden pavilion at the rim of grassland chatting and smoking together for a while. Then they disperse mostly by motorcycles and also by a few pickup trucks to look after and bring each one’s buffalos or cows back to stables located around the pavilion. They, then, continue hanging out shortly while waiting for buffalos or cows to stroll back slowly. After that they go back home before dark for Maghrib or the evening prayer.
Since the past raising buffalos in the Baroh Ai Hetae has been done in herd. Although it is possible to raise and feed each buffalo separately and by doing so buffalos always gain good weight and give more meat, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have been familiar from previous generations of managing their herds to graze freely in the extensive grasslands. To raise the herds successfully dependeds on the vegetation and the seasonality of the wetland. However, success also depends on the herder’s knowledge, most of it transmitted from past generations, about the nature of the animals that they raise, such as buffalo behavior and the way buffalos live in herds⁹.

⁹ The herders of the Kampong Ai Hetae told me about the nature of buffalos living in groups and that the members of a group should be from the same lineage. At the same time there are subgroups within a herd based on the proximity of blood. If a herder adds a new buffalo from somewhere else into a herd, they are always fights between a new one and former members. The herders have to help them get familiar with each other gradually by building a small stable for any new members adjacent to the existing stable of the herd. Later on when they are familiar with each other, the fence dividing the two stables will be taken away. Also taking earwax from each buffalo and then applying it to the nose of each one is another way to
During the flood season, most grassland of the Baroh Ai Hetae has been under water including the area where the stables are located, so the way that the herders manage their herds during this time is always in mixed up. It is a difficult time because it is more frequent for cattle, sheep, and goats to die from drowning or starving to death since most grass and other vegetations are flooded. Herding during this flood season requires a knowledge of areas where there is no inundation and there is enough food for the animals. Knowledge about animal nature helps them to look after their herds and try their best to keep the herds alive through this difficult flood season. Buffalos always move forward to graze in upper areas aimlessly during this time, so the owners has to be familiar with their herds well enough to be able to predict where the buffalos go and then they can go to check out frequently if the buffalos are still fine.

It is important to note that although livestock, especially buffalo raising, has been the main activity in the grasslands of the Baroh Ai Hetae since in the past, not all of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have raised buffalo. Individuals who are herders do so only because they love the work and have some conditions permitting the activity such as that their houses are not very far from the grasslands or they have inherited buffalo herds from their grandparents or parents.

State Enclosure

The grasslands of the Baroh Ai Hetae have changed drastically during the past 25 years in size and in the attributes of soil and vegetation. The decrease of the grassland area started in 1977 when the Ministry of Interior announced that the Kampong Ai Hetae subdistrict and the three nearby subdistricts would be under the new khing-amphoe or minor district called Padae Kuwing Marah instead of being subdistricts of Mayo district as in the past. A minor district is a governing unit that is a branch of a district but is bigger than a subdistrict. Later on in 1994, the Padae Kuwing
Marah minor district was announced by royal decree to be the district of Padae Kuwing Marah.

Being a minor district and then a district means increased construction of government office buildings and more land occupied for district offices, police station, hospital, and secondary school. These offices were built on the edge of the grasslands which was announced before as state public land. The area occupied by these government offices is usually in higher elevations than the low grassland, so it is the area that herds used to graze during flood season. However, the space occupied by these governmental offices hasn’t yet caused a serious problem for the herds and herders because there was a lot of upper grassland remaining. The real impact on the herds and herders, especially buffalo owners, started when the MDU 99 settled here in 2005, one year after the resurrection of the violence in the southernmost region started.

The MDU 99 is not an army with a military mission, but works on development and emergency relief. Therefore it requires more land to keep machines for constructions like asphalt roads, reinforced concrete roads, reservoirs, water storage tanks, and so on. It also needs the area for the model organic farming extension and the promotion of livestock. Therefore, MDU 99 has occupied a huge area of grassland of more than a hundred acres which is much more than the space occupation by other agencies for its buildings, garages, storages, and model farms as well as dormitories for low rank staff and houses for high rank officers.

The area occupied by MDU 99 is the grassland with a higher elevation adjacent to grazing area. Before the arrival of MDU 99, during the flood season the herders built temporary common stables in this area, and brought buffalos to live there for around three months until the flood of the lower grassland receded. At that time buffalos grazed in this area and also travelled to find vegetation in non-flooded areas, and then came back to these temporary stables. Since the MDU99 arrived, the enclosure of grassland has been gradually started by strong fences and barbwires, but the latter have injured many buffalos, especially when the barbwire is hidden under the water. The enclosure has caused serious problems. Without non-flooded areas for food and stables during the flood season, buffalo herds travel aimlessly with hunger. Sometimes they have to stay on inter-district roads which is very risky because of the possibility of being hit by vehicles or stolen. There is also a problem that the herds go up to the hills and eat young
rubber trees of other people. Then, sometimes buffalos have been killed by people who get angry.

Even though the decrease of food sources for buffalos caused by the enclosure of MDU 99 is significant, buffalos don’t normally die abruptly by starving during the flood season. Instead buffalos usually die one or two months later when the flood is gone and after being gradually weakened for several months. When the flood is gone, then the dead bodies of buffalos are spread around in the grasslands of the Baroh Ai Hetae. Moreover, food shortage doesn’t happen only during the flood season, but also during the low tide period when buffalos start going back to low grasslands. During this time, the grass and other vegetation all are still covered by mud (Illustration 4.18 and 4.19). When the buffalos eat them, they get sick and start to die. Some buffalo also die because of foot and mouth disease since they have to be in water almost all the time during the flood season because of the enclosure of non-flooded grasslands. Moreover, the area which has not been blocked by barbwire was always dug into trenches or was filled to elevate it by the MDU 99. It is common for buffalos and cows to fall down into trenches or from elevated areas when they try to climb up to find food to eat and some of them die from this.
Illustration 4.18 and 4.19 A buffalo herd struggling for grazing area during the first few months after the flood receded when most area of the grassland remains muddy.

The encroachment by the MDU 99 has also caused changes in vegetation in this area. Since the MDU 99 uses backhoes to plow and turn soil in a huge space, *Samet*, or *Melaleuca cajuputi*, has been widespread and become the dominant plant in the upper grassland. Ghalib, a 45 year old herder, told me that before the arrival of the MDU 99 Samet was not like this. He thought that the plowing and turning of the soil by the MDU 99 has diffused the existing roots of *Samet* and also has changed soil conditions to become more sandy which is suitable for the growth of *Samet*. In addition, before the arrival of the MDU 99 in 2005, mushroom picking including for the mushroom market
in the Kampong Ai Hetae and the adjacent subdistricts was not a regular seasonal economic activity like today. The spreading of Samet has caused the increase of Kula Kae-ling or Samet mushrooms (*Boletus griseipurpureus cor.*) which grow in a pile under Samet leaves beneath bushes of Samet trees.

**Intensive Uses of Grassland**

Apart from being occupied by state agencies and especially by the MDU 99, the rest of the grassland of the Baroh Ai Hetae, which is a low area has also been used much more intensively by the residents since around ten years ago. Previously, this low-lying area, which is state public land, had been utilized only for grazing and for few plots of vegetables. However, nine years ago around 400 rai (158 acres) of grassland were allocated in small plots of three rais (1.2 acres) each for each household applying for the project to plant watermelon. The land allocation was mainly initiated by Waseem, the head of the Village Empat of the Ai Hetae subdistrict. Waseem travelled to Thae Pa, a district of Songkhla province adjacent to Pattani province, with support from the OPDA to learn how people in Thae Pa plant watermelon, which is a good quality and famous product there. Then, Waseem and three of his friends, who were sergeants at Padae Kuwing Marah police station, experimented to plant watermelon in the grassland of the Baroh Ai Hetae during the non-flood season.

After they realized that watermelons can grow well in the Baroh Ai Hetae and they can gain good income from that crop, Waseem cooperated with the SAO, subdistrict head, and other village heads to contact government officers to ask for permission for villagers to seasonally use the grassland which has been state public land for watermelon planting. After getting permission, he announced for the residents to apply for allocated plots and then managed to cast lots for being a fair and just selection. For Waseem, initiating the project is better than just leaving the land empty and useless. Planting watermelon would help the residents get extra income. After watermelon were planted by the Kampong Ai Hetae residents for 3-4 years, formal community leaders of the adjacent subdistrict also managed to allocate another plot of grassland nearby for their subdistrict members to plant watermelon.

In March, while the flooding has gradually retreated, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents start to make fences for watermelon planting. Because the allocated area is the
same area where the herds graze in other seasons, fencing is vital to prevent herds from
intruding into watermelon plots and then eating all of them. However, Waseem
confirmed that the watermelon plots don’t encroach on the grazing area. For him, there
is still plenty of area to graze during the non-flood season. Herds are able to avoid
watermelon plots and graze in other places. Moreover, the planting duration for
watermelons is only 70 days. After harvesting the herds can come in and eat the leftover
vegetation. Also most herders plant watermelon as well for their extra income.
However, for some residents who plant other annual crops apart from watermelons such
as corn, beans, pumpkin, chili, jalapiyo, eggplant, or yams, after harvesting watermelon
they have to maintain the fence to be stronger than usual. It is risky for other annual
crop plots to be invaded by herds. This is because not many residents continue planting
other cash crops. They just leave their plots and leave fences to brake and decay,
waiting for the new round of flood season to come. Then herds can come to eat the
leftover in these plots which are adjacent to the ones planted with annual crops.

The intensive use of land also happens at the edge of the grasslands. This area is
next to wetland paddies and has a little higher elevation than the low grassland. Some
parts of the area have been utilized for annual crops permanently for 8-9 months a year
before stopping during the flood season when all of the area is under water. This is
different from the annual crop planting in previous watermelon plots which is used for
other annual crops for not more than three months a year. Doing annual crops
permanently can be the main income for the households doing so. The vegetable
products are always sold at the scheduled markets of the subdistrict (Illustration 4.20
and 4.21).
Illustration 4.20 and 4.21 Kampong Ai Hetae women selling annual crops from their spaces at a the scheduled market.

However, the area at the edge of grasslands utilized for annual crops is not much when compared to the land transformed into new perennial cash crops, especially rubber. This includes some plots of oil palm, which has just come in about 4-5 years ago. All rubber plots at the edge of the Baroh Ai Hetae are still young, not yet more than seven years old and not yet ready for tapping. Interestingly, although the edge of the Baroh Ai Hetae has higher elevation, it is still flooded at least for two months a year. Therefore, it is actually not suitable for either rubber or oil palm. Even the staff of the OPDA don’t encourage the residents to plant rubber and oil palm in this area because it is very likely that these plants would die during the flood season even though planted by ridging. For the OPDA staff, the edge of grasslands should only be utilized for annual crops. In the past, the edge of the Baroh Ai Hetae was full of brushwood and undergrowth. Recently, the increase of rubber prices and the oil palm market as well as land pressure from population growth have urged some residents to pioneer this area and plant perennial cash crops, especially rubber which is the plant that people in this area have been familiar with for a very long time. It is important to note that the land at the edge of the Baroh Ai Hetae was preempted by the residents since a long time ago and some households have Sor Kor 1, a document given to them when the states was informed of their ownership. However, since a few decades ago, the area was announced as state public land, and after that the right over the land at the edge of the Baroh Ai Hetae has been unsecure. Therefore, it is likely that to plant perennial crops in
this area, which was unused before, is one way the residents can secure their rights over the land.

**The Changes of Water Flow, Paddy Field, and Rice Farming**

**From Wetland Rice Farming to Early Rice Farming**

The lowland at the edge of the grasslands that is inundated for around three months was pioneered by previous generations of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents as paddy fields. The residents usually called the paddy fields in this area *bue nae baroh* or wetland paddy fields, which is one of two kinds of paddy in the Kampong Ai Hetae and nearby villages. In the past, rice farming in wetland paddy fields was prevalent. This kind of rice farming used local slow-growing rice varieties that could survive flood well. Hammah told me that the rice from *bue nae baroh* was very good for making Kao Mao, the pounded unripe rice eaten as a dessert with fresh shredded coconut mixed with sugar.

However, because the Baroh Ai Hetae was transformed, the water flow was changed. Then the slow growing rice varieties, which take more than seven months from sowing to harvesting, were not suitable for *bue nae baroh*. Therefore, Kampong Ai Hetae residents couldn’t continue wetland rice farming for several years. According to Saad, a 60 year old man, before ceasing to plant *bue nae baroh* the residents had been faced with the problem that the rice was not ripe in time before the arrival of the flood which came earlier with higher levels than before. During that time often the residents either had to harvest rice amid high flood, or had to harvest earlier even though the rice had not yet ripened properly to escape damage from flood.

Roads constructed during the last 30 years are other causes changing the geography of the Baroh Ai Hetae. This is mainly the main road or the rural highway, which is the extension from the one initiated by Khru Razak, starting from Selasa market passing through several other subdistricts of the Padae Kuwing Marah and Raman districts. The road was joined by another smaller road 17 kilometers long starting from another side of the Pru Tung Krabue. Combining together the two roads seems to be a wall surrounding the Pru Tung Krabue. Although it looks like the two roads were built at the rim of the Pru Tung Krabue, in some areas the roads are inside
wetlands. It can be said that the two roads have divided the Pru Tung Krabue into two sides. The roads have also blocked the way water flows because they were filled high for around 2.5-3 meters from the low ground with insufficient drains under the road surface. Moreover, there are also an increasing number of inter-village smaller roads, which were in the middle of Pru Tung Krabue including Baroh Ai Hetae, built mainly by the Department of Rural Highways including by the MDU 99 (Map 4.1).

Map 4.1 Roads built in Pru Tung Krabue (The thin orange lines are roads in Pru Tung Krabue and the thick dark red line represents the dyke as a road in Kampong Ai Hetae) (Google Maps, 2012).

These roads affect water flow in Baroh Ai Hetae. It is more than 20 years ago already that the flood has arrived earlier and stayed longer than in previous times. This directly affected wetland rice farming. Previously, this kind of rice farming took seven months starting from June and then harvesting in month of December. When the flood started to come earlier, *bue nae baroh*, or wetland paddy fields, were always damaged because the rice couldn’t ripen before being flooded and then farmers had to harvest the paddy under the flood water. This is the reason why the Kampong Ai Hetae residents discontinued wetland rice farming since around 15-20 years ago.

Later years on, several residents of Pula, a cluster of households in the Kampong Ai Hetae located closest to wetland paddy, didn’t want to leave their paddy field useless, so they went together to find new rice varieties from the district of Panarae in Pattani province. *Anor Darow* (Daughter Rice) and *Batu* (Stone Rice) were the two new
varieties they brought back home at that time. They are the early rice varieties which take less time to grow. A few years later the OPDA started to regularly distribute seeds of the state improved early rice varieties to the residents. The residents call these varieties in their own generic Thai term *Phan Kaset* meaning the varieties they got from the OPDA, one of which is *Chai Nat 1* (the formal Thai name of the variety produced and distributed by the Department of Agriculture) and another is *Thian* (Thai word which is the informal name used by the local residents).

Noticeably, the local Malay term used for a long time by the residents for previous wetland rice farming is *wah buenae baroh* meaning to do rice farming on wetland paddy. After changing rice varieties from the previous ones to the early ones, the residents changed the local Malay term to call rice farming in wetland paddy fields *wah padi e-ngae*, which means to plant light rice. In Thai, light rice which means early rice is called *khao bao*, which is *padi e-ngae* in local Malay (In Malay, *padi* means rice and e-ngae means light). Generally, early rice varieties, which take only around 100 days to grow until they can be harvested, have been for double rice crop or *na prang* (Thai) in many areas of Thailand, especially the areas with irrigation. When the Kampong Ai Hetae residents talk to Thais, they call *padi e-ngae* as *na prang*. Therefore, *padi e-ngae* and *na prang* had never existed before in the rice farming system of the Kampong Ai Hetae until the change of geography and the flow of water of the baroh arrived.

The way to do wetland rice farming or *wah buenae baroh* in the past and to do early rice farming or *wah padi e-ngae* or *na prang* of today are quite different. The latter one requires more management and investment in labor, time, and factors of production like fertilizers and pesticides. Moreover, the early rice always has a problem with water shortage that had hardly ever happened to the wetland rice farming in the past. So far there has been an informal agreement among farmers to draw water from the streams originating from the low hills nearby and end when they reach the paddy area. Although water from the end point spreads all around, in the years that draught is severe there often are conflicts among residents doing early rice farming. Moreover, some farmers have to drill underground water in their own paddy fields during this time. Another problem getting serious recently is the invasion by herds of buffalo and cow because the grazing area has gradually decreased from the enclosure by the arrival of
new state agencies after the 2004. Importantly, it is almost impossible that one person do early rice farming on one’s own when the owners of neighboring plots don’t do so because the cost will be much higher for doing it alone. By doing early rice farming together, they are able to save the cost from building fences together to prevent invasion by herds. It also helps save cost when they hire a big tractor together to do the first plow for everyone at one time rather than doing so individually.

Since early rice farming requires more management and investment, the residents have to make a careful decision whether or not they should do it. The most important factor for them is the adequacy of water. Therefore, they don’t do early rice farming every year. Also some residents, who own the wetland paddies, have never done early rice farming for a decade and left the paddies unused because they don’t have enough either labor or money to do so. In addition, for several residents early rice is not delicious, especially if it is kept for more than a year. The residents who already have enough rice for their household consumption from padi bue kha or in-season rice with the slow growing variety, usually sell rice from their wetland paddies to thao kae or middlemen from outside to gain extra income.

However, during the past few years the OPDA has implemented the policy from the SBPAC to support na prang, the double rice crop farming with the early rice. The support had increased year by year. During 2011, the year the dissertation research was conducted, the support was almost 100% free ranging from plowing by a backhoe to rice seeds, fertilizers, and biological pesticides. Hence, this year many of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents including the ones who had previously left their fields unused for many years returned to do early rice farming actively.

The Decrease of In-Season Rice Field

For the upper area of paddies, it has been for in-season rice farming to plant padi bue kha or slow-growing rice varieties. The product from in-season rice farming has been staple food for the Kampong Ai Hetae residents since a long time ago. Although this area has higher elevation than the low grassland, it has still been flooded yearly but only short time by water from the streams running down through the near hills during the rainy season. The Kampong Ai Hetae residents have started sowing and transplanting in November before the flood comes. After that rice seedlings have been
under water for a month or so, and most are able to survive. When the flood is gone in early or late February, then residents have started to harvest in March every year.

Although more than 60% of the households in the Kampong Ai Hetae have still planted *padi bue kha*, the land for in-season rice farming has been decreasing for a few decades. Since most of the land has not been under water during flood season, it has been gradually used for new houses by newly married couples who have just separated from their parent’s houses. The expansion of households caused by population growth has made several parts of the in-season rice paddy become a populated area.

Some plots of in-season rice paddy fields have been transformed to plant rubber recently. Previously rubber plots were just only in the hill area which is a little far from the village. Today several rubber plots are just right next to the populated area of the community or are alternated with resident’s houses. For the Kampong Ai Hetae residents, investment in rubber planting means a secure life in the future for at least 20-25 years with the constant income from rubber tapping. Therefore, when someone can accumulate enough money, they always buy land from their relatives or neighbors and then invest it in planting rubber trees. It is important to note that the proper piece of land to buy is the one with a secure land title. In addition, the land should be non-flooded or be flooded only for a short time in the year. The land with these qualities is only the in-season paddy field.

Apart from the decrease of in-season paddy field, there are some paddies that have been deserted uselessly. Some plots are flooded all the time as an impact from community expansion. When new houses are built, each house needs to elevate the land by filling it in to prevent flooding. When several residents did so without cooperating together, then their elevated land blocked the existing water ways. Some paddies, which are lower than the filled plots are blocked, and then they become permanently flooded and turn into shallow ponds because water has no place to go.

One thing that has already changed for in-season rice farming is that in the past the residents did rice seedlings around their houses. To do seedlings for in-season rice farming requires a dry area, and it cannot be done in muddy areas unlike the early rice farming. Rice varieties for in-season rice farming, which is slow growing rice, have long roots, so it is very difficult to pull the seedlings out if they are planted in muddy land. Moreover, during seedling season, cows are still grazing in the in-season rice
paddy field. Every year cow owners are able to let their cows graze in paddy fields when rice harvesting is done. If someone wants to do seedlings in the in-season rice paddy area, then they have to make very strong fences to prevent the high risk from invasion by cows. Previously, the residents did rice seedlings in their backyard. Recently, the space around each house has been decreasing because the land has been used for new houses of descendants who have started their own families by building their own separated houses on land around their parent’s houses, so there is not anymore enough backyard for seedlings.

Today Kampong Ai Hetae residents do seedlings in new rubber plots around the village where the rubber trees are not yet older than three years (Illustration 4.22 and 4.23). They do seedlings on empty land left between each row of rubber trees. In a rubber plot of three acres there is enough room for around 15-20 families to do seedlings using just half a row for a family. However, after rubber trees have grown for three years, then farmers can’t do so anymore because the trees grow too much with their branches and leaves blocking the sunlight which is necessary for the growth of the rice seedlings. Therefore, they have to find a new young rubber plot and ask for permission from the owner. Interestingly, rubber plot owners are always willing to allow others to do rice seedlings on their plots because it helps maintain their plots both by killing and chopping weeds which is good for rubber trees to not be deprived of nutrients from weeds, and by fertilizing the soil from the fertilizers rice farmers put on their rice seedlings. Moreover, the duration of rice seedling is very short at only 28-30 days, so it doesn’t cause any problems for the rubber trees. When the seedlings grow enough, the residents gradually remove seedlings and tie them in bundles to bring them to paddy fields by motorcycle for transplanting.
Illustration 4.22 and 4.23 Doing seedling in the new rubber plots where the trees aren’t yet more than three years old.

Land pressure seems to be the main phenomenon for the Kampong Ai Hetae residents from now on. The area for in-season rice paddy is being gradually transformed to be land for new houses. One day when I went to do seedlings with Kah Nada, I saw an adjacent plot of land, a two acre plot, had been left unused almost all year long except for around 1-2 months in a year for rice seedlings. I was wondering why the owner doesn’t plant rubber trees on this piece of land like other owners of nearby plots.
I learned later that this plot is owned by Bae Mansur, a 60 year old toh kor teb or Imam’s assistant in the mosque of Pula. Bae Mansur has several siblings and many nephews and nieces. He has planned to keep this plot of land for new houses of his descendants in the near future. If he plants rubber on this piece of land, then his descendants will not have any land left to build their houses. Land in Pula, a cluster in the Kampong Ai Hetae, is in short supply and crowded already. In the meanwhile when the land has not yet used by his descendants, he allows his relatives and neighbors in Pula to do rice seedlings in this piece of land.

**Low Hill Area: From Integrated Orchards or Traditional Rubber Plots to Modern Rubber Plots**

The Ai Hetae ecosystem consists of swamps, marshes, and low-lying grassland in the bottom, and then the area gradually slopes up into low hills. While the upper area with short-time flooding has been used for in-season rice farming, the low hills have been for mixed orchards and traditional rubber plots (Illustration 4.24). In the beginning, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents started to pioneer land in low hills and then planted upland rice varieties by digging tiny holes to bury the seeds. At the same time they planted perennial fruit and rubber trees along with the rice. When the perennial trees grew up, then the land became either integrated orchards or traditional rubber plots with rich biodiversity. Their orchards might have different main plants such as durian, coconut, or bamboo along with other varieties of fruits and plants mixed in. The same as a traditional rubber plot, there are other fruits or plants inserted as well.
While there are not any traditional rubber plots still existing today, there a few mixed orchards are left from the past, but most of them are not maintained well. However, these orchards reveal something of the past about agroforestry practices in the region. Chaman is the upper area located deeply two kilometers from the Kampong Ai Hetae main road. It used to be the center of the Kampong Ai Hetae until around 30 years ago before the residents started moving to live near the main road to enjoy more convenience and facilities, especially electricity. Today Chaman is a very quiet place, with decaying remains of old houses, although a few houses are still in use. There are also several densely overgrown gardens that used to be garden homes or backyards of previous residents. Local academics, NGOs, and the CSS call these kinds of gardens dusong which means an ancient orchard like suan boran in Thai. However, dusong for local academics, NGOs, and the CSS refer to management of gardens within kin groups.

After moving out from Chaman some residents have still kept the orchards and harvested from them. Some residents have improved their gardens by adding more trees such as coconut, bamboo, and wild bean trees, especially pa tai (Parkia speciosa or bitter bean, twisted cluster bean, or stink bean). Also a watering sprinkler system has been installed in 2-3 plots. Today some of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents still obtain substantial regular income, for example, from pa tai, and even daily from coconut.
The landscape of the low hills has been totally changed from 30-35 years ago. Low hills are the first ecological component in the Ai Hetae to change drastically. Since the arrival of the Office of the Rubber Replanting Aid Fund (ORRAF), the traditional rubber plots of the Ai Hetae residents in the low hill area were transformed into modern ones with high-yield rubber varieties and the new ways of planting and maintaining the new rubber trees such as specific spacing of planting, applying chemical fertilizers, and avoiding and removing other kinds of plants in the plots (Illustration 4.25 and 4.26).

However, apart from the transformations caused by the ORRAF, the low hills were also transformed by residents themselves who wanted to do more modern rubber because of the expansion of the rubber market. These residents didn’t have traditional rubber plots before, which was not in a condition to be supported by the ORRAF which has provided governmental aid fund for only rubber replanting of the traditional to the modern one.

Illustration 4.25 and 4.26 Modern rubber plots.

During the annual flood season from December to mid-February, the four kilometer route from the resident’ houses to the rubber plots in the hill area is cut off by flooding. In the past when rubber activity was not intensive like today, then the residents were able to pass the difficulty of the flood by just stopping traveling to tap rubber and engaged in other activities instead. They didn’t have to make an effort to travel through flood water a long way to tap rubber. However, today the residents are willing to put a lot of effort into going to tap rubber during the flood season by taking a motorized boat for around 30-45 minutes to their rubber plots in the low hill area. For
the ones who do not have their own boats, they have to rely on other people’s boats. During my fieldwork period, the SAO provided two fiber boats for each village to use, so people who don’t have their own boat can use them in a group to go tapping. Also during the flood season, thao kae rubber middlemen in the Kampong Ai Hetae can’t send the coolies with motorcycles to pick rubber lumps sold to them from plots in the low hills. Therefore, rubber plot owners or tapping employees have to bring the rubber lump back by boat. After landing they also have to carry the sacks of rubber lumps that weigh almost a hundred kilograms each to thao kae’s house (Illustration 4.27 and 4.28).

Taking a boat to the hill area is difficult and sometimes even dangerous. The huge area of water with 2-3 meters average depth has surges sometime during the day, especially when strong winds come. Even ripples can overturn small boats, particularly if they are overloaded. Moreover, on the ground underwater it is mainly uneven and undulated. There are elevated roads, small and simple pavilions which farmers built in their paddies for shade during the early rice season, fences from early rice plots, elevated pieces of land, and bushes including young rubber trees. There are also several ponds and reservoirs from construction projects underwater during the flood season. Therefore, boat accidents sometimes happen even though the residents have been familiar with the area and try to ride their boats very carefully.

Illustration 4.27 and 4.28 During flood season carrying rubber lumps by boat from low hill areas back to the village.
The More Distance between Residents and Wetland Ecosystem

The Baroh Ai Hetae or Ai Hetae wetlands is the main component of the Ai Hetae ecological system that the residents live in and make a living from. However, it was quite common for the residents I questioned about Baroh Ai Hetae to apologize because they do are not knowledgeable enough to answer. Then they always refer to a few other persons. Every time the same persons referred to are the ones who still utilizes a lot of wetland resources and knows the wetlands far better. While several people in same the age with Wahab, the former Village Satu head who is now 67 years old, usually spend most of their time during the day in the grasslands and swamps of Baroh Ai Hetae, more than half of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents today actually have never even come to Baroh. Most of them are from the younger generation. Some of them make a living in non-farming activities such as government employees, traders, wage labors, or students pursuing higher education.

Interestingly, even several residents who still make a living in the farming sector in the Kampong Ai Hetae, also do not have any close relationship with the Baroh Ai Hetae anymore. From 15-20 years ago the use of natural resources and farming activities by the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have been less diverse and more specific because they have focused more time on rubber as their main production activity. Several of the residents just ride motorcycles on the road passing through the Baroh to go back and forth between their houses and rubber plots in the low hills. At the same time, for people who become professional fishermen, even though they are familiar with the Lu Boh or a permanent lake, several of them don’t have a chance to utilize the natural resources from other parts of the ecological system such as the low hills or paddies since they don’t have land in those areas.

Some parts of ecological system, moreover, have been barely visited by residents, such as a bank of the stream passing through from the hill of the adjacent district toward the Baroh Ai Hetae. Since the main road of the Kampong Ai Hetae was built, people haven’t used the small walk way along the streams to travel anymore. Besides, after people built their houses along the road, the stream has become the back of these houses where some have fences to mark the ownership of their land, so since then it has been difficult for others to walk along the stream. While elders, like my host mother, often go to the banks of some streams near their houses to soak mats they
weaved from cutting *Sue Gu Wea* or screw pines to make them more durable, no younger residents come to use the streams.

Interestingly, while local academics, NGOs, and the CSS are very concerned with the changes in the wetland ecosystem of the Pru Tung Krabue, of which Baroh Ai Hetae is a part, the Ai Hetae residents of all generations seem to be much less concerned. When asked what they feel when swamps, marshes, and watercourses are blocked by the dyke (the dyke as a road) and become a permanent lake, several of them said it is fine. For them they don’t think the dyke as having any negative impacts. One middle age man told me that “It is true that blocking the watercourses at Baroh caused all trees there to die, but this didn’t cause any problem to us. The dyke was built to prevent people from outside to come to poison fish.” When being asked whether the dyke should be demolished, several of them said that it shouldn’t be because so far people can adapt themselves to the new lake, especially the fishermen who have already invested a lot in their fishing gear and earn their main income from fishing. In addition when being asked what the difference is between the wetlands of the past and today, the answers from them were just short and perfunctory such as ‘It is just like today.’, or ‘There were more trees than today.’ Although these answers can’t be read literally, they to some degree show how residents do not worry much about the changes in the Baroh Ai Hetae. One reason that makes them feel like this is that they don’t have to depend on the wetland ecosystem and its resources closely like in the past, so the changes of Baroh Ai Hetae hasn’t yet affected them directly, at least up until the present time.

**Conclusion**

The various farming activities of today have passed through the complex process of changes happening to the Kampong Ai Hetae ecological system. The main factor causing the change of the Ai Hetae ecological system are state roles and development projects, especially the construction of roads and dykes that change water flow in the wetland system resulting in swamps, marshes, the permanent lake. Other factors are the promotion of cash crops, especially rubber, as well as the expansion of land used by state agencies into the grassland of the Baroh Ai Hetae after the resurrection of the unrest in 2004.
Along with the ecological changes caused by development projects, the expansion of the market economy has gradually stimulated farming activities and resource use in the Kampong Ai Hetae. In addition, the increase in population changes the ecological system as well. For the upper and low hill areas, the changes in the farming system haven't been propelled by ecological changes but by attractions from the market as in the case of modern rubber plots replacing traditional orchards or traditional rubber plots. This is to include the new rubber plots in paddy fields, some contrary to ecological conditions by planting in inappropriate zones that are flooded regularly for several months each year.

Today the Ai Hetae ecological system has been transformed substantially from the past. Most of the hill area was changed mainly from traditional integrated orchards to monocrop modern rubber plots. The huge area of marshes, swamps, and watercourses of the Baroh Ai Hetae or the Ai Hetae wetlands became a permanent lake. There is also the change of water flow in the wetlands which made floods come earlier and the area unsuitable for wetland rice farming anymore. Also the upper part of the wetlands, which has been occupied by the military unit, has been transformed by backhoes plowing and turning the soil in a huge space changing the vegetation.

Since in the past, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have gradually adapted their farming system to suit ecological changes and to maintain their uses from their lands and common resources. Their shift from doing wetland rice farming to early rice farming in the rim of the wetlands was to avoid flooding which came too early after many constructions were built in the wetlands. However, the recently annual crop farming, especially watermelon planting, which requires only a short period to harvest, is suitable to the rhythm of water flow in the wetlands. Also the annual crops planted, both watermelon and various vegetables, is in response to the rights to use the grassland which seems to be more insecure because the Thai state announced them as a public land 1-2 decades ago. Only the planting of short-term annual crops is allowed by the authorities in this public grassland. The mushroom gathering which has been bustling as never before because of the change of vegetations caused by the state agency’s land transformations, is one way to utilize the resources that have been already changed.

The ability and effectiveness of the local residents to adapt ways to make a living amidst the changes in ecosystems and natural resources have made it hard to
identify whether or not each development or construction project by the state is good or bad. That is because change in ecosystems and natural resources happen gradually over time. The residents adjust their lives to meet these changes gradually as well. For example when the wetlands were transformed into a permanent lake, some residents became professional fishermen, which coincides with the decrease in farmland among the young generation caused by population growth. That is the reason why the residents do not see the dyke as a road blocking Baroh’s waterways as a big problem unlike NGOs. Simultaneously, agricultural activities and the use of natural resources by the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have been getting less diverse and more specialized. The residents who focus on rubber hardly relate to other parts of the ecological system, and the same for professional fishermen who only utilize the resource from luboh, the permanent lake. Then the intensive use of each specific farming activity has been required and this is their main concerns over the changes of the whole ecological system or the parts of the ecosystem that they do not utilize.

At the same time, some farming activity has been declining, especially the in-season rice farming, caused by population pressure decreasing paddy area and turning the area into houses for the young generation. Seeking the land under young rubber trees in new rubber plots to make rice seedlings is the latest struggle to continue their in-season rice farming. Also there is the decreasing of grazing caused by the enclosure by the state agency, even though the good price and high demand in the local market should encourage herding.

The changes in farming practices and natural resource uses by the Kampong Ai Hetae residents in each ecological component have happened as responses to the changes in the Ai Hetae ecological system. This means that the residents have tried a lot to maintain their use of the changing land and other resources in making a living. Also amidst their increasing involvement with and the expansion of the modern market economy, the more specialized and intensive farming relying on a few important cash crops is the major trend in the Kampong Ai Hetae. Under these conditions, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents are trying to find ways to achieve well-being through their current farming as will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5
MAKING A LIVING THROUGH MODERN FARMING

Even though farming and natural resource uses of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have still in some degree been diverse, the diversity seems to be less with more specialized and intensive focus on a few cash crops, particularly rubber, watermelon, and few other annual crops. Consequently the residents have become closer and more dependent on the wider market economy. That in turn is closely related to the global economy, and especially rubber. At the same time, some modern techniques for farming, such as chemical fertilizer uses, have also been applied to increase productivity and even on farming for household consumption.

More specialized, intensive, and modern farming has gradually happened amid development policies claiming to improve the quality of the lives of rural Malay Muslims by increasing their productivition and drawing them closer to the modern market economy. Unfortunately, most of these policies have failed: some completed projects don’t work because of low and ineffective construction quality; and some cause negative impacts to the ecosystem and obstruct the residents’ access to common natural resources. However, while living with the failures of these projects, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have gradually become a part of the modern economy through the expansion of the market system and agricultural industry, especially on rubber. These expansions have been possible because of the Thai state’s general policies since 1961 on modernization providing several highways and numerous inter-provincial roads as well as the expansion of electricity and the communication system. Interestingly, while the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have been a part of the modern market economy, development policies and implementations in the southernmost region have not helped them them to improve their status in the modern market economy.

This chapter will discuss the current farming economy of the Kampong Ai Hetae through the economy of two important cash crops: rubber and watermelon. The chapter also shows how the residents are in the bottom of the farming market economy. Moreover, it will examine the ways that the residents survive through their strategies in doing farming amidst the state’s unsupportive policies and their low status in the market economy.
Farming Economy

Rubber

Among several farming activities in the Kampong Ai Hetae, rubber is the most significant one. It is true that several residents can reduce their household expenses on food from other farming products, such as rice, annual crop farming, integrated gardens, and fishing, and some can gain income from selling these farming products in the local market such as selling the products in front of their houses, by trishaw driving, or at local scheduled markets. However, economic conditions in the Kampong Ai Hetae are highly dependent on rubber. The significance of the rubber economy is not only for rubber plot owners, tapping laborers, and local rubber middlemen and their coolies or employees, but also for the vitality of other businesses like grocery, food shops, and clothing sales in the Kampong Ai Hetae as well as other petty trading at the Selasa market and scheduled markets.

Rubber has been economically important for the Kampong Ai Hetae residents since it was still the traditional one before the arrival of modern rubber farming promoted by the ORRAF starting around 30 years ago. Even though it was difficult, the residents put a lot of effort in working on rubber for cash. When Saad, a 60 year old man, was around ten years old, he and his family had to leave the house at two o’clock in the morning and took a very long walk via an untidy and small walkway to the family’s rubber plot at a low hill nearby. Sometime during the year they had to cross watercourses. After finishing rubber sheets, Saad helped his parents carry all the heavy rubber sheets back home. At that time there were no machines or equipment to make their work and lives more comfortable. Also access to the market was still limited. Poh Wahab, a 67 year old man who is a former village head and a rubber trader, had to ride a bicycle travelling to each rubber plot in the low hill area to buy rubber sheets and rubber cup lumps and then sell these products to bigger middlemen who came from town occasionally.

Since the arrival of modern rubber farming, rubber has been the main income for many households in the Kampong Ai Hetae. It has been like this up until now, even though amidst the growth of population the percentage of households highly depends on rubber farming seems to decrease gradually. Income from rubber remains important, especially for the families with several plots. These families have secure economic
status than others. Their previous generations pioneered or bought several plots of land, so today the descendants still have enough land for rubber farming as their main income. In the case of my host family, it has three rubber plots that are still in use and one more plot that is in the replanting process from four years ago. Income from rubber has been distributed among my host parents, two daughters, and one son. For daughters and sons all are in their 40s and have their own families. Even though the families of two daughters have another source of income from their salary as state officials, income from rubber still remains important for them. Moreover, rubber is still the only income of the son’s family. In addition, when the time for replanting comes, rubber plot owners get a large amount of money from selling rubber wood. For around eight rai (3.2 acres) of rubber tree wood, the owner can earn almost 300,000 baht ($9,600). However, after cutting all the rubber trees, then the plot owners must have other sources of income during the next six years while waiting for the replanted plot to be able to be tapped.

Even though rubber can still provide steady income for owners and hired tappers, rubber prices are not stable at all. During the early months of my fieldwork from January – March 2011, the average price of a rubber cup lump, which has been the only kind of rubber product in the Kampong Ai Hetae for several years, was as high as 63 baht ($2) per kilogram. During that time Bae Reza, a son of my host family, and his wife, Kah Muskan, could earn 5,000-6,000 baht ($161-193) each round or five days of tapping from their eight rai rubber plot (3.2 acres) that produced around 110 kilograms of rubber cup lumps. Within a month, they sold rubber three to four times depending on the rain, so they earned 15,000-20,000 baht ($500-650) per month. However, a few months before I left the field, rubber price had gone down gradually. In December 2011, the price decreased by almost 50% by the beginning of the year. This means that income from rubber for Bae Reza and Kah Muskan as well as other residents decreased by almost half. The fall in rubber prices continued in 2012 and 2013. The main reasons for this fall are the surplus production in major rubber producing countries, the decreasing demand for automobiles in China (Suraj 2012), and the declining condition of the global economy, especially the Eurozone debt crisis, U.S. economic conditions, and oil prices.

Kampong Ai Hetae residents have been living with the fluctuations in rubber prices for many years. One thing that makes them resilient is that the cost of rubber
farming has been rather low. Most rubber plots, which are in use right now, had been fully subsidized for replanting from the ORRAF for the first six years before being able to be tapped. Also the cost to maintain the productivity of rubber is not that high since sometimes rubber farmers decides to not put much fertilizer on their plots.

Local rubber middleman called *thao khae* are the main connection with the world market economy for the farmers (Illustration 5.1). There are four rubber middlemen in the Kampong Ai Hetae. One of them often complains to me that his business don’t go very well because the costs are so high such as the cost from a 10-wheel truck rental to bring the products to a factory and also labor wages. In addition, during the rainy season there is very little rubber to buy, so the middlemen do not have enough income. However, for some rubber middlemen, their business goes smoothly and they are able to accumulate capital to expand their business and usually have good economic status. Bae Nadim, a 50 year old man, is a major rubber middleman in the Kampong Ai Hetae with 8-10 coolies or employees. Bae Nadim has a good economic status earning from his business. During the month of Ramadan of my fieldwork year, he was the one in the Kampong Ai Hetae donating the highest amount of money at 20,000 baht ($650) for *zakat*, one of the Five Pillars of Islam in giving of a portion of one’s wealth as a tax. It is the regulation that before the end of Ramadan each year the one who has money has to donated 2.5% of the it to the poor or needy. This means that if the ones has 100,000 baht ($3,225), then they have to donate 2,500 baht ($80). In the case of Bae Nadim, the 20,000 baht of his donation equals 2.5% of his 800,000 ($25,800) baht of the money used in his rubber trading business during that time.

After studying in *pondok*, a traditional Islamic boarding school, for more than 10 years since he finished grade seven in the government primary school, Bae Nadim was married to Kah Mona under the advice of their senior relatives. He previously helped his mother tap rubber when he had free time from studying in the *pondok* at a nearby village. After being married, he helped his father-in-law to run the business of rubber trading and has inherited the business. Previously he and his wife mainly bought rubber latex from the Kampong Ai Hetae rubber farmers and had their employees make rubber sheets from the latex before selling the rubber sheets to a processing factory. However, from several years ago most rubber farmers in the southernmost region have not made rubber sheets or even collected rubber latex to sell anymore because of security reasons.
Since 2004, when the unrest and violence started to renew, it has not been safe anymore for farmers to go to their rubber plots in the mountain or hill areas in the very early morning beginning at 2-3 am to tap rubber and then collect the latex before making rubber sheets in the same day which should finish around noon. Working only on rubber cup lump means that the farmers don’t have to go to rubber plots too early and they can spend only short time there just to tap. By doing so, they can arrive at their plot around 6:30 am and then spend only 3-4 hours on tapping before leaving. Then after 5-6 days of tapping, farmers can collect rubber scrap to sell. Right now Bae Nadim and his wife mainly buy rubber cup lumps from smaller middlemen of other villages nearby instead of buying directly from farmers in the Kampong Ai Hetae since he doesn’t want to compete with other smaller traders in the same village.

Illustration 5.1 Rubber cup lumps at a thao khae’s house waiting to be transported to sell to a rubber factory in Songkhla province.

While his wife works mainly on internal management such as supervising all employees, doing accounting, and so on, Bae Nadim as a rubber middleman has to build and strengthen connections with the wider market system, especially with rubber transforming factories. He sells the rubber cup lumps he bought, mainly 5-6 tons a day, to either the factory near Pattani city or the another one in Jana district in Songkhla province. His good relationship with factories and also with some bigger middlemen means the opportunity to negotiate to gain a better price and sometimes to gain a loan
when in need. Moreover, Bae Nadim has to use modern media and technology to run his business. It has been several years already that Bae Nadim hasn’t had to go to sell rubber at a factory by himself. He lets his employees deliver rubber cup lumps and then Bae Nadim communicates with the factories via cell phone. Then, the company will transfer money to his bank account. Bae Nadim’s daily activities are that in the morning he manages rubber cup lump purchasing and in afternoon he goes to the banks in Yala city or Mayoe district to do money transactions such as to transfer money to smaller middlemen who sell rubber cup lumps to him.

Since the rubber market highly depends on the conditions of the world economy, small rubber middlemen like Base Nadim are always trying to find ways to gain profit from the unstable and uncontrolled price, thus they are always trying to find information on current rubber prices and trends. He gathers information from television news reports on the economy, the rubber news short message service (SMS), and chatting with other rubber middlemen or owners of rubber processing factories about daily rubber prices to make a decision whether or not he should sell the rubber he has in stock. Bae Nadim said:

I have to follow the Japanese Yen exchange rate. If the exchange rate goes down, rubber price is down. Rubber price also depends on world oil market. Rubber price depends on several outside factors. I don’t think the price depends on the Thai government’s actions: no matter the government comes from which party. I also have to check the price with thao khae at the factories every day.

For Bae Nadim, when the rubber price is low he stops selling the rubber cup lumps he bought for a while and waits until the price goes up. However, how long he can put off the selling depends on the reserve money he has on hand or whether or not he can get a loan. This is because while waiting to sell, he still has to buy rubber cup lumps from his customers every day.

Bae Nadim, as a thao khae or a rubber middleman, has to be involved and build connections with people in the rubber business ranging from rubber processing factories, other smaller rubber middlemen, and rubber farmers, to his coolies or employees who mostly are teenagers in the village. His role as thao khae, like other small middlemen, is an important mechanism for the rubber business to be able to operate at the village level. From Bae Nadim’s work presented above, we can learn how the rubber business in the Kampong Ai Hetaer has been operating.
Watermelon

It has been ten years already that every February, after the flood in the grasslands starts to decrease, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents enthusiastically begin preparing to plant watermelons. Pick-up trucks full of sacks of chicken dung as well as backhoes and walking tractors travel back and forth on the Kampong Ai Hetae main road all day long. Some residents even begin to prepare for the planting earlier since November before the arrival of the flood season by buying chicken dung and storing it in their houses to avoid the shortage when the time of the watermelon planting season comes. Since it has been promoted by district government agencies and formal local community leaders by allocating state public grasslands in the Baroh Ai Hetae to plant during the non-flood season, watermelon is another source of cash crop for many of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents. Like rubber, the watermelon economy depends highly on the outside market both in terms of production factors and price of the product.

Chicken dung costs 35 baht ($1.16) per sack and around 100 sacks are required for each allocated plot, which is three rai (1.3 acre). This is just one of many other costs required for watermelon farming. One more cost is on watermelon seeds, which is 270 baht ($9) per can, and 4-5 cans are required for each plot. There is also the cost of chemical fertilizers at around 820-1,100 baht ($26-25) depending on the brand and quality, and at least two sacks are used for each plot. There are also the costs of pesticides, liquid hormones (not necessary), hiring for plowing by backhoes, gas for personal walking tractors, and fence making. The use of production factors in watermelon planting in the Kampong Ai Hetae is high, thus people have to carefully decide whether or not to pursue this activity.

Ateefah, a 36 year old woman with two children and her husband found the opportunity to be a middleman for chicken dung since they had not yet started planting watermelon themselves. After searching for the sources to buy chicken dung in other districts from their relatives, they took orders from other watermelon planters, who don’t have their own pickups to go get 100 sacks of chicken dunk from faraway places. By doing so, they gain the charge either five or ten baht ($0.16 or $0.32) for every sack ordered. If customers pay in one time right after getting the dung, then the charge will be five baht per sack, and if the customers pay later after harvesting and selling watermelon, then the charge will be ten baht per sack.
After getting an allocated plot and starting to plant watermelon for the first year, Ateefah realized that many watermelon planters had to travel to the Selasa market to buy fertilizer and pesticides. Also she and her husband usually went to agricultural equipment shops in Yala city to buy these materials for their own plot already, so she though it would be a good idea to buy fertilizers and pesticides and other materials to sell in the Kampong Aihtae. She consulted with her husband about this, then the couple invested 40,000 baht ($1,290) to buy these production factors to retail in the community. The profit the couple gains each year is 10,000-15,000 baht ($322-483). She said:

The profit is not that much. However, we have to buy these materials to use in our farms anyway.

Although most prices of agricultural materials at her shop are the same as those at the Selasa market, she sells some cheaper. This is because Ateefah and her husband go to Yala city to buy the goods on their own, so they can choose to buy from the sources with lower prices, while the shops at the Selasa market get the goods from suppliers which may not be the cheapest ones.

Although Ateefah modestly told me that her business is so small and yields only a little profit, her business is gradually expanding. The shop at her house has been full of several kinds and brands of fertilizer, both chemical and organic ones, plant hormones, and pesticides as well as plant seeds (Illustration 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4). The goods she sells are not only for watermelon planting but also for other annual crops including rice. Ateefah’s business is doing well since she has been familiar with trading before. Apart from tapping rubber on their own plots and doing rice farming, Ateefah and her husband’s supplementary job is to sell rubber seedlings made by her husband himself. Her husband owns a stall at the Selasa market to sell the seedlings. To run the business on agricultural materials, Ateefah has to build a connection with bigger sellers in Yala so that she can gain the cheaper prices and good quality of materials to buy and to get some convenience such as to check the prices of goods by phone. Ateefah also buys fertilizers and pesticides from the Agricultural Cooperative under the BAAC, which she can buy through installment purchase.
Illustration 5.2 Pesticides, sold at Ateefah’s shop.

Illustration 5.3 Herbicides sold at Ateefah’s shop.
Apart from Ateefah, there are also other people trying to gain opportunity from the watermelon business. Taheem, a 45 year old man and a vice executive of the Ai Hetae SAO, used to trade chicken dung before, but this didn’t go very well because some chicken dung in his stock was flooded, so he moved to work on watermelon trading. In the beginning, he worked for one outside middleman in managing to buy watermelon from planters in the Kampong Ai Hetae and then he gained one baht per kilogram. For now, he is doing watermelon trading on his own. Several middlemen from nearby areas in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat provinces, and in some years also from Nakhonsrithammarat, the upper south province, come to the Kampong Ai Hetae to buy watermelons from him. In doing business, he uses his own money. However, sometimes, especially when watermelon prices are high and he doesn’t have enough money, he doesn’t pay all the money to watermelon planters at one time but just the first half, and then when he gets money from the buyers who are bigger middlemen from outside he pays the rest to the planters (Illustration 5.5).

In general, watermelon output is sold in bulk. In the year that the output is fine, the product of 3 rai (1.3 acres) of watermelons is around 6,000 kilograms and the price for selling in bulk is around 30,000 baht ($970). Therefore, Taheem has to sell the products to bigger middlemen at least at 40,000 ($1,290) baht, which is the minimum price guaranteeing that he does not lose money. Also, the higher the price he sells for, the higher the profit he gets. He told me that in a year that watermelon production is too much, the middlemen prefer to buy from him only big watermelons, each about two
kilograms or more, and don’t buy the smaller ones. To gauge profit or loss, apart from knowing the market price for each day, it is up to his sharp eyes to estimate the amount of production of each plot and the size of the watermelons. Moreover, he has to find good buyers who are willing to buy both big and small size ones. In 2011, during my fieldwork year, his watermelon business was fine because the price was good. However, in 2011 he didn’t have to struggle finding money to buy watermelons from planters as the price was good. This is because watermelon production was down because of a flashflood which killed many young watermelon plants.

Illustration 5.5 Taheem’s employees arranging watermelons bought from plots in the grasslands of the Baroh Ai Hetae.

The Lowest Status in Modern Market System

In the modern market economy of farming, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents are always in the lowest status. This is not only the farmers, but also the residents who run businesses as middlemen. Even though Nadim seems to be a successful rubber middleman having better economic status than other residents of the Kampong Ai Hetae judging from his ability for zakat and his big and beautiful house (Illustration 5.6), he is the smallest rubber trader gaining the least benefit from rubber trading. This not to mention Ateefa, who is a very small chemical fertilizer and pesticide retailers, getting little profit from her sales when compared to the profit of the corporations in agribusiness producing these production factors.
For the Kampong Ai Hetae residents, as small-scale farmers, no matter how they have put a lot of effort into their farms, such as applying fertilizers and pesticides or diversifying the production to ensure their farming success, the residents are always still at risk in selling their products without any power to negotiate. They have to live with the situation that the price of farm products for sale are always fluctuating. This is especially in the case of rubber. In February 2011 the price of rubber cup lumps was peaked at 70 baht ($2.25) per kilogram. However, at the end of the year the price started going down and down. In May 2012, the price went to 40 baht ($1.29) per kilogram and in August 2012 it more decreased to 24 baht ($0.77) per kilogram. Although often I heard from some rubber farmer in the Kampong Ai Hetae complaints that middlemen in the village collaborate to lower the buying price of rubber cup lumps, still they seem to sympathize that these middlemen are also underpriced from their buyers or rubber processing factories that they sell to as well.

Under the rubber economy, rubber growers have no way to negotiate with rubber price fluctuations. Interestingly, even though since early 2012, there has been government intervention by allocating 15 billion baht to buy rubber from farmer cooperatives and community businesses to raise the price (Bangkok Post 2012), all rubber growers in the Kampong Ai Hetae didn’t receive any benefit from the project. This is because there are no rubber cooperatives or community businesses in this area like in most areas of the southernmost region. However, as mentioned before, the cost
for rubber planting is not that high and the uses of production factors are not that intensive when compared to other cash crops, and also some residents received support for replanting from the ORRAF, so they are still able to survive with the decreasing rubber price up until now.

In the case of early rice farming, especially during my fieldwork period, several residents planted a lot of it because of the subsidies from the OPDA and the Income Guarantee Project by the Democrat government at the time. But farmers had difficulty selling their product. For the ones who already had enough rice for their household consumption from their in-season rice crop, they expected to sell their surplus. It was lucky that during my fieldwork year that there was no drought or water shortage, so the crop provided high yields, even though some told me that they were faced with rats coming to eat rice in the field.

Hamnah was the one who does the double crop rice farming much more than others. She planted around 30 rais (12 acres) on several paddy plots that she mostly rented from others. She and her family really expected that they would earn a lot of money from double-crop rice selling. The price she expected was 10 baht ($0.35) for one kilogram of paddy. While other residents started to hire a tractor to harvest the double crop, Hamnah and her family members still insisted to harvest manually to save cost. However, after harvesting rice from early September until early December in 2011, she still couldn’t sell her rice. The price of the rice that the middleman from outside who came to the Kampong Ai Hetae offered was only 8 baht ($0.25) per kilogram, while the proper price should be around 11-12 baht ($0.35-0.38) per kilogram. Some farmers decided to sell their paddies to this middleman because they didn’t want to have the burden of taking care of paddy storage when the flood season was approaching. Hamnah, who at that time had more than a hundred of paddy sacks full on the first floor of her house, still decided not to sell them to this middleman, even though her house is very close to the Baroh Ai Hetae. This was very risky because her house is the first one to be flooded during the wet season, thus sacks might be underwater.

Meanwhile, Hamnah tried to find a way to sell the rice for a higher price. She asked me to call my NGO friend to ask for information about mills in nearby areas. She also discussed with the OPDA staff to find the ways to bring her sacks into the Rice
Pawning Project which was just proposed by the Pheau Thai Party that came into power after winning the general election in 2011. Also with her cousin they went to the branch of the Agricultural Cooperative under the Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC) to obtain some information about this project. However, what they found is that their paddy was not in a condition to be under the Rice Pawning Project. Finally, before the flood reached her house, Hamnah asked for help from the SAO to use its truck to carry her paddy sacks to a mill at a district nearby. The price she received was nine baht per kilogram, which was still cheaper than what it should be. When thinking about the risk of being almost flooded and the logistic costs to transport the sacks, the price Hamnah received was not any better than selling to the outside middleman who came to the Kampong Ai Hetae in the first place.

The Kampong Ai Hetae farmers haven’t been able to negotiate for better prices for other products such as watermelons and sweet potatoes because the prices are determined by the market system operating through middlemen at several levels and the small-scale farmers are at the bottom. For watermelon, only for the first 3-4 years did the Kampong Ai Hetae residents gain good profit, but after that apart from being faced with droughts or floods they have faced prices as low as three baht ($0.1) per kilogram. It is the same for sweet potatoes, which some of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents plant in the grassland area after harvesting watermelon. Two years ago there was a problem with a middleman from an upper south province who came to Kampong Ai Hetae and sold sweet potato seedlings to some residents promising that he would come back to buy all the sweet potato products from the seedlings. However, he never showed up again. The variety of the seedling was not a good one. Some said its meat has too much liquid, so it is difficult to make food or sweet desserts, thus no one wanted to buy them. Then many of the sweet potatoes were just thrown away. However, during my fieldwork year, some residents were planting sweet potatoes by making their own seedlings, which helped them get good varieties and save costs. Moreover, the price had not been down during the past two years since not many people were planting them. Also the demand had increased in the local market, thus the planters could sell sweet potatoes directly to consumers without having to depend on middlemen.
Modern Farming Practices

The Uses of Chemical Fertilizers and Pesticides

In the modern market economy it is hard for the Kampong Ai Hetae farmers to negotiate for better prices for their farming products or to avoid price fluctuations. From the earlier chapters it is apparent that the state agencies have not been able to help the farmers with the market. There are also the changes in natural resources and the ecosystem, such as the decrease in grasslands and the changes in water flow, which are the main factors decreasing the diversity of farming activities and resource uses. There are also the problems of drought, severe flood, diseases, and insect pests happening more often. With the combining these challenges it is necessary for the residents to use modern farming techniques to ensure the productivity of the few cash crops they are increasingly relying on. This is even though these techniques increase the cost of their production and are not environmental friendly.

The uses of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in the Kampong Ai Hetae have become common and widespread. The storage space in my host family’s house like others is full of empty fertilizer sacks from previous use that are kept for holding future paddy harvest. At Ateefah’s shop, there are several brands of fertilizers and pesticides sold, both the more expensive ones, which are believed to be more effective, and the cheaper ones for people who don’t have as much money. Ateefah explained to me that chemical fertilizers must have formulas and the formulas that are being used widely in the Kampong Ai Hetae farming consist of the following:

16-20-0 for rice
15-15-15 for grown rubber tree and watermelon (apply while planting)
18-4-9 for young rubber tree (up to 3 years old)
14-4-9 for rubber tree of 3 years old and older
21-0-0 (Urea fertilizer) for young watermelon and rice seedling
13-13-21 for watermelon when 20 days old
46-0-0 (Urea fertilizer) for being mixed with the 13-31-21

It is interesting that even the farming activity mainly for household consumption like padi buaka or in-season rice crop also require chemical fertilizers and pesticides to ensure high yields. For padi buaka farmers start with a chemical herbicide
to kill weeds while preparing rice seedling plots located mostly along the empty land between the rows of young rubber trees. When the weeds die, then farmers start to plough, sow rice seeds, apply the 15-15-15 fertilizer, and then 40 days after sowing they start to pull the seedlings. After transplanting the rice seedlings in their paddy fields, then the farmers apply chemical fertilizers again. For my host family’s 11 rai in-season paddy, my host mother uses three sacks of chemical fertilizer, the Cow’s Head brand, at a cost of 670 baht per sack. When the rice season starts, sometimes fertilizers sold in the Ai Hetae subdistrict is in short supply and then the farmers have to wait or get only some portions to use first.

The use of chemical fertilizers for in-season rice farming has not yet been highly intensive which is the same for rubber plots. Chemical fertilizers are applied only once a year when the trees are still young, not more than 6 years old. Up until when the rubber trees are mature enough to be tapped they require only organic fertilizers once a year. Also chemical herbicides are applied only a few times when the trees are very young. When the trees are mature, then the grass under them always dies because of the lack of sufficient sunlight under the shade from the trees, and then other kinds of weeds which are small trees come out instead. Then rubber farmers have to cut or chop these weeds with lawn mowers instead of using chemical herbicide which are effective only for grass.

The highly intensive use of chemicals in the Kampong Ai Hetae began 1-2 decades ago when the residents started planting new kinds of annual crops like several varieties of early rice, watermelons, and other vegetables. After the changes in the water flow in the Baroh Ai Hetae, which directly affected wetland rice farming in the grassland area until the residents ceased to farm there for several years, around 10 years ago they started to use new early rice varieties that grow in a shorter time. These new varieties came along with new practices in farming in the grasslands of the Baroh Ai Hetae, which requires more management and investment in labor, time, and factors of production like fertilizers and pesticides.

To farm the new early rice crop, the farmers begin with applying cow and chicken manure and plowing up and turning over the soil in the field. After that almost every step requires chemical fertilizers. When the seedlings have grown for around 10 days, then the farmers put a kilogram of the 15-15-15 fertilizer for each 2.4 kilograms of
paddy seeds, and some may also apply urea fertilizer at this stage. When the seedlings have grown for 25-30 days, then they pull them, transplant them, and apply the 16-20-0 fertilizer right away. After that they get rid of Green Apple snails before they spread and destroys the paddy. After transplanting for one month and four months, then farmers apply the 15-15-15 fertilizer at a rate of ten kilograms per rai (0.4 acre) of paddy field.

Although the use of chemicals in early rice farming is more intensive than that in in-season rice farming, it can’t be compared to the use in watermelon farming as well as for other vegetables that are annual cash crops such as cucumbers, green beans, eggplant, corn, pumpkins, and squash. The use of the pesticides for these crops is especially hazardous for the health of both the farmers and the consumers. Watermelons and these other annual cash crops are new plant varieties for which the farmers have to rely on the agroindustry business for all of the production factors ranging from seeds to chemical fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and plant hormones.

On a day in February 2011, I went to help Naazneen plant watermelons in the grasslands of the Baroh Ai Hetae. When I arrived at her plot, which is one among many other allocated plots, Wahbiyah who is Naazneen’s sister in law who went there with me, looked for one-day-soaked watermelon seeds wrapped in a piece of wet cloth. When she found the seeds then she took a handful of them and put them into two halved coconut shells, one for me and one for herself. After that she looked around for a sack full of very small purple pills, and when she got it she took some and mixed the pills with the seeds in our coconut shells, and then we started to plant.

Although this is not her own plot and she came that day just to help, Wahbiyah did everything very skillfully without having to ask Naazneen who was at that time dropping seeds into planting holes far away from us. This is the way the Kampong Ai Hetae residents plant watermelon and everyone already knows how to do. I learned later that the small purple pills are Furadan, the trade name of Carbofuran which is one of the most toxic carbamate pesticides (Illustration 5.7). Since Carbofuran provides highly acute toxicity to humans much more than many other insecticides, it has been prohibited in some countries. However, Carbofuran is still widely sold and used in Thailand. Watermelon planters in the Kampong Ai Hetae know well that the Carbofuran or Furadan that they are applying is so dangerous that only a quarter of a teaspoon can be fatal. It is also a powerful endocrine disruptor that can cause transient alterations in the
concentration of many hormones and lead to serious reproductive problems in humans. Naazneen and Wahbiyah seriously warned me to wash my hands in the well nearby the plot before eating snacks during our break from planting. The residents also realize that the diarrhea they always get when eating watermelon is caused by Furadan.

Illustration 5.7 The trade name of Carbofuran.

By using Furadan, the watermelon planters aim to eliminate disturbance mainly from rats, and some said that there is no other way to do so. Apart from rats, planters are also faced with disturbances from diseases and insects. Kah Nada, a 45 year old woman and a niece of my host father, told me that her family had been planting watermelons for the first four years since they received the allocated plot. During the first three years, watermelon plants grew well with a high yield, but for the fourth year they were damaged by the yellow disease, which she said comes from the wind. Since then it has been three years already that her family hasn’t planted watermelons. However, some residents decided to fight with the disturbances. Hamnah once sprayed highly toxic pesticides to fight insect pests in her plot until she got faint.

Interestingly, the ones who plant watermelon first are always faced with diseases and insects less than the ones who plant late. When to plant is determined by observing the flood decreasing. There are three zones for watermelon planting in the Baroh Ai Hetae. The first one is the best for planting because the flood is gone earliest. It is the first plot of public grasslands allocated for watermelon plots for the first 40 persons who
apply. The next two zones came 2-3 years later after more people wanted to raise watermelon too, but these zones are closer to luboh or the permanent lake where the flood level decreases later than in the first zone. When watermelon products at the first zone are picked earlier, disease and insects move to the remaining zones, especially the last one. Therefore, it is quite likely that planting in the last zone will not produce good crops with a high yield. In the case of Ghalib and Mussah, a few years ago they planted watermelon in their own plots of eight rai (3.2 acres) and gained good profit as high as 180,000 baht. The year later they applied for plot allocation in the third zone and got one. Then, they found that they almost lost the crop in this plot.

Although there are some of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents starting to use organic materials because the cost is far cheaper than the chemical ones, the residents who do so are still very few. Some told me that organic materials such as organic fertilizers are not suitable for short life cycle plants, especially watermelon, which grows for only 70 days. This is because the nutrients from the organic fertilizers doesn’t become available to feed these short lived plants in time. For these farmers organic fertilizer is good for plants with longer life cycles such as in-season rice that takes around 4-6 months to grow. However, many residents realize that using too much chemical materials causes soil degradation. They know well that when they plant watermelon for 2-3 years they have to stop doing so for at least one year afterward to let the soil rest and recover nutrients. Nevertheless, no one has yet used organic farming materials and practices to recover soil from degradation.

**Farming at Risk**

Since cash crops, most of all rubber trees, have been getting more and more important for the residents in making a living, cash crop farming has been expanding even into areas with the risk of flood. This is because the residents hope that the crops may survive such a risk and give them constant income in the long run.

While the ORRAF insists that lowland paddy is not suitable for rubber planting, many paddy fields have been transformed into rubber plots all around the south of Thailand during the past decade, especially when rubber prices have been high. While taking a train going down to the south, especially when passing by Pattalung province, which is mostly lowland, one observes many young rubber plots in previous paddy
fields. We can also find scenery like this all the way down to the southernmost region. Interestingly, during the rainy season these new young rubber plots are flush with water while suitable areas for rubber planting should be free from flooding with good drainage. Therefore, it is very risky for these young rubber trees to grow well and give enough latex.

New rubber plots have been increasing in Kampong Ai Hetae as well from 4-5 years ago. There is no problem for new rubber plots in previous padi buekha or paddy field of in-season rice crop which is in a non-flooded area. Nevertheless, it is not good for the new rubber plots planted in at the edge of the grassland where flooding occurs every year for 2-3 months during the wet season. However, some residents insisted that it is fine for rubber to be planted in flooded areas because the flooding season is just during a limited period of the year. For them a one year old rubber tree is able to survive through the flood. Therefore, farmers have to plant rubber trees as soon as possible when the flood season is over, and they have to take good care of the young plants to make them strong enough to survive through the next flood season. They accept that rubber trees planted in flooded areas may not give yields as high as the ones planted in non-flooded or hill areas, or it may take longer than usual to provide latex and to be mature enough to be tapped. Nevertheless, they think it is worthwhile in the long run and it is worthier than planning other crops. However, Ghalib and Mussha told me that he used to plant rubber in his 8 rai plot at the rim of the grasslands. When his rubber trees were two years old they all died because of flooding. Since then he and his wife had to change to plant annual crops, especially watermelons, corn, and yams.

Nevertheless, the new rubber plots planted on previous in-season paddy may still have a problem from flood as well. It isn’t seasonal flood like in the case of Ghalib and Mussha, but it is flood from man-made topographical changes. Four years ago Yasmine invested in planting five rai (two acres) of rubber plot in her family’s previous in-season paddy field close to her house. The problem is that there has been stagnant water in this plot all year long for several years. When she started planting rubber, she had to make beds to plant in a row. In the beginning, the stagnant water, caused by an error in the construction of the irrigation canal that blocked the waterway from the hill area to the Baroh Ai Hetae, was not yet so serious. However, during the past few years, more new houses were built around Yasmine’s rubber plot. The owners of these houses filled their
land before building the houses, and this increased waterway blockade. Then more water started to come into Yasmine’s rubber plot.

Because of the stagnant water throughout the year it is impossible to apply fertilizers into Yasmine’s rubber plot because it would disipate with the water. The only thing that she can do to enhance the growth of the rubber trees is just spray hormones or liquid organic fertilizers. This causes rubber trees in her plot to be smaller and unhealthier when compared to rubber trees in the same age planted in the hill area. When I asked whether she used to talk to these house owners about the impact she has suffered, she said that she did so but they don’t care. I also wondered whether formal community leaders have helped her solve the problem. She said her plot is too small and she is the only one who gets in such trouble, so they don’t care either. During our conversation Sabah, Yasmine’s niece who is working as a Defense Territorial Volunteer at the district office told me about a way to solve this problem. It is just to put underground waterspouts to allow the water current to flow and go down to the Baroh Ai Hetae. However, doing so is more burdensome for an individual to do on their own. It requires construction, which only a government agency or the SAO has enough money to do. Interestingly, there has not been any effort by Yasmine and her relatives to push these state agencies or community leaders to solve the problem. This is because during non-flood season her rubber trees seems to be fine since the water level decreases, even though there is still some water left in watercourses between the beds of the rubber tree rows.

Apart from planting rubber in improper areas which makes farming more risky, there is also rice planting in unsuitable areas. Several years ago some Kampong Ai Hetae residents occupied public land in the grassland area adjacent to padi e-ngae where most farmers do early rice crop. This area is closer to luboh or the permanent lake and waterways, so the area is more likely to be flooded even in the non-flood season. The building of the elevated road in the grasslands blocked water from the luboh because only few drains under the road are not enough to let water flow to the other side of the road. While the existing double rice fields in on the other side of the road are safe from flood, especially when the rice is still young, the new occupied paddy field on the opposite site of the road closer to the luboh is always in risk of being flooded and often. Interestingly, the newly occupied paddy plots happened after the
increase in construction projects in the Baroh Ai Hetae after the new round of unrest in the southernmost region since 2004. With these projects, the soil surface in grasslands, which most state agencies viewed as useless or waste area, has been taken to construct these projects, particularly several roads in the Kampong Ai Hetae and Baroh Ai Hetae built by MDU44. After the soil surface was taken, the rest are big shallow holes which are similar to pioneered land for paddy fields. Then someone who didn’t have their own early rice paddies occupied these lands taking usufruct rights.

These occupants, however, can utilize the land for free without having to pay rent, but they have to face some risks. While I was arriving at Pakeezah’s house to interview her and her family, one of their neighbors was there and he was complaining loudly that he is very worried about being caught by authorities since he was invading state public land. However, being arrested is not the only risk that invaders have to face, but also flood, which is related to the conflict with the Kampong Ai Hetae professional fishermen. This is because the fishermen would like to block water from running through watercourses to make water full in the *luboh* and waterways, then it would be easier for them to fish. This makes water come to the newly occupied paddies which are closer to the *luboh* and waterways. Pakeezah and her parents, who at that time were also planting in this area, had to re-transplant half of their rice seedling since the seedlings were being destroyed by flood. Recently, her father went to talk to the SAO executive chief asking him to open one slot of water blockade for at least a month so that the water could go out and then the rice seedlings could survive until they grew up and were strong enough to be in water.

**The Uses of Common Resources**

**State Public Land: Difficulties and Opportunities**

Farming activities of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents can’t be separated from the *baroh* or wetland area consisting of swamps, marshes, watercourses, and grasslands. The wetlands are always ambiguous for property rights, especially at the rim of the grasslands where the flood water doesn’t stand too long during the wet season. While the Baroh Ai Hetae, including some areas at the rim of the grasslands, has been announced by the Thai state as state public land, for several residents those areas are
actually their private property. Some residents have *Sor Kor 1*, which is a kind of primary land owning proof used in the past and given by the state when ones paid for land tax at the rim of the grasslands. Interestingly, when the land was announced as state public land, these land owners didn’t oppose the declaration. This is because at the rim of the grasslands most of the area is flooded 3-4 months a year with water as high as 2-3 meters. Then no one can settle down or build houses there permanently even though they have *Sor Kor 1* in this area. The owners were only able to plant rice or other annual crops temporarily during the non-flood season. Also some owners just leave the land empty. Moreover, even when their lands became state public land, they have still been able to utilize the land and it will continue like this as long as no state agencies want to use the land.

Another problem on state public land is enclosure. As mentioned before, this situation has happened since the MDU 99 moved to settle in the Ai Hetae subdistrict and occupied the upper grassland area where cattle stay and graze during the flood season. Then several buffalos die from drowning and starving to death. Although in general 2-3 herders who are relatives or close friends may collaborate to raise cattle together, there has not been any collective action to deal with the difficulty from this enclosure. Then at least 1-2 buffalos of almost every herd die during this time every year.

While there has not been any formal or collective action to secure their land ownership in this problematic area at the rim of the grasslands as well as concerning access to graze in the grassland, there have been continual efforts from some residents to “illegally” invade or occupy state public land as well as the area enclosed by state agencies. The case of Pakeezah’s family occupying state public land to plant rice mentioned earlier is one example. At the same time a few land owners at the edge of the grasslands with *Sor Kor 1*, which now became state public land, try to plant rubber trees on their lands to assert their rights, even though it is high likely that the young rubber trees may die from flood during the wet season. Moreover, for the enclosed land behind the barbwire set by the MDU 99, there are several spots where barbwire was cut and then cattle go inside to graze.

While having some difficulties using state public land with no formal or collective actions to solve the problems, during the recent years there has been a land
management system on some parts of the grassland with which most residents feel satisfied. It is an allocation of grassland for watermelon planting that provides an opportunity for the residents to be able to utilize some grassland in a new way. The project was started by Waseem, the Village Empat head, and his friends, one a deputy village head and two policemen of Padae Kuwing Marah Police Station, under support from the OTDA. The OPDA took these people to visit the Tae Pha district in Songkhla province where a good quality of watermelon was planted. After Waseem and his friends tried out planting watermelon in the grasslands of the Baroh Ai Hetae, and found that they could gain good return, others among the Kampong Ai Hetae residents were interested to plant watermelons as well, and then several hundred rai of grassland were allocated for most households of the Kampong Ai Hetae for watermelon planting (Illustration 5.8).

It is interesting that the project was initiated by a group of formal community leaders who knew how to deal with state agencies asking for permission to use the state public land. So far watermelon planting in the Ai Hetae subdistrict started first in the Kampong Ai Hetae. It has become one of the important products of the Padae Kuwing Marah district. Later on more grassland in the nearby subdistricts was allocated for the residents of those subdistricts to plant watermelons. For several years now Watermelon Day has become a yearly formal festival in the Padae Kuwing Marah district. It is a big festival, and the Pattani governor always comes to preside over it and several government agencies are co-hosts (Illustration 5.9).

Illustration 5.8 Watermelon plots in the grassland of the Baroh Ai Hetae.
The allocation of state public land to be watermelon plots for local residents seems to be convenient and can easily gain support from government agencies. This may be because in the eyes of state agencies the grassland is just useless and waste land, and its value in term of the ecosystem hasn’t been in their concern for long. Watermelon planting is a way to make grassland more productive and useful. Apart from allowing people to use the grasslands for watermelon planting, there has been other support from government agencies, such as providing production factors for communal plots as an activity for students and youth in the Kampong Ai Hetae. The latest important support was the compensation for 2,900 baht ($94)/rai for the damages from the flash flood in March 2011, which helped a lot to relieve the loss at that time. Because of the compensation, even though almost all watermelon planters didn’t receive any profit, they didn’t lose money that they invested but only their own labor. Waseem, the Village Empat head, was the main actor bringing staff from the OPDA to come to verify and take photos of the damaged plots after all of the night of rain. However, apart from the efforts to use the grasslands for the allocation and extempore management to gain flood recompense from governmental agencies, there is not any other collective management of the common grasslands, especially to improve soil conditions, which have been deteriorating because of heavy chemical use.
The Conflict on Resource Uses among Individuals

Apart from the difficulty from enclosure of the grasslands that the herders are facing, in the eyes of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents the use of state public land is satisfactory. Even though there is the ambiguity of land property, it has not yet been a problem as long as the state doesn’t want to use or occupy the land. Also land allocation for watermelon planting seems to be useful and benefits the residents in earning more income. However, there are still some problems related to common resource uses which are conflicts among individuals.

The main conflict is about water management for the early rice crop. There is not any collective water management system to distribute water to everyone equally. Those whose plots are near watercourses can gain water first and plant before those who have plots farther away. After getting enough water in their paddies, these owners let water flow to other people’s plots by breaking their paddy earthen dykes to make small channels for the water to pass through (Illustration 5.10). This is what Hamnah told me about water management for double rice crop:

There is no rule, no system. I just know that today this person or that person takes water, and I just take water back the next day by breaking an earthen dyke to let water flow and sometime digging a small waterway to draw water to my plot.

Actually there is a small reservoir funded by the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC) to manage water for early rice farming. Waheem, Village Empat head, told me that he was the one proposing the project to the relevant state agency. He said if there was no reservoir, then the water would flow wastefully from the mountain nearby down to the luboh. However, this small reservoir has nothing to do with water distribution among farmers.
Another conflict is over cattle. After the enclosure of the grasslands, especially by the MDU 99, there is not enough grazing area for cattle during the flood season. The cattle have to scatter around and it is hard for herders to follow them. Some of the cattle aimlessly walk on the road where they are hit by cars or trucks or even shot. This is especially problematic when cattle invade and destroy other people’s farms, especially young rubber plots. In the year 2010, four of Ghalib’s buffalos were shot dead and all of them were big male buffalos which were valuable. Ghalib told me that the ones who dare enough to shoot other people’s cattle must be either extremely angry because their plants have been destroyed by the cattle or they are influential and powerful enough to not be charged as guilty by the herders who lost the cattle. It was said that some of the influential persons such as heads of some nearby subdistricts might cooperate with the Buddhist military officers in selling meat from these cattle among Thais (Muslim can’t eat non-halal food). For these cases, it is hard to call for compensation. In addition, one day during my fieldwork, Ghalib’s buffalo herd was being accused of invading and destroying someone’s new rubber plot in a nearby village. Then the head of that village made a phone call to inform him of the incident. Luckily, he knew well that his herd usually doesn’t go that way and he was able to prove that there were no footmarks
related to his herd. Finally, the rubber plot owner admitted that he didn’t see that herd himself, but someone told him that it might be Ghalib’s herd.

Apart from the conflicts over cattle between the Kampong Ai Hetae residents and the residents of nearby villages or communities, there is also the conflict among the Kampong Ai Hetae residents, which has been going on daily without any collective and permanent efforts to solve them. During the flood season herds of cow or buffalo always come into the low hill area which is full of rubber plots. For grown rubber plots the invasion by cattle is not a big problem because they may only break some lump cups. The cattle also benefit rubber plots by eating weeds. However, for the plots with rubber trees that are still young, the owners have to watch out carefully checking the barbwire regularly during the flood season. It is said that some herders cut barbwire to let their herds into graze in other people’s rubber plots.

Cattle herds also invade watermelon plots. One day I visited Naazneen and her husband’s watermelon plot to pick watermelons left from invading cows the night before. Estimating from my eyes there were around 200 watermelons damaged by the cows. Naazneen and her husband presumed that someone who shared the whole allocation sector with them didn’t close the gate securely. This is the same as Inas, the niece of my host family, whose plot was not flooded, but almost all of the watermelons were eaten by cows who invaded her plot. Both Naazneen and Inas didn’t know at all whose cows invaded their watermelon plots. They didn’t know how to get compensation, although in the case of Inas it was suspected that the cow owner (s) opened the fences to let their cows come in.

Sometimes serious vengeance happens to irresponsible herd owners, such as in the case of farm paddy invasion. Actually herds can benefit paddy farmers by grazing on harvested paddies which helps stop weeds from growing, so it is easy for farmers to plow for the next season. However, the herds can cause great damage when they run into paddies which are full of transplanted rice seedlings. Even though it is a normal practice that when the annual rice crop farming season comes cattle owners have to bring their cattle out of the paddy zone, invasions by cattle still happen often. Usually cattle owners just let such things happen and don’t try enough to avoid it. Therefore, in some cases of paddy invasion, if a paddy owner asks for responsibility from herders and no one confesses, then a cow or buffalo of a suspected herd might be secretly shot dead.
In some cases even the herders themselves think that they can’t blame the shooter because some herders don’t pay attention at all to their own herds. They never bring them back to the stables and don’t care at all if their herds make trouble for others.

**The Overexploitation of Natural Resources**

Also there is no system or regulation to help maintain the uses of common natural resources which may lead to over exploitation and deterioration in the near future. This is very clear in the case of mushroom (*Boletus griseipurpureus cor.* ) picking during the mushroom season in wooded groves which is a part of grassland as I wrote in my fieldnote below:

Before sunrise today, I rode a motorcycle driven by Yumnah, a 21-year-old woman who is a daughter of Hamnah, using the route to the grasslands and passing communal cattle stables. On the way we met many others on motorcycles heading to pick mushrooms, same as us. Most of them were women wearing the ‘uniform,’ the clothes for working in the farm: long sleeve t-shirts and long pants covering with sarong outside with rubber boots. Some carry big empty baskets to keep mushrooms they would get this morning. We ran passing the entrance of one plot of allocated area for watermelon planting. Then, Yumnah parked the motorcycle and we walked into a wooded grove at the side of road.

While we were picking the mushroom, it reminded me of Thung Sang Tawan (Field of Sunshine), the well-known TV program partly sponsored by some funding organizations of CSS to promote the story of natural resource-based communities, when the program moderator walked with children in a village to pick mushroom to show how villagers live in harmony with nature. However, what was happening to me was so opposite to that romantic representation.

While I bent under bushes searching for mushroom unskillfully and clumsily which I could do very bad because I hardly found mushroom hidden under a thick layer of leaves fallen on the ground and I also accidentally stepped on mushroom, Yumnah tried to teach me that to get mushroom needs to have sharp eyes and be nimble. She showed me how to pick very quickly when first glancing at the mushroom while having to search for the new one ahead in different spots. She said if we pick slowly we would get less than other people. I thought what she said is true because each day there are many people coming to pick mushrooms. On that day when Yumnah saw the mushroom she notified me to pick it and then she searched ahead for the new one. When she felt that I was too much far away behind, she called out to me to make sure that I didn’t get lost in the forest grove.
On that day I felt like most of the mushrooms we got were small. I talked to Yunnah that if we let them grow for few more days, we would get the bigger and more beautiful ones. She replied me that if we don’t get them now, others would come to get them. (Fieldnote: March 26, 2011)

It is important to note that most wooded groove areas where the residents pick mushroom were occupied already by the MDU 99. Some parted areas were territorialized by a high earthen dyke. Also landmarks and barbwires were all around. The residents don’t think that the land is their own communal property anymore, but the army base’s property. This might be the main reason why there has not any effort to set collective management on mushroom picking or other uses of natural resources in this area.

The Persistence of Farming Activities

Amidst modern farming emphasizing a select few cash crops and the market economy, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have been facing several difficulties. This is especially their lowest status in the market economy lacking power to negotiate for their own benefit. There are also the risks from droughts and floods including the deterioration of general environment and the ecosystem that will decrease farming productivity in the long run. This is not to mention the failure and negative impacts of state development projects happening in the context of conflict and unrest of the southernmost region. However, farming activities by Kampong Ai Hetae residents still persevere through their hybrid and practical knowledge of agriculture, their diversity of farming production system, and their different views on cost-benefit.

Hybrid and Practical Knowledge

Anja Nygren (1999) points out the two oppositional representations characterizing the conventional environment-development discourse. The first one, pervasive among NGOs or alternative activists, constructs local knowledge as a panacea for sustainability by viewing local knowledge as traditional knowledge, intimately linked to particular place, and transmitted from one generation to another. Another one, pervasive among some scientists and many development experts, constructs local
knowledge as a scapegoat for underdevelopment and a constraint on progress because it is not true knowledge and based on irrationality and ignorance.

The two opposite representations have dominated the discourse on local knowledge in southernmost Thailand. On the one hand, local academics and NGOs of the CSS always romanticize local Malay Muslims as having local knowledge, which makes them live in harmony with nature. However, the invasion of the modern market has weakened their local knowledge, and then they usually do farming and use natural resources in deteriorating ways. On the other hand, for Thai state agencies, local knowledge of the local Malay Muslim has not been recognized, and then they have been seen as poor, weak, and uneducated. Even when local residents follow the modern knowledge provided by state agencies, such as planting newly developed rice varieties for double rice crop like the Chainat variety, they are still blamed by state agencies that they can’t do modern farming effectively.

To go beyond the two conventional approaches on local knowledge, Nygren (1999) emphasizes ‘situated knowledge’ where knowledge production is seen as a process of social negotiation involving multiple actors and complex power relations. The process also means the dynamic articulation between various knowledge systems such as traditional agriculture mixed with modern agribusiness, which are linked to the complex social history of each area. The situated knowledge is also about the struggles over conflicts such as land tenure in conservation areas that local people use to contest the role thrust upon them by developers or environmentalists. At the same time local people may construct themselves not as authentic others, but the ones who have been mediated by globalization. Moreover, while local people also have a selective engagement with the current discourse of development, they use the current phraseology of sustainable agriculture discourse and environment as well as consciousness, local participation, and sound resource utilization as keys for the reconstitution and redeployment of their knowledge.

However, in the case of the Kampong Ai Hetae this confrontation over knowledge, according to the ideas about ‘situated knowledge,’ between the residents and outside agencies seems not to be prominent, even though the two conventional approaches on local knowledge, both by state agencies and by the CSS, have been
exercised in the area. This is because the impacts of the approaches haven’t been clear, but subtle. For example, it is hard for local residents to connect how the difficulties they are facing in farming today are related to the state agencies’ views on local knowledge which actually has been the basis for all infrastructure and development projects of the Thai state in the southernmost region.

What is prominent in the Kampong Ai Hetae is hybrid and practical knowledge happening under the development approach of the Thai state, market economy, and the changes in the ecological system. It is important to note that even though the ways Kampong Ai Hetae residents do farming and use natural resources seem to be unsustainable and at risk, it doesn’t mean that the residents do things passively or ignorantly. On the contrary, they have searched for new information and learned, and they have constructed the hybrid and practical knowledge combining with what they have already known about farming from the past. This knowledge has been useful for them to ensure satisfactory production and good returns, even though their practices don’t suit the ideal type of sustainable agriculture and resource use.

The change into a modern production system requires the Kampong Ai Hetae residents to gain knowledge of modern farming. The ways to do so are various and usually the residents do it on their own without enough help from state agencies. After transforming traditional rubber planting into the modern one according to the support from the ORRAF, the Kampong Ai Hetae rubber farmers started to learn about the new varieties of rubber introduced to them: how the new varieties are different from the traditional ones, and how to take care of the new varieties correctly to get more latex and to live longer. While we were tapping rubber, Bae Reza, a son of my host family, instructed me on how to distinguish a traditional rubber tree from a modern one. He also explained to me skillfully about the differences between two high yield rubber varieties; namely, that the GT1 gives a higher percentage of rubber in its latex than the RRIM 600, which although gives more latex but less rubber percentage. For this kind of knowledge, apart from getting it from the ORRAF, the residents have learned from their own experience, their friends, and also from rubber seedling shops and agricultural material retailers.

Also the drastic changes in the landscape of the Baroh Ai Hetae requires new knowledge. In the case of grazing, when the grasslands of the Baroh Ai Hetae were
transformed by several construction projects and were enclosed by MDU 99, the existing knowledge about the nature and behavior of buffalo herd like what Ghalib told me is not anymore enough for herding. Then the herders have had to learn about the changes in the grassland, which are the changes in vegetation, ground, and slope. The new knowledge helps them to be able to direct their herds to get food without failing down or drowning in the ponds or reservoirs built in the grasslands.

The construction projects in the Baroh Ai Hetae have also changed waterways and then made the flood come earlier than ever before, and this has made wetland rice farming impossible several years ago. However, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents didn’t passively desert the paddies at the edge of the grasslands. The initiative to find the new rice varieties which take a shorter time to grow to avoid the new patterns of flood showed how they were so eager to seek new information on new rice varieties which were the early rice varieties that they had never known before. Since then the early rice has been widespread in Kampong Ai Hetae.

Later on when the OPDA came in to support the double rice crop by providing the state developed rice variety formally called Chainat (but Kampong Ai Hetae residents call it ‘khao phan kaset’, which means the Agricultural Office rice variety), Kampong Ai Hetae farmers learnt after trying to plant it that it is not suitable in the soil conditions in the Baroh Ai Hetae, and this causes low yield. Therefore, some households don’t plant the Chainat at all, and some plant little of it, even though the price of the Chainat is always higher than other local early rice varieties. Instead, most farmers plant several kinds of rice varieties for their double rice crop. For the ones who still plant the Chainat, they do so because the OPDA has given them the seeds for free. Interestingly, they manage Chainat in their own way based on their trial and error which may be different from what has been expected by the OPDA. They found that although the Chinat is not tasty for them to eat as cooked rice, it is good for making lasoe or noodle (served with curry). It is the tradition in the southernmost region that after harvesting rice there will be a New Rice Merit Making where the hosts have to make lasoe and distribute it to other residents, especially religious persons like the imam or leader of a mosque, people who usually volunteer in the mosque, toh kuru (traditional religious teachers), and pondok students. This merit making becomes a good reason for some residents to still keep planting Chainat.
For watermelon and other annual crops such as cucumber, gourd, green bean, corn, eggplant, and pumpkin, which are the new farming activities started in the Kampong Ai Hetae not more than 10-15 years ago, the residents have learned fast and well how to use chemicals for good quality products and high yield. One source they could learn from is agricultural material shops at the Selasa Market Place, as well as Ateefa’s shop in Kampong Ai Hetae. These sellers can provide information and knowledge about chemical fertilizers, hormones, and pesticide uses. The resident can also learn from farmers in other areas who have used the materials before and from their own trial and error lessons.

Another interesting thing on hybrid and practical knowledge of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents is about organic farming, which during the past decade has been popularly promoted by several state agencies. Many of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have experience at least one or two times in attending the training provided by various government agencies on organic farming. These activities have aroused the residents to realize that using too much chemical fertilizers causes soil degradation and low yield, and that using too much pesticide causes health problems. However, there is not even one person in the Kampong Ai Hetae who can be identified as doing real organic farming. This is not surprising because most training activities are not effective and not practical. For example, in 2010, one of the training events provided by the MDU 99 was about hydroponics, even though in the Baroh Ai Hetae there is enough land that people can use both permanently and temporarily in planting annual crops. Also hydroponics seems to be too complicated to practice in everyday life.

Nevertheless, some knowledge of organic farming promoted by government agencies has been acquired by some residents as choices on their farming techniques, and mixed with the chemical ones, which they have been practicing before. For example, during my fieldwork period it was the first year that some planters started to add dolomite in their plots for watermelon and other annual crops to restore soil quality and reduce acid in the soil. Some planters also use liquid organic fertilizers along with chemical ones. Moreover, farmers who have been able to acquire more training and support from state agencies are likely to utilize organic farming techniques much more than others.
As mentioned before, Mussah became one of very few residents not using Carbofuran for her watermelon plot. This is because she was supported with free watermelon seeds from the DPHO, same as other village health volunteers, under the condition assigned by the DPHO that they must not use Carbofuran in their watermelon plots. Also Salamat, a 35 year old man who has attended several training sessions on organic farming and who is a Kampong Ai Hetae agricultural volunteer, has made a lot of liquid composts both for himself and for his relatives and friends and sometimes sells them to other residents in Kampong Ai Hetae. It is worth noting that by trying to learn and practice organic farming even though it is not yet real or 100% organic, Mussah and Salamat have gained trust from the agencies such as the OPDA or the LDD and have been asked by state agencies to assist several activities or project running in the Kampong Ai Hetae. Then, the practices on organic farming become their access to state resources both for themselves and for the community as a whole.

Even though most of the Kampong Ai Hetae farmers have performed their farming in unsustainable ways using a lot of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, this doesn’t mean that they don’t have any knowledge about the danger of chemical substances in agriculture. Other village health volunteers, who also received free watermelon seeds, still didn’t follow the rule of not using Carbofuran in their watermelon plots, even though they knows about the danger of it from information they received from the DPHO. Whether or not they decide to use Carbofuran depends on several factors. The lack of other trustworthy alternative methods to deal with diseases and pests is the main reason. The more convenient and cheaper access to risky chemical substances than getting the organic ones is also another reason.

There has been, however, pervasive organic fertilizer use in rubber farming. It is widely accepted among the Kampong Ai Hetae rubber farmers that organic fertilizer is good enough to be applied for their mature rubber plots. The compressed organic fertilizer has been applied once a year for several years in the Kampong Ai Hetae during the fall leaf season instead of using chemical fertilizer. However, this knowledge was not from any agencies, not even from the ORRAF which has supported only free chemical fertilizer for young rubber plots. Kah Nada told me that previously Kampong Ai Hetae rubber farmers used only chemical fertilizers and they found that some rubber trees died and the soil turned hard. One day, her cousin who is a rubber middleman in
Village Dua went to the district of Natawee in Songkhla province and found that people there used organic fertilizer and their rubber yield were high. Then, her cousin ordered the compressed organic fertilizer to sell in his village. After several rubber growers started to try to use compressed organic fertilizer it has become normal practice for mature rubber plots in the Kampong Ai Hetae.

**Diversification of Production**

In chapter four it was pointed out that the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have long been making their living by utilizing resources from various parts of the Ai Hetae ecological system. However, later on this diversity which didn’t require high investment and complicated techniques or gear has been decreasing and more people have specialized on a few intensive farming activities and resource uses. Nevertheless, diversification of production is still prominent in the Kampong Ai Hetae. Superficially, the diversity seems to coincide with the romantic representation about the self-sufficient subsistence economy of the rural Malay Muslim that is produced and reproduced by the CSS. However, today diversity is happening under a modern farming system and modern market economy, which is not a self-sufficient subsistence economy that has been believed to be able to sustain and serve the basic needs of life. Instead, the resident’s efforts to keep the diversity of farming activities has been the way to make their lives in the modern market economy smooth and untroubled by gaining steady income and decreasing some expenses for foods.

While in general agriculture in the Kampong Ai Hetae is changing to focus more on a few cash crops, especially rubber, most households still work more than one type of farming activities. The more the households depend on income from the farming sector, the more diversity in their farming activities. For example, Kah Rumaisa, a 40 year old woman and her husband have been working on diverse farming activities. In the morning, Kah Rumaisa travels to an adjacent subdistrict to tap rubber in a three rai plot (1.2-acre-plot) that she inherited from her mother. At the same time, her husband is busy picking fish from his nets and hooks in the luboh. When they both arrive at home then they work on cleaning, cutting, and preparing fish for selling fresh and for making preserved ones. They also do padi bue kah or in-season-rice farming and plant watermelons in their allocated plot in the grassland area when the season comes. Also...
her husband raises a herd of buffalo. High diversity in farming activities like this has been practiced by around 35% of households in Kampong Ai Hetae where most family members are not working in the non-farming sector.

Also some residents elaborate their farming by planting more kinds of crops on their plots. Some residents plant annual crops for selling, such as sweet potatoes, cucumbers, green beans, gourds, and pumpkins, in their allocated watermelon plots after harvesting watermelon. Some households also grow several kinds of plants around their houses including in their rubber plots for household consumption like galangal (Alpinia galanga), ginger (Zingiber officinale), lemon grass (Cymbopogon citratus), chili (Capsicum frutescens Linn.), limes (Citrus aurantifolia), mangos (Mangifera indica), papayas (Carica papaya). The ones who have large backyards can even plant pineapples or sugar cane (Saccharum officinarum Linn.) for selling. Some households also own traditional gardens that can include coconuts (Cocos nucifera), pakria (Pakria speciosa), or langsat (Lansium domesticum) gardens. For coconut gardens, the products are able to be picked regularly throughout the year and for pakria and langsat gardens they can be picked seasonally. In addition, some households may own traditional durian gardens in hill areas in a nearby subdistrict because their ancestors pioneered the gardens there, while there was no durian garden in the Kampong Ai Hetae because soil condition are not suitable.

Farming diversity is the way to secure the residents’ lives by maintaining their subsistence foods while living in the market economy and practicing modern agriculture. In other word, this can help mitigate the adverse effects of the market economy. Dove (1993) demonstrates how Para rubber cultivation, which is Indonesia’s largest agricultural generator of foreign change, was integrated into the Bornean system of swidden horticulture. Dove explained that while Para rubber meets the need for market goods, the swidden meets the subsistence needs of local residents. This is similar to the effort of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents to continue their in-season-rice farming, which is the crop for household consumption, amid the changes of land cover, especially the increase of new rubber plots and the decrease of farm land because of population pressure. When the new rubber plots are pioneered, several residents always asked for the permission from the owners to do rice seedling for their in-season rice farming in the new rubber plots. Around 8-10 rai (3.2-4 acres) of a new rubber plot
are enough for around 20 households to use the empty area between the rows of young rubber trees to grow rice seedlings. The rice seedlings can be normally planted for three years after planting rubber, or until there is too much shade from mature trees and the areas is no longer suitable for rice seedling.

Moreover, in the mature modern rubber plots, especially in the hill area, there are local plants providing products popular for local foods such as pakria and djenkol bean (*Archidendron jiringa*) planted around the edge of the plots (Illustration 5.10). Some of these plants have been grown naturally or were planted many years ago in rubber plots. It is interesting that these rubber plots were financially supported by the ORRAF to replant traditional rubber varieties with the modern ones with the regulation that the plots must be monocrops having only modern rubber varieties which aimed to make the planting most effective. However, it seems like no one follows the regulation seriously and the residents still try to grow food plants in their modern rubber plots. Most rubber owners have known well that if they do not insert too many other plants, then it should be fine because the ORRAF would not check this too seriously. The conflict and unrest in the region has made it hard for the ORRAF staff to come often to the hill area to inspect the rubber plots.

One reason that makes the diversity of farming activities in the Kampong Ai Hetae persist is that each of the activities is mutually enhancing as in the case of supporting relationships between in-season rice farming and herding. After harvesting the in-season rice crop, then herders in the Kampong Ai Hetae let their herds graze rice stalks left in the harvested paddy fields. Not only do the cows get more food to graze on, but they also make in-season rice farming for next season much easier. Hamnah told me that if there are no cattle grazing in harvested paddy, then it will be very difficult for farmers to plough the paddy because there will be too many weeds. Some also told me that if cattle in the Kampong Ai Hetae vanish, mainly because of the enclosure by state agencies, then this will make in-season rice farming more difficult and it may gradually fade out.

The diversification of farming activities can bring several sources of income. Mussah said:
I don’t like to stay at home. My husband and I can’t get any income by staying home. Therefore, we always stay at the grassland to plant several things.

The farming products planted by the residents mostly have been sold in very local markets. During the festivals, such as the month of *maolid*, when many households rotate in making merit by cooking a lot of foods for other people to celebrate the Prophet Moohummad’s birthday, annual crops planted in the Kampong Ai Hetae are usually not enough for the greater demand. Some products have been processed for value added, such as coconut meat which is shredded and roasted, and then can be sold at a high price around 80 bath ($2) per kilogram, while the price of the whole mature coconut is just around 8-12 baht ($0.35) each. For the crops like cucumbers, green beans, and corn sold in scheduled markets of the sub-district, the farmers pay only very cheap market fee or sometimes don’t have to pay at all. Sometimes the crops are sold to food stalls in the Selasa market and some may be ordered in advance from small middlemen (Illustration 5.11 and 5.12).

Illustration 5.11 Pakrai for selling in the village and in local scheduled markets.
The diversity of farming including the resource uses is not only the source of income, but also helps reduce household’s expenses. The important one is the cost of rice, which is the main expense for every household not doing farming. Several of the Kampong Ai Hetae households can produce sufficient rice to eat all year long from their in-season rice crop and double crop or early rice crop. Even the ones who don’t have their own rice field can rent some plots of paddy field from others and pay the rent with paddy rather than cash. Even people who don’t do rice farming can still get rice as reciprocation for helping their neighbors or relatives to transplant rice seedling or to harvest rice.

During my fieldwork year it was the first year that several of the Kampong Ai Hetae farmers hired harvesting and threshing machinery from outside for their double crop rice farming (Illustration 5.13). After the season, several farmers told me they regreted the hiring, it was not worth it because the service fee was as high as 88 baht ($2.83) per a sack of paddy harvested. This is especially if the purpose of the farming is to sell. However, some said if the rice is for household consumption, then it should be still worthwhile to hire harvesting and threshing machines. This means that even when the cost of hiring machines to harvest and thresh paddy is included, it is still much cheaper than buying the rice from the market for household consumption.
The diversity of farming activities and resource uses in the Kampong Ai Hetae also reduces the expense for everyday foods including when the households have to make a lot of food for banquets for religious merit making. Non-paid vegetables or fish can be one or two dishes that the hosts prepare to serve to their guests apart from meat dishes that they have to invest or buy from somewhere. When Hamnah was a host for koran share, a rotating religious study class, she with the assistance from relatives and neighbors prepared food for around 35 persons who are the koran share members. Most dishes were made from big white catfishes that her husband fished from the Baroh Ai Hetae. If they sold those fish that day, then Hamnah and her husband could earn about 2,000 baht. However, for them, spending labor and time for fishing is still very much better and less burdensome than having to spend their money to buy these fish.

Even people who don’t have their own farmlands can also benefit from the diversity of farming activities of others from being hired for these activities. Hiring for rice harvesting, which is paid by paddy, has been pervasive in the Kampong Ai Hetae. Also in the case of Bae Dizhwah, the former imam of one mosque in the Kampong Ai Hetae, and his wife, who don’t have their own garden, they can still gain income from gardens by investing to buy two monkeys and use them to pick coconuts and pakria from other’s people coconut plots, and then they manage to sell these products and share money with plot owners.
Different Views on Cost-Benefit

Michael Moerman (1968) points out that everyday rationality of choice making by farmers on the type of lands, the type of farming methods, and the type of rice varieties, are strongly based on the information and knowledge of farming techniques as well as the limited factors such as land acquisition and labor mobilization. However, Moerman also points out that it is not necessary that farmer’s rationality must follow the outsider’s perspective which is mainly based on the cost-benefit approach. It is important to understand the reasons behind their decision making and adaptations from their points of view, which sometimes is odd to outsiders but practical and reasonable for them. An example would be reversing to lower level technology like stopping the use of tractors whenever they can to avoid uncomfortable expense. In addition, Ida Bagus Mantra (1981) demonstrates that social factor seems to be important for farmer’s in decision makings. Then the farmer’s enthusiasm in maintaining social network and relationships among kin is a decisive factor in deciding whether to move from or stay with wet rice production and to create alternative strategies to compromise the dilemma between enduring an economically hard life and the separation from kin and relatives.

In the Kampong Ai Hetae there are several decisions and practices in farming that seem to not follow the cost-benefit approach familiar to outsiders. In the case of paddy field renting in other areas of Thailand the rent is usually fixed and clear with the contract. Also, paddy tenants seem to have less negotiating power than landlords. However, in the Kampong Ai Hetae in the case of paddy field rental for *padi e-ngae*, or double crop rice farming (early rice crop), it seems to be different. While for *padi bue kah* or in-season rice farming the share of paddy between tenants and landlords is fixed and clear at 50-50, this regulation is not applied to double crop rice farming. Even though ideally the fair and acceptable share should be two portions for tenants and one portion for landlords, often that rule is not followed. The double crop requires more investment and intensive labor, especially in fence building and plowing, and it also requires a personal rice threshing machine since the stalks of the early rice grain after harvesting by sickle are different from in-season rice which is harvested by different kind of rice cutter that cuts only the ear of the rice without the stalks. For some households that lack enough labor and capital, if they don’t want to leave their paddy
fields unused, as well as someone who has too many paddy plots, then they usually allow other residents to use their plots for double crop farming.

Yasmine, who is single in her 40s living with only two nieces, doesn’t have labor and money to invest for double crop rice farming, so she has allowed one family in the village to use her plots to do so. She told me that last year the tenant family didn’t give her any share from the crop by making an excuse that they got low yield because of drought. This also happened with my host family last year. My host family owns several plots of wetland paddy fields and hasn’t been doing the double crop by themselves for few years. Last year one tenant gave my host family only 2-3 sacks of paddy rice (around 45 kilograms a sack) for each rai (2.5 acre) in return which is very little.

It is interesting that the unfair paddy sharing has not yet led to any serious estrangement between landlords and tenants, except some gossip and murmur by landlords among their close friends or relatives. Also landlords still give the same tenants use of their paddy fields. In this case social relations seem to have more priority than the return from paddy rent. This is mainly because for the landlords the reward from tenants is extra, not a basic need for their living. To rent out their paddy fields is better than leaving the fields unused. In addition, the dissatisfaction from unfair paddy share can decrease in fertile years when there is more chance for landlords to gain more share even though it may still be less than 1/3 of the paddy harvested from their land. Moreover, in fertile years, it is reasonable and acceptable for the landlords to ask for a half of the paddy by harvesting that half themselves.

Also in a certain farming production with the cost-benefit approach then intensive inputs into a farm means expecting more productivity. But this hasn’t been applied seriously by the Kampong Ai Hetae residents. This is even though in the case of rubber, the main farming activity for constant income for many households in the Kampong Ai Hetae, the investment to increase rubber productivity seems to not be a concern for the residents. One day I observed the selling of a salesman, who would like to sell a solution to restore declining rubber trees. Even though all in the audiences on that day paid attention to the presentation by the salesman who graduated from a college and who is a Kampong Ai Hetae resident’s nephew, and even though there was a good deal that buyers didn’t have to pay 3,500 baht ($112) all at once for a set of the solution, they could pay later after it was proved that the solution works well, no one requested to
buy it on that day. I didn’t hear that there was someone buying it later. It is interesting that not investing too many inputs in rubber plots can help farmers deal with the risk of rubber price fluctuation. When the price is down, even though they get less income, they still don’t feel the loss because the cost in rubber planting is not that high. Also, when the price is too low, some residents may decide to not tap to save the rubber tree’s tapping capacity waiting for the time when the price is up again.

In other kinds of farming the cost-benefit approach has not been applied seriously either. This happens even though the resident have to invest in seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, weed killing, equipment and machines including transportation costs, especially gas for their motorcycles, and boats in the case of fishing. This is not to mention the cost when residents use themselves as laborers. However, often these costs have not been calculated seriously when they manage their products. Therefore, when there was a flash flood, several residents felt that it was fine when they got compensation from the OPDA for watermelon damage, even though if everything went well they would get 3-4 times more than of that. Also, when selling their products some don’t try to sell at the highest price. My host mom sold chili to a female trader in the village at a cheap price, although if she wanted to she could sell to other traders who would give her a higher price. I also tried to buy ekae-budu, the fermented fish, as a gift for my husband’s host family in a nearby district, and I found that the prices set by each seller were various ranging from 50-120 baht ($1.6-3.8) per kilogram. I tried to find the reason behind the variation in prices, but no one could give me the any answer. Interestingly, the fish used as raw material by all ekae-budu producers are the same and the taste of the products from all producers are similar, even though consumers may like the taste from each producer differently.

Nevertheless, from the cases discussed earlier, this doesn’t mean that the residents are irrational or don’t want to profit from what they have invested. It is important to note that these activities are not the only source of income for the households, so it is not necessary to gain the highest price from selling. Moreover, for these activities, they don’t have to invest much. They can plant chili on their own land without having to pay rent, which helps save cost and not being worried so much about the selling price. Also fish for making ekae-budu are small, plentiful during the flood season, and easy to catch without having to invest much in fishing gear. Importantly,
these activities are mainly run by senior residents in their 60s and older. For these senior people, these activities are not just for income but they are their habitual way of life continuing from the past. Therefore, they don’t have to follow any cost-benefit approach seriously. With these activities, senior people can be more economically independent without having to only rely on the assistance of their descendants in making a living. Also, when doing the activities is their way of life, they don’t count their labor as a cost. Therefore, for them, no matter how much the price they can sell something for, it is fine for them.

In the case of herding, for some herders the income and profit from their herd is not the most important thing. Although it seems like herding doesn’t require much investment because the cattle can graze and live in the grasslands of the Baroh Ai Hetae, the cost, especially expense on gas for travelling around the huge area of grassland to take care of the herds, is not that cheap and this has not yet been included in the cost of their own labor. Also the sale of herd animals doesn’t happen often, but only once in a while they sell one of their cows, buffalos, sheep, or goats. However, some herders continue their herds because they love to do so. Moh Manal, a 60 year old female who raises a herd of 60 sheep in grasslands of the Baroh Ai Hetae, told me that she can sell only 3-4 sheep a year to either the Kampong Ai Hetae residents or people from other communities, who either want sheep for holding feasts or for raising. Apart from sheep Moh Manal also raises a herd of cows and a herd of buffalos. Every late afternoon she rides a motorcycle to bring the herds back to the stables built at the edge of the grasslands. The income she earns from her herds is occasional, which has not ever been much more than 20,000 baht ($645) a year. If we calculate in term of cost-benefit strictly, this income doesn’t even cover the costs, especially if her labor is included as a cost. This is like other buffalo herd owners who may sell an animal only once in a while, or sometimes not even one in a year.

One of the main reasons they still do herding is that they love to do so. Moh Manal is different from other female residents in the Kampong Ai Hetae in the way that she loves spending time in the grassland working on herding which is normally a job for men. Likewise Ghalib loves to raise his buffalo herd. His drawings of buffalos show his attachment to buffalo herding. However, it doesn’t mean that the herders don’t care about the economic values of their herds. They do so, but in their own way and for their
own specific purposes. For them, cattle herding is their household savings and it can be used when they are in need including for religious or spiritual purpose. Daania, a 21-year-old woman, who is now earning her living by tapping rubber with her mother and starting to be a tailor, told me that her father used to have a herd of buffalo, but later on sold the whole herd to gain money for travelling to Mecca for the Hajj. Also, sometimes buffalos are slaughtered by herd owners and the meat is cooked for making merit. This is especially in the case when some buffalos are surely going to die because of famine caused by flood.Merit making helps the herders not feeling the loss of an animal as much because at least they can still get merit from the death of herd animals by flood (Illustration 5.14).

Illustration 5.14 Weak buffalos slaughtered to make food for merit making.

It is interesting that while some things are not seriously calculated in terms of cost-benefit, for some other things they seem to be very serious that everyone involved must follow the rule strictly to make sure that no one is at a disadvantage and even a single penny can’t be taken improperly. This is especially so in the case of rubber. The important rule is that the 50-50% share between rubber owners and tappers must be followed strictly. At the same time, it is very important that thao khae or middlemen and their rubber picking workers must be honest enough to gain the trust of the rubber farmers. When farmers want to sell their rubber cup lumps, then the workers of the thao khae are the ones who ride a motorcycle up hill and transport rubber cup lumps back to
the thao khae’ s houses (Illustration 5.15). The rubber plot owners or tapping employees usually come to the stations later to pick up the money from selling. Often they are not at the thao khae’s place when their rubber cup lumps are weighed. During my field work I had never heard anyone complain that the thao khae cheated on them in weighing.

Illustration 5.15 A rubber coolie picking up and transporting rubber cup lumps from a rubber tree grower’s plot in the mountain area to a Thao Khae’s station.

Another very strict rule is about stealing rubber cup lumps. It is easy for rubber cup lumps to be stolen before being picked by owners because it is left alone in rubber plots in hill area all of several days and nights. Since the starting of the new round of the unrest and violence in southernmost Thailand in 2004, the residents have been greatly worried about their safety, so they have spent very short periods in their rubber plots just for tapping around three hours a day in the morning. Amidst the widespread appearance of kratom, which is an illegally addictive substance, and other drugs, some addicts, mostly teenagers, may lack of money to buy drugs sometimes and then decide to steel rubber cup lumps from someone’s rubber plots, especially when the rubber price is high. For the Kampong Ai Hetae residents and those of nearby communities, steeling rubber cup lumps is a very serious bad and unacceptable deed. If the thieves are caught, it is normal to hear that they are beaten up their captors regardless of whether or not they are the owners of the rubber cup lumps which have been stolen or not. This
happens although the value of rubber cup lumps stolen each time is not that much, mostly for around 2,000 baht ($65) or so. Every time when the stealing happens, it becomes important, and it becomes known all around the village. It is very important that everyone has to help prevent the stealing. I learned that at the Luboh Luwah, which is the subdistrict nearby, there are some voluntary guards watching out for rubber stealing. These people used to help arrest someone who stole rubber cup lumps from a plot of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents and escaped by using the route passing the Luboh Luwah.

It is worth noting that rubber is the main economic activity in the Kampong Ai Hetae that most households depend on and relate to. It is not only important for rubber plot owners, tapping employees, rubber middlemen and rubber coolies, but also others outside the rubber business like grocery shops, food stalls, and so on. In the rubber business, it is impossible for anyone in the Kampong Ai Hetae, even the thao khae, to control or manage the rubber market in which everything is up to the global market and the world economic condition. Therefore, the only thing that they can do is to maintain the system within their community before connecting with the outside market running smoothly and be able to prevent any cheating and stealing, which are considered as improperly taking advantage of other members. Moreover, amid the unrest that the residents live in fear and don’t dare to spend much time in their rubber plots in hill area, the widespread use of drugs, especially among male teenagers, is one among the many consequences of the unrest. It is hard for the residents to handle these difficulties which are beyond their control. Consequently, what they can try to control is to prevent the impact of the unrest and the widespread drug problem from ruining their lives. This is the reason why they pay very strict attention to any stealing of rubber cup lumps which are their most valuable agricultural products.

Conclusion

Through farming rubber and annual crops the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have become fully involved with the modern market economy in which they as small-scale farmers have the lowest status in lacking any power to negotiate on either the cost or the price of their products. Without proper support from state agencies together with the
changes in the ecosystem and the decrease in common resources, most farmers have to apply intensive modern farming practices to ensure the productivity of major farming activities that they rely on. Also with an expectation to gain returns in the long run from cash crops, they even plant rubber in some risky areas such as where flooding may occur.

Even though only a few cash crops, especially rubber, have become their main farming activity, the Kampong Ai Hetae baroh or wetlands area remains important as a common resource. Baroh is the area where annual crops are planted, cattle are brought in to graze, and rice is farmed. However, today there are several problems with common resources including the ambiguity of property rights, especially at the rim of grassland; the enclosure by some state agencies; and conflict over the resource uses among residents, especially over cattle invasion and water grabbing for paddy. The unrest and violence in the southernmost region causes distrustfulness between Malay Muslims and the state security forces, and even distrust among villagers. Formal or collective action to solve problems is prevented in these circumstances. On the contrary, there is some personal resistance by ‘illegal’ invading of the enclosed area or in occupying the state public land. In addition, the sustainable uses of common resources has not been considered by the residents because they don’t feel that the baroh belongs to them as communal property, but is now the property of state agencies.

Amidst the difficulties because of the state’s unsupportive policies on market and production and their low status in the market economy, the residents survive and persevere through their farming and other strategies. The hybrid and practical knowledge that the residents have actively learned from several sources on modern farming as well as on landscape and vegetation changes have helped them be part of the market economy and continue their farming activities among ecological changes. There is also the utilization of their recent knowledge on organic farming. Residents have made decisions to use, to not use, or to mix some of its techniques to gain benefits both on farming production and on access to resources from state agencies.

The diversity of farming activities is also important. However, the current diversity of farming found in the Kampong Ai Hetae area doesn’t work to maintain an isolated self-sufficient subsistence economy, but to help their lives in the modern market economy be smooth and untroubled by gaining steady income and reducing food
expenses for their households. Also the residents’ different view of cost-benefit which
does not follow the logic of the modern economy strictly helps the Kampong Ai Hetae
residents feel relieved with their loss when they don’t profit or get good returns as
happens with a regional, national, and world economy far beyond their influence or
control.

The decrease in inputs on farms sometimes is the way to reduce risk from the
fluctuation of prices. In addition, for some residents the return from their farming
activities doesn’t have to be cash or economic profit, but it can be in the religious
dimension through merit making. Likewise, for some residents, they perceive that
farming activity as their way of life and through this perception their labor hours are not
counted in calculating the cost of production. At the same time, the rule that might seem
to be too strict in the case of stealing rubber is the way to keep the internal system
operating smoothly before connecting with the outside market and to reduce the impact
of the unrest and the widespread problem of drugs in this southernmost region.
CHAPTER 6
LIVES AMIDST RURAL TRANSFORMATION

The adaptations and strategies to make a living through modern farming as mentioned in the previous chapter are closely related to other dimensions of changes of the Kampong Ai Hetae which are the attributes of rural transformation. This chapter will discuss the three main attributes of the transformation consisting of: (1) the increasing role of the non-farm sector happening with the decrease of farming land caused by population growth; (2) the increase of modern consumption and lifestyles which helps enhance the economy of the Kampong Ai Hetae in various ways; and (3) the intensification of Islam which coincides closely with the growth of the modern market economy. These three attributes in various ways shape the significance and status of farming in the lives of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents today, although there is some variation among households. At the same time, the three attributes may create some conditions or difficulties preventing or retarding sustainable farming and development.

The Growth of Non-Farm Sector

Although the Kampong Ai Hetae is still located in a rural setting and is a farming village, around 85% of the households earn their living from a significant share of income from wage labor and non-farm occupations. This seems to be in accordance with what Jonathan Rigg demonstrates as the process of rural change in Southeast Asia where the rural communities can no longer be identified as peasant societies. For Rigg (2006), today rural people don’t depend highly on farm land and agriculture, meaning that non-farm activities have become more central to the rural livelihoods, and the number of rural households that have no commitment to farming activities has been increasing. He identifies this process as “de-agrarianisation.” Rigg (2003) also provides an overview of the changes in rural Southeast Asia in the context of the national and international political economies that have made modernization and capitalism dominant in this area. Given this context, the importance of non-farm activities has been fuelled by the limited ability of agriculture, especially the traditional production systems.
which consisted of local varieties and mixed farming systems, to deliver an adequate livelihood. At the same time, development and modernity, the rising level of formal education, communication and transportation development as well as growing aspirations and consumer pressures have made livelihood strategies of the rural people more of a hybrid between farm and non-farm activities. This attribute can be seen in the Kampong Ai Hetae as well.

The degree of involvement in wage labor jobs and non-farm occupations of each household in the Kampong Ai Hetae depends on how much farming land each household still has and the extent to which each household can make a living from farming activities that include fishing and grazing. However, this may be in some degree different from what Rigg emphasizes. While Rigg focuses on de-agrarianisation, this doesn’t fully happen in the Kampong Ai Hetae. In the Kampong Ai Hetae farming, especially rubber, is still the main economic activity, even though the percentage of the population that farms, either as a land owner or as a land tenant, is decreasing because the amount of farmland is insufficient for the growing population. Wage labor jobs held by the landless are mainly still in rubber farming and rubber trading.

Furthermore, while Rigg focuses on people’s aspiration as one factor in de-agrarianisation saying that for many young people farming is an occupation to be avoided (2003, 221), this hasn’t yet fully happened in the Kampong Ai Hetae. So far the possession of the rubber plots has still been desirable for most Kampong Ai Hetae residents because rubber is the most secure farming activity for an all year around income with low cost, even though rubber price usually fluctuate. What Rigg points out may be true for some young people and teenagers, who get a chance to study higher education including at the college level. These young people don’t have any experience or skill in farming, this it is unlikely that they will return to farming forever. However, the more important factor that has pushed Kampong Ai Hetae residents out of the farming sector is the shortage of farmland, a dilemma increasing for younger generations with population growth.

The Shortage of Farmland among Young Generation

Several households in the Kampong Ai Hetae aren’t involved in agriculture at all nowadays, not even working as farm wage labor. These cases are mostly the households
of a couple who are now in the age class of the 30s or 40s with children in school. For these people, even though they have their own parcels of land for their houses, still they don’t have enough land for farming activities. Their shortage of farmland might have existed since the generation of their parents who usually made a living as rubber tapping workers for their relatives or neighbors since they were young.

Yameenah, a 34 year old mother of two young daughters, is an example. While her husband is a construction worker and sometimes a construction contractor himself, Yameenah earns money from making several kinds of desserts and snacks to sell to several tea shop owners in the Kampong Ai Hetae area and nearby villages. Yameenah’s mother, who was born in the Kampong Ai Hetae, didn’t have any rubber plots, so her mother has earned her living as a rubber tapping laborer since she was young up until now. Also, Durriyah, a 33 year old woman, and her husband haven’t made a living at all in agriculture. Because she had learned cooking skills from helping her mother in another district, she could cook for her own food stall starting after getting married and moving to live in her husband’s house in the Kampong Ai Hetae several years ago. Apart from assisting Durriyah, her husband also earns money from making artful bird cages in which he is extremely skillful. Apart from a few rai of in-season paddy fields, her husband’s parents don’t have any other farmlands to make a living. His mother has been working as a rubber tapping worker and his father, who came from the Muang district of Pattani province, worked as a janitor in the Kampong Ai Hetae Government Primary School for around 25 years until he retired recently.

For some households, even though they still own farmlands, the land is not enough when their sons or daughters get married and start to have children. As in the case of Sofina, a 30 year old woman who is a niece of my host father, after getting married she and her husband, Yusuf, have made a living in raising their four daughters by selling noodle and rice soup at Yusuf’s house in the Ya Rang district. Yusuf is a great chef since he used to work in a Thai restaurant in Malaysia. Although Sofina’s parents have three rubber plots and several paddy fields, their lands are insufficient for her parents, herself, and other three siblings with their families for making a living. At the same time, Maheen, Sofina’s older brother, with his family, moved to the border area in Songkhla province to make a living by providing his own car for rental, mainly for a short trip to Malaysia with him as a driver. Also, his wife earns money from
making desserts and snacks sold at tea shops. Sofina’s youngest brother, who was discharged from being a draftee two years ago, had been working as an employee of a coach bus for a year and then has been working as a head of laborers for his cousin who is a thao khae or a rubber middleman in the Kampong Ai Hetae.

Although some households inherit rubber plots from their parents, a small piece of land is not enough to make a living without other additional occupations. Fateemoh, who I mentioned in the introductory chapter, is a perfect example. Fateemoh and her seven siblings received 3rai (1.2 acres) of rubber farm each from their parents. The plot is definitely too small to support her family with three kids. Therefore, the main income for her own family is from her husband who used to work as a construction contractor and now as a trader in recycling. Every day he drives his own pickup truck to buy scrap iron, pieces of plastic, broken electrical appliances, empty water bottles, and so on from residents in the Kampong Ai Hetae and nearby areas, and then he sell them to bigger traders outside the village.

The significance of income from the non-farming sector has been increasing, even for households working on various farming activities, especially when the household’s population size increases and this leads to a shortage of farmland. Kah Dunyana and Bae Yasser, a couple in the age class of the 50s, has been working on several agricultural activities, ranging from rubber farming, orchard, watermelon and vegetable planting to rice farming, which provide them with their annual income. Their income from these various farming activities has been sufficient for raising their six sons and one daughter and for their education in both the ordinary public and religious schools. However, when these children grow up and start their own families, then the income from these various farming activities will not be enough anymore. Then, they will need to find jobs in the non-farming sector. Today, Kah Dunyana and Bae Yasser’s eldest son works as a Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO) driver and his wife is a trader in cloth for hijabs. Also Kah Dunyana and Bae Yasser’s other son is working as a coolie for a thao khae or rubber middleman in the village.
**Wage Labor Jobs and Trading in the Village**

**Wage labor jobs**

While increasingly more residents do not have enough farmland to making a living and then have to work on wage labor jobs, the jobs are still mainly based on the rubber economy. Several residents who don’t have rubber plots make their living as rubber tappers for rubber plot owners who mostly are their relatives or neighbors. By doing so, an owner and a tapping worker each get 50% of the money from selling rubber cup lumps. Most tappers are either middle age or older people, mostly 35 years old and above. Working as a tapper is desirable for the Kampong Ai Hetae residents because it is in some degree a long term job with regular income. However, the positions on rubber tapping have never been enough, especially for young people because most positions were occupied already several years ago. Then young people, who actually are descendants of current tapping rubber workers, have to find other wage labor jobs. Moreover, there is a limitation of working as a tapper because when a rubber plot is around 25 years old, then it needs to be replanted. After one rubber plot of my host family was replanted, a middle aged couple who were tapping for that plot had to shift to make a living in a fruit stall at scheduled markets in the area.

It is true that working as a rubber tapper seems to be a secure job with regular income. However, if it is the only source of income, then the family of the laborer will be poor and marginalized. Kah Yarah, a 53 year old landless woman, has been employed by my host family to tap rubber. Money from tapping is only one source of her income. Kah Yarah hardly gets money from her husband since he mostly stays and makes a living on petty trading with a second wife. Kah Yarah lives at her own house with her son and his family consisting of his wife, their two daughters and one stepson. The economic status of her son’s family is not good as well. Her son is working as a semi-truck driver for a local businessman in a nearby subdistrict, while his wife used to work as a freelance sewer at home, but has stopped working recently because of ill health. Their oldest daughter, who just dropped out a few months ago before finishing junior high school, has been starting to work as an employee at a foodstall at the Selasa market. However, she may lose her job soon because the food stall owner is not satisfied with her performance since she doesn’t know how to compute the price correctly when customers buy foods.
Awatif, a 55 year old woman, is another tapper who has a difficult life. She have raised her eight children on her own after divorcing her husband who wanted to have a second wife without her permission. In the past she worked for a small rubber plot owned by a resident of the Kampong Ai Hetae. Six years ago, her son-in-law introduced her to tap for a big rubber plantation located in Raman district in Yala. She, her son, her daughter-in-law, and the other six residents from the Kampong Ai Hetae leave their houses at 3 am in the morning travelling to the plantation which is far from the Kampong Ai Hetae for around 12 kilometers. Then they start to tap rubber and make rubber sheets there before going back home around noon.

Nevertheless, some tapping laborers can achieve good economic status if they have additional occupations. For example, Andia works as a rubber tapper with her husband for the plot owner at a nearby district. After finishing tapping early in the morning then she also goes to work as a janitor for a cleaning company at the Padae Kuwing Marah Hospital. Also, her husband owns a six wheel truck to be rent to transport rubber cup lumps and other farming products. Accordingly, with several sources of income Andia’s family is doing quite well. During my fieldwork period, they were able to buy a second hand 10-year-old Honda Civic by getting credit for car installments from Thanachart, one of the commercial banks in Thailand.

While tapping labor is a job for people in middle age and above, wage labor jobs in rubber trading is a job for younger people. In the Kampong Ai Hetae, there are now four thao khae, or rubber middlemen. Each middleman has around 5-6 young male workers as coolies to carry, lift, and shoulder rubber cup lumps. Some of them drive motorcycles, which are modified to suit hilly and narrow routes and to be able to carry around 100-200 kilograms of rubber picked up from customer’s plots. In the morning, these motorcycle drivers are always busy going back and forth to the thao khae’s stations to take rubber cup lumps from several plots. Another duty of the workers is to carry rubber cup lumps at thao khae’s stations to put in pickup trucks or 6-10 wheel trucks so that thao khae can bring these to sell to rubber processing factories, most located in Songkhla province. It is the duty of these workers as well to drive pickup truck to collect rubber cup lumps from smaller middlemen of other nearby villages who are the customers of their thao khae. Then, they unload the rubber cup lumps and keep them on the ground at thao kae’s station to let them dry and then upload them again to
bring to a factory. The income of these workers is around 200-400 baht ($6.5 - 13) a day depending on their duties. The ones who also drive motorcycles or cars to pick up rubber cup lumps usually get higher wage than regular coolies. However, rubber can’t be tapped every day because of rain and the wet season, so there is no rubber cup lump to pick up and carry every day. Therefore, usually during a month they are hired only for around 15-20 days.

Apart from the wage labor jobs in rubber business, another popular job among men is as drivers. Several men are drivers for local businessmen or influential persons such as subdistrict heads or the SAO chief executive. Some drive backhoes, harvesting trucks, or 10-wheel-trucks travelling to many places according to the orders from their bosses. Moreover, some men, especially young men, work in the tour business as either drivers or service persons coach buses. It is important to note that the tour business has been growing very fast from 2004 when most government agencies have paid a huge amount of money in the southernmost region for activities with local Malay Muslims to try to help stop the new round of unrest and violence. One of the popular activities is the study trip taking local people to see development projects in other regions of Thailand expecting that these Malay Muslims would adapt what they have learned to develop their own lives and communities.

Trading

Apart from wage labor jobs, petty trading in the Kampong Ai Hetae is a main occupation for several residents especially for women. Home based food selling has been booming here. Along the village road of around 1500 meters in length, from the Kampong Ai Hetae Elementary School, which is the beginning point of the Kampong Ai Hetae community, to the last house before reaching the wetlands paddy fields and grasslands, there are 16 food stalls of which 10 sell instant foods—main dishes, light dishes, snacks, desserts, tea and coffee—and the rest are either groceries or shops selling raw materials for cooking as food.

Durriyah’s food stand is the biggest one in the Kampong Ai Hetae. While other food shops sell either only foods for breakfast—such as nasi grabu or rice salad, nasi miyoue or yellowed rice, phad phed or chicken spicy curry, nasi eiy or rice soup, including desserts and tea—or foods for lunch, which mainly are noodle soup,
Durriyah’s food stand sells both. For lunch, she doesn’t sell only noodle soups, but also cooked to order food such as fried rice, sweet and sour beef stir fry, noodle stir fry and the most popular menu tom yum. Durriyah’s food shop opens at around 5:30 in the morning. During that time, her shop is always crowded with women who are on their way to tap rubber and stop by to buy breakfast to bring to their rubber plots. From around 6:30 on most customers are housewives who don’t go to tap rubber and have to buy food for their kids before they go to school. Durriyah’s shop is busy until around 8:30 and all foods are always sold out by 9 am. After that Durriyah’s prepare materials for lunch which is starts around 11 o’clock to 2:00 pm.

Kah Hala also runs a grocery and food shop. Already for several years she has sold several kinds of food ranging from instant curries and noodle soup to light meals like grilled meat ball and fish ball, and desserts. When she was first married and moved to the Kampong Ai Hetae, Kah Hariyah and her husband worked as tappers for the rubber plot owner in the Luboh uwah subdistrict. Later on they shifted to trade fish by buying fish from the market in Saiburi, a coastal district, and then sold the fish by driving their pickup truck around nearby villages. Several years later when they felt that they were getting old and too tired to travel around, Kah Hala decided to run a grocery and sell foods at home. Right now Kah Halah hires her two daughters as her assistants. For Kah Hala, income from her grocery and food shop is the main source for her family apart from occasional income when her husband can sell buffalos or cows he invests in for trading.

In the Kampong Ai Hetae there are three stores called yuwa e-kae, which literally means selling fish but actually involves selling any kind of raw food materials, not only fish but also meats, vegetables, condiments, and so on. The yuwa e-kae store is important for the Kampong Ai Hetae housewives as a convenient source close to home to buy daily raw food materials. The owners of these stores have to go to big markets in Yala city or Saiburi district almost every day in the early morning to buy raw food materials to sell at home.

Food business provides regular income and helps relieve the sellers from economic difficulty. Yameenah earn profit for around 350-400 baht ($11-13) daily from making teau pong gu wae or deep-fried dough stick to be sold at 13 teashops all around the Kampong Ai Hetae subdistrict. To make the dough for 200 pieces a day where the
selling price is five baht ($0.16) each, she uses five kilograms of flour, two kilograms of sugar, and a liter of cooking oil. All cost, including gas for her motorcycle to transport the dough to tea shops, and the fee she gives to tea shop owners at one baht per one piece of dough, thus selling around 450 baht ($14.5) a day. This amount of income is sufficient for Yameenah and her family.

Another story of an individual who gains a better life from petty trading is Kah Madiha, a 62 year old woman. She lives with her five children who are now grown up and married, except two of them who have been sick with albinism since they were born. So far two of the married ones have built their small houses on the same piece of land as Kah Madiha’s house. In the past, Kah Madiha’s family relied mostly on income from working as tappers, even though she often went to the fresh market in the Saiburi district, which is far away from Kampong Ai Hetae at around 30 kilometers, to sell *egae budu*, or fermented fish which was made from fish from the Baroh Ai Hetae that she bought from other residents. One of her daughters told me that their lives in the past were a difficult struggle. Luckily, a few years ago a fish middleman from another district met her mother at the Saiburi freshmarket, and introduced her mother to work with him in the business on another kind of fermented fish made from Chinese Fish which is non-local fish caught or raised somewhere else in Thailand. In doing this business, Kah Madiha has been working as a retailer by splitting the ready made and cut fermented fish from a zinc bucket and mixing the fish with rice bran before packing 3-4 pieces of fish into small plastic bags for sale.

The middleman sells Kah Madiha a bucket of instant fermented fish for 720 baht ($23) each. Kah Madiha also has to invest in rice bran at a cost of 1,200-1,400 baht ($39-45) per sack. One bucket of fermented fish can be split and packed into 60 small bags, which she sells for 20 baht ($0.65) each. In each regular day, she and her family members pack 4-5 buckets of the fermented fish, and during special times, particularly during the month of Ramadan, they have to pack as many as 10 buckets which are sell out almost every day. After deducting all of the costs including the wage on splitting and packing that Kah Madiha pays her sons, daughters, and relatives at 40 baht each a day, the profit she gets is around 300 baht ($10) per a bucket of fermented fish.

With the new business on this fermented fish, Kah Madiha’s family’s economic difficulties seem to be resolved. Before starting this business, Kah Madiha was in a
motorcycle accident and has not been able to do hard work like tapping anymore. With this new business, she doesn’t have to work hard, spending only three hours a day from around 6-9 am having her son driving for her to the Saiburi market and helping her to lift and carry the packages of fermented fish. In addition, recently the rubber plot that her son had been hired to tap was replanted, so he lost that job. The new business with fermented fish can help compensate for the income they lost. Also the profit from the new business can help her daughter-in-law to expand her yuwa e-kae store to have more various kinds of fresh foods for customers to choose from, and then this store can expand in the Kampong Ai Hetae.

Illustration 6.1 and 6.2  Fermented “Chinese Fish” packed by Kah Madiha’s family members.

There are two interesting points about wage labor jobs and trading in the Kampong Ai Hetae. First of all, whether or not these activities—petty trading, home-based shops, foodstall, construction work and wage labor jobs—can flourish, be prosperous, and be profitable, depends on the conditions of the farming economy. When the price of farming products, especially of rubber and watermelons is high, then the residents have more purchasing power to enhance their other activities. Also, when the rubber price is going well, then rubber middleman may need to hire more laborers for their business.
Nevertheless, the opportunities for both wage labor jobs and trading in the Kampong Ai Hetae is still limited. When compared to the stores at Selasa, the market and business center of the Padae Kuwing Marah district some two kilometers from the Kampong Ai Hetae, all food stalls and grocery shops in the Kampong Ai Hetae are smaller and shabbier. At Selasa, there are more customers who have more purchasing power, especially salaried persons working for governmental offices in the district as well as the travelers who pass by since Selasa is located along the inter-provincial road. In contrast, food stalls and other stores in the Kampong Ai Hetae have only orae kumpong, literally meaning villager, but with connotations of backwardness and economic inferiority as customers. Therefore, it is hard for the residents running pursing pettytrading in the Kampong Ai Hetae to gain capital accumulation and expand their businesses.

Like in the case of Yameenah, even though income from the dough and other desserts she makes can help maintain economic stability for her family, the income is not enough for her to hire an assistant. Therefore, her income can come only from her own labor, and it is impossible to increase the capacity of her production without having more labor. In addition, in the Kampong Ai Hetae there are still some areas deep and faraway from the main roads, which is a disadvantage for petty trading. Yameenah told me that she would like to sell the dough and desserts she makes at home instead of asking tea shop owners to sell for her because she doesn’t want to pay 20% of the selling price to them. However, this is impossible because Yameenah’s house is located far from the main roads where it would be difficult to attract customers.

The prosperity of Kah Pakeezah’s food business at Selasa shows how trading there is more advantageous than those in the Kampong Ai Hetae. Her food stall is open from 4:30 to around 8-9 pm. It seems to be the biggest one in the district and is always full of several kinds of instant foods including tea and coffee. She has six workers to help her cook and sell food. After running the business for several years plus the income from her husband who is running a lubricator changing shop located in the same area of the food stall, they have bought 2 units of commercial building for their business, thus they don’t have to rent space anymore. During my fieldwork year, the couple also paid for a Hajj pilgrimage, which costs 150,000 baht ($4,839) each.
Secondly, the bustle of wage labor jobs and non-farming activities in the Kampong Ai Hetae shows how closely the residents are a part of the wider economic system. This is not to mention wage labor jobs in the rubber business that rely so much on the world economy. Even the foods sold at the stalls are seen as local/authentic food, like *nasi krabu* (rice salad). The latter is made from imported rice planted in northeastern Thailand together with shredded and roasted coconut and shredded vegetables that are other raw materials of *nasi krabu* and can still be found in the Kampong Ai Hetae, and *budu* or sweetened fish-gravy as well as roasted shredded fish that can be found locally from nearby districts of coastal area. This is same as *nasi miyoue* (curried rice with chicken), another local/authentic food sold in the Kampong Ai Hetae, in which rice is also from another region and chicken is from CP which is the biggest conglomerate of the agroindustry and food business in Thailand. In addition, in groceries and raw food material shops, 95% of the goods are bought from nearby cities such as Yala or Saiburi. Although some residents who plant some vegetables including yam sell their products in the village or local markets, these foods can’t cover all of the kinds of food necessary for the everyday life of residents. At least the Kampong Ai Hetae residents need to buy garlic and shallot planted in the northern or northeastern Thailand or may be from China as well as cooking oil from Malaysia for their everyday cooking.

**Working outside the Village**

Following the long-term pursuit of an export led and foreign investment driven development strategy by governments in Southeast Asian countries, Rigg points out de-agrarianisation as the main attribute of rural changes in Southeast Asia. For Rigg, de-agrarianisation happens because of the growth of factory work both in local areas and beyond. The latter requires migration to capital cities, regional urban centers, and other rural areas or abroad (2003: 212, 238). However, what has happened in the Kampong Ai Hetae seems to be different. During the one year of my fieldwork in the Kampong Ai Hetae, I didn’t meet even one resident employed as a factory worker. The long term

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10 The Charoen Pokphand Group (CP) is a Thai multi-national conglomerate with core businesses in agroindustry, food, retail, and telecommunications. Founded in 1921, CP currently employs over 280,000 people and invests in 15 countries worldwide generating over USD 33 Billion annually.
unrest that has caused the low growth of the industrial sector in the southernmost region set the conditions for making a living for Kampong Ai Hetae residents. However, this doesn’t mean that there is no mobility and migration of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents. Actually, today there are around 7-8% of these residents, mostly teenagers, migrating to work in Malaysia. They don’t work in factories or the industrial sector, but in Thai restaurants called ran tom yum kung or tom yum kung restaurants.

As mentioned earlier, wage labor jobs and trading in the Kampong Ai Hetae have some limitations because of insufficiency in positions and the low purchasing power of orae kumpong in buying goods from petty trading at the village level. In addition, food business usually requires experience and skills in cooking to gain acceptance from customers, so not everyone can do this. Therefore, working outside the village is the only choice that some residents have.

There have been residents working outside of the Kampong Ai Hetae area since the past 4-5 decades. It is hard to believe that the aunt, who is also the adoptive mother of Ayah, my 65 year old host father, used to stay in Saudi Arabia for around 20 years before moving back to Kampong Ai Hetae after her husband died there. Several people from the previous generation travelled to Saudi Arabia by ocean liners for the hajj pilgrimage and never returned. Some of them became citizens of Saudi Arabia, settling and living there permanently. This migration is not for economic reasons. In the case of Ayah’s aunt, after accomplishing the hajj, she felt that Mecca is a good place to live. This is in accordance with the popular explanation among Malay Muslims in the southernmost region that their previous generations were inspired based on the faith in Islam to live and die in the holy city close to Allah.

People of later generations, who are now in the age group of 40s to 50s, however, migrated to Saudi Arabia mainly for economic reasons. Most of them were illegal immigrants smuggled into Saudi Arabia as hajj pilgrims during the time that the Saudi Arabian government started to put more restrictions on immigrants and citizenship. Therefore, several of these people had the experience of being deported by the Saudi Arabian government back to Thailand. Twenty years ago, one of my friends, in an adjacent district, who went to live in Saudi Arabia illegally for a few years, intended to disclose himself to Saudi Arabian officers in order to be deported to Thailand by a Saudi Arabian government’s airplane without any expense. No matter
how much Saudi Arabian government has tried to control illegal immigrants, many people from southernmost Thailand have still been able to avoid the inspections.

The support from their relatives or friends, who have lived in Saudi Arabia before for many years and already received citizenship, is the main contributing factor in the continuation of the migration to work in Saudi Arabia. It is important to note that several people from previous generations who lived in Saudi Arabia before and got citizenship were favored to marry Malay Muslim women at home on return. They married women chosen by their parents or relatives even though the bride and groom didn’t know each other before. This kind of marriage has helped create a supporting network for others to continue migrating to work in Saudi Arabia up until now. This is even though it is getting harder to stay there illegally because of the restriction from Saudi Arabian government.

Almost all of illegal immigrants from southernmost Thailand have worked in sewing male religious clothing. They live in a small group with their employers in houses. These migrants always get married within their own group. Therefore, it is normal to see children around the age of six year old and above who were born in Saudi Arabia back in the Malay Muslim villages in the southernmost region of Thailand. Their parents always move back to Thailand permanently when their kids grow up to six or seven years old to bring them to school because these kids aren’t allowed to go to school in Saudi Arabia.

Sarish, a 38 year old widow, migrated to work in Saudi Arabia since 1994 and had been staying there for nine years. When Sarish finished grade six from a government elementary school then she continued religious studies in a pondok close to home for seven years. Her father died several years ago and only her mother supported the family from a small plot of rubber. When her aunt, whose daughter has been running a sewing business in Saudi Arabia, suggested her to work as a sewing laborer there, she agreed suddenly because, as she said, “There is no job to do in the Kampong Ai Hetae.” She started to learn how to sew there and her duty was to put buttons and sew the rim of clothes. One year later she got married to a Malay-Muslim man from Thailand there. After that she could earn more money because her husband had been there before and had more experience and skill in sewing. They earned $4 per dress they cut. During regular days, they made five dresses a day and during the month of Ramadan they made
fifteen dresses a day. While living in Saudi Arabia, she delivered three kids at home without going to a hospital because doing so in a hospital in Saudi Arabia was too expensive for the couple to afford. Later on, her husband died from a heart attack. Then she decided to move back to the Kampong Ai Hetae with her three children. Since then she has been making a living both by tapping rubber with her mother and as a tailor.

Although right now it is difficult to illegally migrate into Saudi Arabia, several people in southernmost Thailand still want to work there. Some even chose to work there only for 40 days according to one-time permission of arrival duration that the Saudi Arabian government grants to foreign Muslims who come to perform Umrah. When deducting travelling cost, some residents think that they can still profit from working only 40 days in Saudi Arabia for around $350-400.

Malaysia is another place that people in Kampong Ai Hetae have migrated to work from the past up until now. Today there are around 7-8% of the village residents, most of them teenagers both men and women, working in Malaysia. Poverty and the lack of jobs in the local area have been the main reason for the migration to work in Malaysia since the past 3-4 decades. For people who are now in middle age and used to work in Malaysia before, they expect to gain some saving money so that they can come back home to continue their lives more smoothly or to invest in some business at home.

Waseem, a 52 year old man who is now Village Empat head, had a difficult childhood because his father was shot dead when Waseem was still very young. Then his mother was the only one who earned money to take care of eight children. After having studied in a pondok for almost 10 years, he quit the pondok and then worked full-time as a freelance wage laborer for few years. He was conscripted into the army for two years and then was discharged. Waseem and his wife moved to Sungai-Kolok and there he worked as a tricycle taxi driver for two years. Then, he worked as a rubber

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11 The Umrah or (Arabic: عُمْرَة) is a pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, performed by Muslims that can be undertaken at any time of the year. In Arabic, Umrah means "to visit a populated place". In the Sharia, Umrah means to perform Tawaf round the Kaaba and Sa'i between Al-Safa and Al-Marwah, after assuming Ihram (a sacred state), either from a Miqat like Zu 'l-Hulafa, Juhfa, Qarnu 'l-Manāzil, Yalamlam, Zāt-i-'Irq, Ibrahīm Mursīa, or a place in Hill. It is sometimes called the 'minor pilgrimage' or 'lesser pilgrimage', the Hajj being the 'major' pilgrimage and which is compulsory for every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it. The Umrah is not compulsory but highly recommended.
tapper in Malaysia for three years before coming back to Kampong Ai Hetae using money saved from Malaysia to invest in a small grocery store and petty-rubber trading. He was working in these businesses for around five years before deciding to run in the election for the village head.

This is the same as Bae Ramzi, a 53 year old man who has been a Territorial Defense Volunteer for around 17 years, and now his duty is to drive for the Padae Kuwing Marah district-chief officer. Bae Ramzi migrated to work as a wage laborer in an oil palm plantation in Malaysia, not very far from the border, for several years. Kah Haniya, his wife, and their children also moved to Malaysia with him. Kah Haniya didn’t work in a plantation, but she took care of housework and food. At that time they were very poor. The family moved back to the Kampong Ai Hetae when the former subdistrict head who is Bae Ramzi’s close relative suggested to him to work as a Territorial Defense Volunteer which is a kind of government employee.

Several middle age women also have experience working in Malaysia. Kah Nada, a 45 year old woman, used to work in Malaysia for six years as a baby sitter for a policeman’s family living in a flat. She said her employers, both the wife and the husband, were very nice. She mostly worked in the flat room and hardly came down to the ground. During that time she came back to visit home during Hari Raya every year. The former subdistrict head, who is her relative, introduced the job for her. The former subdistrict head is the same person as the one who introduced the job on Territorial Defense Volunteer to Bae Ramzi. In addition, some women work in Malaysia on seasonal jobs. One woman, who is now in her mid 40s, used to work in Malaysia as a travelling salesperson selling pillows and mattresses. She and her colleagues carried and shouldered pillows and mattresses walking around in rural areas in Malaysia. Each trip took 1-2 months. When there was no job, she came back home. When the job was available, she started to travel again.

In contrast to the past when several people, who are now at the age of late 40s and 50s, used to work in Malaysia as wage laborers in rubber or oil palm plantations, now several young people in the Kampong Ai Hetae have migrated to Malaysia mostly to work in the restaurant business called both in Malaysia and Thailand’s southernmost region ran tom yum. Tom Yum spicy soup is one of the most popular Thai dishes in many countries including in Malaysia. According to Suttiporn Bunmak (2011), for
Malaysians it has been widely believed that the perfect and tasty Tom Yum soup as well as other Thai dishes must be cooked only by chefs from Thailand. Moreover, since most customers of the restaurants are Malaysian Muslims, foods in Tom Yum restaurants must be halal (the foods that are allowed under Islamic dietary guidelines). According to these guidelines halal food can be prepared only by Muslims. Therefore, Tom Yum restaurant business as Thai halal food in Muslim society is usually reserved only for Muslim migrant workers from Thailand. However, it is important to note that most Malay Muslim workers hardly eat or cook Tom Yum or other ‘Thai foods’ that they sell in Tom Yum restaurants at home in southernmost Thailand where they always eat local Malay foods.

According to Samsuddin Wasukaloh, the secretary of the tom yum restaurant association in Malaysia, so far there are 2,000 to 3,000 tom yam restaurants in Malaysia, employing 200,000 to 300,000 Malay Muslim workers from southernmost Thailand including Thai Muslims from the upper southern provinces such as Nakhon Si Thammarat, Krabi, Songkhla, and Surat Thani. These workers start out as preps, servers, and dish washers earning 8,000 baht ($258) a month and, if they are skilled especially as cooks, the wage goes up to 12,000-15,000 baht ($387-484) a month (Bangkok Post February 5, 2012). Thus, the tom yum restaurant business in Malaysia has been very economically important for the survival of Malay Muslims in southernmost Thailand. Realizing this the Thai government led by Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra from the Pheu Thai party via the SBPAC has launched a project providing a mortgage loan to tom yum restaurant operators through the Islamic Bank of Thailand. The Thai government has also been working to make an agreement with the Malaysian government to reduce the fee for work permits which are now very expensive and burdensome for both restaurant owners and workers. This would make the permission process more convenient. This action by the SBPAC would help tom yum restaurant owners and workers avoid being arrested by Malaysian officers with the charge of working without permission.

From the Kampong Ai Hetae, there are 3-4 women who seem to be very successful in the tom yum restaurant business in Malaysia. They have been able to set themselves up from low-level entry positions in a restaurant to be a main chef or a restaurant owner. These people are the pride of their family and relatives in Kampong
Ai Hetae. They are also able to help support other villagers to get jobs in the restaurants. Interestingly, the main reason why these women can settle well is that they got married with suitable persons in Malaysia who become the supporting factor for the success of their business. One lady was married to a Malaysian man while she was working in a restaurant there, so she gained Malaysian citizenship, which makes it easier for her to run a *tom yum* restaurant. In other cases, they were married to male Malay-Muslims from Thailand who also work in a *tom yum* restaurant in Malaysia and then have been cooperating to set up and run their own business.

Kah Reyhana, a 44 year old woman and a *tom yum* restaurant owner in a city close to Kuala Lumpur, started working in Malaysia in 1997 because there was no job at home. In the beginning, she worked as a dish washer for 2-3 months, and then was promoted to make food and smoothies. At that time she earned $5 a day. Several years later, she married a man from southernmost Thailand who worked in a *tom yum* restaurant as well. Then, they started to run their own business. She borrowed gold valued at 50,000 baht from her mother in Kampong Ai Hetae for the first investment in buying a restaurant which was sold out. For money to buy raw food materials, she used her credit and then paid it back pay later. Her business has been going well. The daily sale from her restaurant is from $500-1,000. So far, she has paid for renovation of her mother’s house. She also bought a new rubber plot in the Kampong Ai Hetae and is paying by installment for a new pickup truck.

Kah Reyhana, however, thinks that she has still been struggling because the cost in running a restaurant in Malaysia is very high, especially the cost of a work permit, which is as high as 9,000 baht each for every three months, both for herself and her nine employees from Thailand. Last year, she was arrested and in jail for 21 days because she had not yet had a work permit. In addition, a few years ago her restaurant was defamed by the neighboring Malaysian restaurant owner who secretly hired one of Kah Reyhana’s employee to put a bar of soap into her soup cauldron so that customer smelled soap when they ate. It has been widely said among people in the *tom yum* restaurant business how unfriendly Malaysian and Indonesian restaurant owners are to them. This is because *tom yum* restaurants run by people from Thailand have always been popular among Malaysian customers everywhere, and this affects the restaurant business of other nationalities. During my fieldwork, I heard several times about the
stories of black magic used by Malaysian or Indonesian restaurant owners to attack *tom yum* restaurants in Malaysia.

No matter how much Kah Reyhana thinks that she has been still in difficulty, she is by other Kampong Ai Hetae residents as a successful person. The case of Kah Reyhana seems to be in accordance with what was presented in Darairajoo (2002) about the possibility of gaining a better life for local Malay Muslims from working in Malaysia. Darairajoo points out that several Malay Muslim migrants who stayed on and worked for a longer period could earn sufficient income to fulfill their dreams of building big houses and buying and living a luxurious life in Thailand. Moreover, for several young men, working in Malaysia for a few years and then returning home for good also helps them raise money to marry wives and to afford more luxurious goods.

Furthermore, when compared to other young female residents who have only stayed and worked at home in the Kampong Ai Hetae, the *tom yum* people look more modern and fashionable, meaning that they can earn sufficient money and are able to afford to be more dressed up. When I took a public pickup from Yala city to Selasa which is the entrance to the Kampong Ai Hetae, I often met young women dressed in a beautiful modern style, some wearing Dave leg jeans with long sleeve waistcoats. These ladies came back from working in *tom yum* restaurants in Malaysia to visit home. They took buses from Malaysia to Hatyai district in Songkhla province and then took public vans or trains from Hatyai to Yala and then a public pickup back to their home villages. Also sometimes I saw some young women who looked unfamiliar to me in the Kampong Ai Hetae, and even though I didn’t know them in person I could recognize from their clothes which looked more modern than others in the village that they were working at *tom yum* restaurants in Malaysia.

In the Kampong Ai Hetae, however, most workers in *tom yum* restaurants are still far from being successful. Several young and early middle age women I met who are working or used to work in *tom yum* restaurants, usually earn 7,000-8,000 baht ($225-258) a month with free food and free shelter provided by the restaurant owners. These incomes and benefits are enough to survive, but not enough for capital accumulation. Therefore, when they have to quit their jobs, they are still struggling and are not any different from when they migrated to Malaysia.
Romana, a 35 year old single mom, had been working in several *tom yum* restaurants in several cities in Malaysia for more than ten years since 1997. She mainly received a salary of 7,000 baht ($225) a month with free shelter and food. She felt satisfied with the salary and wage because these were much more than working at home in the Kampong Ai Hetae. However, she told me that working in a *tom yum* restaurant is tough. Sometimes some restaurant owner didn’t pay for the salary on time or didn’t pay it fully. This is the reason why she had changed the restaurants to work in several times. Romana also used to be arrested by Malaysian officers because she didn’t have a work permit, and then she was detained for 15 days until her employer came to pay the penalty. Later on Romana decided to go back home because she missed her daughter who had been growing up and now is a teenager, taken care of by her mother. Although Romana had been working in *tom yum* restaurants for ten years, it couldn’t provide her with a better economic status or more savings to be able to invest in her own business. It was just only working hand to mouth for her family. Since she came back to the Kampong Ai Hetae she has worked as a daily based wage laborer in a small noodle stall with the wage only of 150 baht ($5) a day. Romana may go back to work in Malaysia again soon. She is making a decision whether or not she should go back there to work with her niece, who has married a Malaysian man a few years ago and now has started to run her own *tom yum* restaurant.

**Working as State Employees**

In the Kampong Ai Hetae and nearby districts there are no factories that can be a source of employment. This reflects the common explanation that the long term unrest has caused the low rate of economic growth with less investment in the industrial sector in the southernmost region. This is especially true since the renewed unrest started in 2004, which has created 14,343 violent incidents causing 5,206 deaths and 9,137 injuries. However, the low rate of expansion in the industrial sector with factory jobs hasn’t resulted in the cessation of economic growth in southernmost Thailand. Jitpiromsri (2012) points out that even though since 2004 the rate of economic growth in the region in some years was lower, in general it has been stable averaging around 2% a year. Jitpiromsri continues that the main factor that has helped support the economic system of the region not to collapse amid the long-term severe unrest and
violence is state expenditures. The annual Thai state government expenditure in the region has been around 180,000,000,000 baht or $5,800,000,000 from 2004 to 2012. This was provided for administration, security, and development to try to stop the unrest and violence in the region.

According to Srisompob, it is interesting that while the growth rate of agricultural production which used to be high before 2004 has shrunk continually, the growth rate of the non-agriculture sector has still expanded up until now. This means that most of the state expenditures have paid for state administration and security jobs instead of for agricultural and infrastructure developments. This direction of state expenditures leads to the high and rapidly increasing number of people hired in the local area to work on various state projects and activities. Only for security activities, in 2012, there are 84,768 militias, all local residents, and there are 25,000 paramilitaries and 40,622 professional policemen and soldiers, of which around 40% are local residents.

The increasing number of state expenditures and state hiring also provides more jobs for the Kampong Ai Hetae residents to work as state staff or employees. State hiring has become the main source of income for some households. This contrasts with the past when there had been only formal community leaders consisting of subdistrict heads, village heads, and their assistants who were state employees getting salary from the government. However, even though in the past these formal community leaders gained income from the Thai state, their salaries were still low and they didn’t feel that being a formal community leader was an occupation. These leaders had other activities, especially with rubber, to make a living.

Today, there are many more residents working as state employees and some of them, especially the young or the newly settled families, can make a living by just working as state employees without having to do other jobs. As in the case of Zaara and her husband, a young couple in their mid 20s with a two year old daughter, both are working as governmental employees using their bachelor degrees from a university in Yala to apply for jobs: Zaara has been hired by the Ai Hetae SAO and her husband by the DNFE. Although the couple with a child have still stayed with their parents (Zaara’s husband’s parents), who are still working in the agricultural sector, the couple hasn’t worked in agriculture.
One year after the new round of the unrest and violence started in 2004, around 20 middle age residents in the Kampong Ai Hetae were employed for non-permanent jobs for some special governmental projects, especially *Krong Karn at 4,500 Baht* ($145 Project). The full name of the project is The 4,500 Baht Urgent Employment and Job Building. The project, which so far has been supervised by the 4th Region Internal Security Operations Command, aims to increase short-term employments to relieve the economic difficulty of local residents, which has been seen as the main cause of the unrest and violence. In 2005, the first year of the project, it hired 44,000 positions and in 2010 it hired 24,710 positions in the southernmost region. All employees have been paid for 4,500 baht a month. Importantly, the project didn’t have education requirements, so the Kampong Ai Hetae residents from the middle age group who mostly had only elementary certification were eligible to work for the project. The employees of the project have worked in various duties. Men mainly worked on security job patrolling and keeping security of official places such as the public schools, the SAO office building, and the subdistrict public health center. Women mostly worked on the survey, especially the Evaluation Project for the Basic Minimum Needs (BMN) supervised by the Department of Community Development, Ministry of the Interior, and also helped assist on the work of the public health center.

Several of the younger generation in the age range of the 20s, who are mostly sons or daughters of the middle age people, have also been hired by several state agencies since 2004. These young people received formal education ranging from high vocational certification to college degrees. For the ones with college degrees, they mostly graduated from either Ramkamhaeng University, an open university located in Bangkok, or Ratchabhat Yala University, a local university with less reputation than the more prestigious universities ones like Chulalongkorn University, Mahidol University, or Thammasat University. After 2004, the new positions hired by government agencies at the district level have increased, so these young people with higher formal education degrees have a better chance to secure a long-term job than the less educated middle age people. Even though some job positions are non-permanent with a low salary, several of the graduates can still get the permanent jobs with more benefits in various governmental offices such as working as a territorial defense volunteer or a school...
teacher. Also recently the SAO has become another state organization providing several jobs, mostly permanent positions, to these young people in the Kampong Ai Hetae.

In the approach imposed by the Constitution of 1997\textsuperscript{12} the power of administration of the central government over subdistricts in Thailand was decentralized into local administrative organizations where both the councils and administrative teams are elected by the people of the subdistrict. In the beginning, depending on the size and tax income, each sub-district may either be administrated by SAO or a Subdistrict Council (SC). However, since 2001 all of SCs were upgraded to the SAOs with a directly elected SAO chief executive. The SAO is a juristic entity having the responsibility to develop economic, social, and cultural conditions in a subdistrict. The SAO has a certain degree of independence to set its own policies and development plans as well as to work on its own personnel administration. The SAO executive team has legitimacy to make decisions on their own to hire local residents in some positions. Therefore, the SAO has become an important source of employment in several local areas including in the Kampong Ai Hetae.

During the early months of my fieldwork year, there were only an administrative assistant, a civil engineer, and a treasury official who are Buddhist Thais while the rest of the Ai Hetae SAO staffs or employees are local residents. These Buddhist Thai were state officials appointed by the Department of Local Government of the Ministry of Interior to work for the Ai Hetae SAO. Several months later, the Department of Local Government sent four more Buddhist Thai officials to work in the Ai Hetae SOA. The jobs of these officials appointed by the department are permanent and secure. They are usually of a higher status than the positions hired directly by the SAO. However, the Ai

\textsuperscript{12} The 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (promulgated 11 October 1997, abrogated 19 September 2006) was widely hailed as a landmark in Thai democratic constitutional reform. It replaced the 1991 Constitution, and was replaced by the 2006 Interim Constitution after a successful military coup. The 1997 Constitution was the first constitution to be drafted by popularly-elected Constitutional Drafting Assembly, hence was popularly called the "People's Constitution". The 1997 Constitution created a bicameral legislature. For the first time in Thai history, both houses were directly elected. Many human rights are explicitly acknowledged, and measures were established to increase the stability of elected governments.
Hetae SAO has still been an important hiring source for the Kampong Ai Hetae residents.

Several residents from a wide range of education background, from the ones who didn’t attend a school at all mostly in their 50s to the young with bachelor’s degrees, obtain jobs from the Ai Hetae SAO. Individuals with no schooling or little education, such as completing only Grade 4 in school, are hired as guards, binmen, drivers, or cleaning staffs. The young residents with a bachelor’s degree are hired as employees to work on papers and management in the SAO offices. In some years during the school break undergraduate students in the Ai Hetae subdistrict are hired by the SAO to work in their office. A SAO chief executive told me he wants to help these students to get some money to lighten the load on their parents. The Preschool Child Care Center administered by the SAO is also another job source for several women in the Kampong Ai Hetae as babysitting teachers. Interestingly, even though several positions hired by the SAO seems to be only temporary jobs based on yearly contracts, there are still some opportunities for the SAO employees to gain more security in their jobs since there are some national policies supporting human resource development for local administration units like the SAO. Therefore, babysitting teachers have a chance to take an examination to be appointed as SAO permanent officials. Also some babysitting teachers who have not yet received a bachelor’s degree can have the opportunity to get scholarships from the SAO to pursue a degree in early childhood education.

Whether or not an individual is hired as a state employee, especially in a permanent position, depends on their relationship with formal community leaders or state authorities at district level. Bae Ramzi, a territory defense volunteer of the Padae Kuwing Marah district mentioned earlier, first secured his job seventeen years ago because his relative, who is a former Ai Hetae subdistrict head, gave it to him. His relative had been in this position before, but later on was appointed to be the Ai Hetae subdistrict head, so he had to quit the defense volunteer job. While working as a defense volunteer, Bae Ramzi established a relationship with high rank officers in the Padae Kuwing Marah District Office, and this helped him to be appointed as a head of the district TDV and a driver for the district chief officer. The connection has also helped his wife, Kah Haniya, to get hired for several governmental projects continually. While other women always lost their jobs when the short-term development projects they were
hired for finished, his wife has been able to get a new job every time when a new project came even during the period when these job positions are rare.

After coming back from Malaysia with Bae Ramzi, Kah Haniya opened a small tea shop selling coffee, tea, *nasi grabu* (rice salad), and sweetmeat in Kampong Ai Hetae. She started to work for government agencies in 2004 with the *Krong Karn 4,500 Baht* where she and eight other female employees in the village were assigned to be assistants at the Kampong Ai Hetae Subdistrict Health Center. After the government wanted to improve the efficiency of the project, its budget and hiring were reduced. Kah Haniya was one of the few former employees selected to continue working at the Kampong Ai Hetae Sub-district Health Center. Also, last year she got funding from *Krog Karn Thai Khem Khaeng* (Strong Thailand Project) which started in 2009 to stimulate Thailand’s economy so that she could be trained in traditional Thai massage at the Ministry of Health in Bangkok. Now Kah Haniya has been working as a traditional Thai medical doctor assistant at the subdistrict Health Center. Her jobs are not only providing massage to patients, but also assisting the staff at the Health Center in general affairs. Kah Haniya has also worked as a village health volunteer.

Similarly, Bae Zaki, a 63 year old man, through the connection he had with the authorities provided him with a secure job that could even be transferred to his son later. Because Bae Zaki’s wife is a daughter of a former Ai Hetae subdistrict head, he had access to a position as a territory defense volunteer around 25 years ago. During that time he worked as a driver for the assistant district chief officer, the head of Padae Kuwing Marah minor district (at that time Padae Kuwing Marah hadn’t yet been upgraded to a district). A few years later he was introduced by the assistant district chief officer to apply for a job as an ambulance driver for Padae Kuwing Marah Hospital. There he could earn a higher salary and extra benefits. After his retirement from the hospital his position was inherited by his son. This can happen because Bae Zaki established a good connection with the authorities in the hospital. Although he had retired already, he still had connections with the state authorities of the district and this puts him be in the circle of the Kampong Ai Hetae leaders. With this kind of connection it was in some degree helping his son-in-law to get a job as a SAO garbage collector.

The ones who get permanent jobs as state employees usually can gain better economic status gradually. Kah Haniyah told me that in the past her family was very
poor, but today their lives are better because they both have jobs working for government agencies. So far they have bought a small rubber plot, and they are renovating their house which used to be small and old. They can also send their daughters to study higher education in Yala city. Like Bae Zaki’s family, the economic life of this family has been getting better because of a monthly income from working as a governmental employee. Bae Zaki has been able to buy a plot of land to plant rubber by using his retirement money. His daughter, whose husband works as a SAO dustman, said that she has been very poor because she has made a living only from making fermented fish and tapping a one acre rubber plot. However, she said, her life is getting better now because her husband has been starting to get 6,000 baht ($193) as a monthly income from the SAO.

Consumptions and Modern Lives

To comprehend the rural changes and modernity of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents, apart from examining the increasing role of non-farm activities, their consumption and modern lifestyle are another space to be explored. The better transportation, mainly from new roads starting few decades ago, and the development of other infrastructure, have made it easier for the residents to access consumer goods. The growth of commercial farming, especially the rubber economy, has been also the main factor enhancing consumption in the Kampong Ai Hetae and made their rural lives more connected to urbanity. However, this is not about extravagance. On the contrary, luxury goods such as cell phones, motorcycles, and pickup trucks actually are the investments in factors of production that help the residents catch up in the modern market economy in which they have been living and to maintain their benefits and returns from the system. This is not to mention that some expenses on consumption are for religious purposes. The increase in consumption and modern lives also enhances the economy of the Kampong Ai Hetae in some ways.

The Kampong Ai Hetae still looks like a typical village in a rural setting. Most houses are still wooden or half cement-half wooden built in traditional style. The crowded settlement area is still surrounded by paddy fields, orchards, and rubber plots. However, the modern lifestyle has become prominent for the residents’ daily life.
already. Their uses of basic appliances—which are now a television, washing machine, gas stove, refrigerator, microwave, and even a satellite dish—are not different from the middle class. At the same time, cell phones seem to be normal for them, even for many elders in the age classes of the late 50s, 60s, and above. Saad, a 60 year old man, always makes a phone call from his cell phone at night to check with his friends in a subdistrict nearby if it is raining tonight there, since his rubber plot is there. If it is raining there, then he can know if he should go to tap rubber the next morning or not since the rubber trees cannot be tapped if the trunks are wet. Also when people in my host family want to sell rubber cup lumps after picking them, they call thao kae from the hill to send a worker with a motorcycle to bring the rubber back to the thao kae’s station. Two cell phone shops in Selasa market enjoy a good business. This is not to mention the use of cell phones among the young which has become normal, including the use of smartphones by the young who get monthly salary from working outside the agricultural sector. Also several households have desktop and notebook computers.

A motorcycle is a basic necessity for everyone to go to their farms, and to go to other places such as markets and hospital. In one household, there can be motorcycles for everyone, even children in school. Some high school students drive their personal motorcycles commuting to school in the town of Yala or nearby districts. Also unlike previously pickup trucks or sedans are now common for the Kampong Ai Hetae residents. Even though residents who own trucks or cars are usually thao kae, formal local leaders, the SAO executive chief or members, permanent government staff, and religious leaders who are in better economic status than ordinary people, it is not too difficult anymore for an ordinary household to buy a car or pick-up truck, especially the used ones through a loan from commercial banks.

Fashion and beauty among women is another phenomenon reflecting the association of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents and outside world through their consumption. One late afternoon, I was hanging out with Yasmine, the head of the Village Health Volunteer, at her house. Her niece in her early 20s, who just came back from work as a Territory Defense Volunteer at the district office, joined the conversation with us for a while before turning to be busy with the catalogs of cosmetic and other items to deliver to someone. I realized that she has an extra job in the direct sale of cosmetics. Since she loves fashion, and always dresses up and puts on make up
beautifully, and always meets with many people during her work at the district office, it is easy for her to do direct sale for Mistine and Amway, which are national and international direct sale companies respectively. Her business has been going well. She can sell both cosmetics at a cheap price of Mistine to female villagers and sell the more expensive ones of Amway to her colleagues and the wealthier people in the village.

Costume is another thing the residents pay much money for, especially during religious festivals like *hari raya* when everyone has to buy new costumes: new dress, hijab or headscarf, and shoes for woman, and new shirts and sarongs for men. Even during regular days they invest in new costumes regularly because each one has to attend feasts in and outside the village often to maintain their social relationships. Some kinds of sarong for woman imported from Indonesia are so expensive for me because it is around 1,000-1,200 baht or $34-37 each, while the regular ones are around 150-180 baht or around $5-6 only. Most women in the Kampong Ai Hetae buy two or three of this kind of sarong each a year. They don’t have to pay all at once to the seller who is from a nearby village, but they can pay by installments monthly such as with 100-200 baht. Although everyone knows that buying things this way they have to pay more than buying with cash at once, most of them are willing to pay more because they don’t want to pay the whole amount of money at one time. Apart from sarongs from Indonesia, there are other goods they buy in the same way, especially jewelry like ruby and other gems produced into some kinds of ornaments like rings, bracelets, and necklaces. This is except for gold which they always buy from gold shops in Yala town. Therefore, some women in the Kampong Ai Hetae can make a living through selling things by installment. Working on headscarves is a good additional job for some. Najidah, a religious teacher, can make a living on cutting out hija. She orders a lot of colorful fabric to cut and then customers can pick the color and style they prefer. Hijabs from her shop are beautiful and some are decorated with imitation sparkling jewelry. Najidah has many customers, even from subdistricts or districts nearby.

Their consumption and lifestyle are not that much different from those of the middle class living in cities as can be seen through health issues. When they get sick and if it is not too serious, then they are inclined to go to clinics which are prevalent in Yala town or even go to a private hospital instead of a state hospital. In the latter they don’t have to pay anything according to the Universal Health Care Policy. If they are
admitted in a state hospital, then a private room is an important concern for several of them even though they have to pay for the special room. In addition, some villagers are willing to and able to pay for around 5,000 baht or around $150 for their eye glasses. Also some paid 3,000-4,000 baht or $100-130 for vitamins and food supplements each time.

Shopping is another important issue for the residents. Every time when travelling close to the town of Pattani to attend magae puloh (feasts) or to visit patients at the provincial hospital, the residents always come in a group crowed in the back of someone’s pickup truck. One thing they usually do while travelling is to stop by Big C Pattani (the biggest supermarket, which is a branch of a large national level retail company in the southernmost region), to shop. Another popular shopping activity is the tour the Aran which is a district of Aranyapradesh, Parjeenburi province, the border of Thailand and Cambodia. Although many people in southernmost Thailand have some experience taking tours to visit some shopping places and tourist attractions in other regions, including visiting Aranyapradesh for a big shopping, which is a part of field study trips popularly held by several state agencies on their security or development projects. Several of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have still been willing to pay to attend the private tours held yearly by local tour companies.

One day in April 2011, the big air conditioned coach came into a small road of the village to drop off a group of the residents coming back from a 5-day tour to Aranyapradesh. The bus stopped in front of Inas’s house adjacent to my host family’s house. Inas and her husband were among the coordinators of the tour. She sold the seats for the tour at 4,000 baht ($135) each to the Kampong Ai Hetae residents as well as her friends or relatives in other villages. If they can hit the target of the sale, then the reward she gets is free seats for the tour for herself, husband, and four children. On that day a lot of stuff was moved from the bus bought by the around 25 tourists of the Kampong Ai Hetae. Other residents who didn’t attend the tour gradually gathered around Inas’s house to see the tourists back home. The tourists dressed in beautiful and modern style which they seldom do in their daily life. For middle age women most of them wore pants and the teenagers wore tight pants, waistcoats, and sunglasses. The goods they bought from Aranyapradesh mostly are imitation brand name clothes, purses, jeans, and wallets as well as electrical appliances. The goods these tourists
bought were not only for themselves but also based on the shopping lists ordered by their relatives or friends who didn’t have a chance to go with the tour.

With more expenses and more relevance to the modern economy, it means more budget management that they have to do. **Share** is an informal and popular way for ordinary people in Thailand to get a large sum of loan. Doing **share** means people get in a group together and do monthly or fortnightly payments to the group equal to the number of group members and how much each one has to pay each time depending on the agreement of the group. For example, for the group with 20 members they agree to pay 2,000 baht a month, which they have to pay for 20 months or 20 times. Every month the money collected from everyone is placed in a closed auctioned by the group members, and the one who proposes to give the most interest will get the money of the month, which from the example is 40,000 baht. For the interest, for example, if the winner proposes to pay for interest 200 baht, then from next month on she/he has to pay 2,200 baht which includes the 200 baht interest and he/she will not again get the turn to do the auction but have to continue paying money and interest back to the group every month until the end or the week twenty. Then for the next month the members who win the auction will get 40,200 baht and at the same time from the next month on he/she has to pay the interest promised.

Generally, because **share** has interest, it can be a good way to invest money for the those who are not in urgent need of using money and can wait to be the last person to get money with a high amount of interest paid by everyone. **Share** is usually run among people who are relatives or close friends, and, importantly, they have to trust each other. Especially a **share** leader must be a trustworthy person and have enough ability to solve the problem in case some members don’t pay the monthly payment or don’t pay on time. However, since interest is prohibited in Islam, so **share** in the Kampong Ai Hetae doesn’t have interest and an auction but operates by drawing lots. Therefore, the **share** here is the only way to gain a loan or a large amount of money because it is hard for them to get a regular loan from other formal financial sources.

**Share** groups in the Kampong Ai Hetae are mostly run by women. One monthly **Share** group that several of my friends joined has 24 shares with 5,000 baht or $166 each. Therefore, the winner of the lot drawing of the month will get 120,000 baht or
$4,000. However, for someone who is able to afford two shares, they have to pay 10,000 baht or $332 a month to the group. Others who are not able to pay even for one share a month have to join together with 3-4 persons contributing one share. Money obtained from the Chae is usually used for some important business, not for daily consumption. When Kah Nada received 28,750 baht ($927) from 25% of the share she invested it with two other relatives, and she used it as the wage for a worker for her house that she was enlarging. Similarly, when Wahbiyah won the drawn lots for two shares and then received 240,000 baht or $8,000, she and her husband spent the money to buy a piece of land at her home village in another district.

Interestingly, Wahbiyah, a 36 year old mother of two sons, is well known for having more money than many residents from her investments, even though she and her husband don’t have any plots of rubber to tap. Apart from income from her husband who occasionally works in a small construction business and has a salary for being a deputy village head, the family can gain good income from investments which can happen because of share. By attending share, Wahbiyah and her husband can gain a large loan and then they lend it to some thao kae or rubber middlemen and also cooperatively invest with a friend to receive a rubber plot mortgage from some residents. The mortgagers have to give them money as interest monthly until they return the principal. However, because interest is prohibited in Islam, the interest was called ‘the share of profit’ which usually means half of the income from the rubber the mortgagers get each time when selling.

As mentioned before, the leader of the share must be a reliable person. The one I knew is a wife of the Village Satu head. She is well known among government agencies since she has assisted them to run several projects in the village. Another one is running her business with her husband as thao kae in the rubber business. Also members of a share group must be reliable persons by having regular income and a good history of not cheating on others. However, sometimes there are problems, especially when a share leader doesn’t have enough financial self-discipline and brings share money to use for his/her own business. Sometimes the one who won the draw doesn’t get money on time and may have to press the claim several times to get it from the share leader. Apart from the problem from share, the disaffection on money also happens in the case of the guarantee on buying some expensive materials especially cars, pickup trucks, or
motorcycles by installments. The problem happens when the buyers stop making monthly payments to the financial sources and then the guarantees are forced by law to pay it for the buyers.

Another way to get money when in need is the mortgage on rubber plots. In so doing, rubber plot owners sign a contract with creditors, who are also the Kampong Ai Hetae residents, and get a large sum of money, mainly for 200,000 baht ($6,450) and above from creditors. After that debtors have to give 50% of their income to creditors every time when they sell rubber cup lumps to the thao kae or rubber middlemen. Since rubber middlemen all live in the village, the creditors can check the receipt from the middlemen concerning how much money their debtors get each time in selling. Interestingly the rubber plot mortgage is usually only for the ones who are in trouble or in urgent need of money. If they are not in deep trouble, then no one wants to use this resource. This is because the share of profit, according to the religious prohibition on interest, seems to be very high and never ends until the debtors are able to pay all of the principal. By the way, in some case creditors may be at a disadvantage if debtors avoid paying their `share of profit.’

**Religious Revitalization**

The Kampong Ai Hetae is a Muslim village and the dynamic of religious lives of the residents has been closely related to the expansion of the modern market economy which is the main factor drawing them to be part of the global Islamic community and Islamic revitalization.

From a few decades ago Thailand’s southernmost region has become a contesting and conflict area between traditional Islam and reformist Islam. For the traditional one, the intermingling of local Malay practices and beliefs existing before the arrival of Islam with normative Islam is acceptable. For reformist Islam, which is a part of the global religious revival of Islam along the path of puritan reform beginning in the middle of the 1970s, it has called for the abandoning of the traditional Malay beliefs and practices from Islam to maintain religious puritanical interpretations and practices. The revival resulted in rifts within local Islam which even caused theological splits within families. The traditional Malay Muslims have been resisting puritanization, viewing it
as a threat to their culture and the maintenance of their ethnic identity. At the same time
the reformists have never stopped to work on their religious mission to purify Islam.

Although presently the traditionalists are more dominant than the reformists, it is
clear that religious piety in Thailand’s southernmost region, both in the urban and rural
areas including in the Kampong Ai Hetae, has been greater than ever before. This is
reflected in the increased use of Arabic religious terminology, Arabicized attire wearing
by males, the hijab donning by woman, and the segregation between the sexes as well
as the various kinds of religious classes for people from all walks of life (Yusuf 2007:
9-13).

**Becoming a Pious Muslim Community**

Amid the dynamics of Islam in the southernmost region, the Kampong Ai Hetae
today is a Muslim community, which seems to be pious, vigorous, and active, just like
other Muslim communities elsewhere in the region. Most of the Kampong Ai Hetae
residents strictly practice the Five Pillars of Islam. The scene in one afternoon when my
host mother and her close friend prayed at the paddy field while we were harvesting rice
made me realize how very much the prayer, which is one of the Five Pillars, really
means to them (Illustration 6.3). Although the paddy field was so muddy and it was not
convenient at all, they both tried so hard to pray properly by cleaning their bodies from
natural ponds at the corner of paddy field. They prepared a praying carpet and *talakong*,
a female praying dress, brought with them from home before riding their motorcycle for
ten kilometers to my host mother’s paddy field located in a nearby subdistrict.

Illustration 6.3 Ibu, my host mother is praying in the paddy field.
Apart from strictly following the Five Pillars of Islam, being a pious Muslim community means religion, social life, and everyday life are all three integrated. The daily life of the Kampong Ai Hetae’s residents is always about activities to maintain and enrich Islam, for example holding fund raising activities to renovate a mosque or volunteering for a morality training camp held for young students. In the month of the birthday of the prophet Muhammad, called mawlid, which occurs in Rabi’ al-awwal or the third month in the Islamic calendar, almost every household makes merit by making several kinds of food and inviting people from the mosques and pondok students to come to pray at home to cerebrate the prophet Muhammad’s birthday. Then the host gives money to everyone who comes and to the Imam or toh kuru (religious teacher) who leads the prayer and then everyone eats foods together. This celebration has been happening from home to home all month long. Women are very busy during this month rotating the cooking for their relatives or neighbors. The schedules of the imam and pondok’s toh kuru are full with invitations from each household to lead the prayer. This is the same as during the month of Ramadan when the Kampong Ai Hetae residents are enthusiastically and actively engaged in religious activities. Before breaking the fast, men bring food from their homes to the mosques for the communal fast breaking. Every night both men and women get together at the mosques for tarawih, the extra congregational prayers at night in the month of Ramadan, and listen to religious lectures. For many of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents, Ramadan is a holy month so they should try to read and recite the Koran as much as possible.

Today in the Kampong Ai Hetae there are two mosques and three barasoh, which are smaller places for daily prayers but not for the Friday prayer obligated for male Muslims, including two traditional pondoks, and one Islamic private school as well as two tadeeka schools teaching basic religion and Malay language for children. The Kampong Ai Hetae is also famous for having several reading classes of the Koran and the classes on canon interpretation and explanation or kitab held regularly in several houses including at toh kuru’s houses. The Kampong Ai Hetae women have paid a lot of attention to studying religion. It is not uncommon at all to see housewives gathering to hold religious classes. One class is big with around 100 women attending. Some other classes have around 10 to 40 people attending. The biggest class is the kitab class, taught by Najidah, the only female toh kuru in the Kampong Ai Hetae. It is a class
emphasizing the interpretation and explanation on Islamic canon. The class is held every Friday, a Muslim weekly holiday, from 6:30-8:00 am at Najidah’s house. The people attending are not only from Kampong Ai Hetae, but also from the villages or subdistricts nearby. At her house apart from the main room where she taught other areas of her house were full of attendees. Najidah taught via a loud-speaker so that all people attending could hear her teaching even though some of them couldn’t see her face because the main room was not big enough for everyone. Najidah divided her teaching into three parts with three different textbooks written in Malay. Most people attending have their own textbooks and brought them to the class. The first part, which takes around one hour, was about faith in Allah. The second and the third parts took around 15 minutes each. The second one was about the proper practicing of Islam, such as how to do prayer correctly. The last part is about morality. Najidah told me that this pattern has been used every week with different contents.

Other smaller classes can be either the classes on the Koran reading or on kitab. For some classes the members invite toh kuru from other villages to teach. For other classes the members teach to each other by themselves with the ones who know more on the Koran reading teach the others who know less. Some of the Koran reading classes are rotated to be held among different houses week by week called Koran share. Actually “share” is the English transliteration which Thais use to call an informal mutual lending circle popular in Thailand as the way for people to get a large sum of money or loan. Representing the nature of rotating and circle, the word share has been used to call the rotating Koran classes.

It is normal among the Kampong Ai Hetae women that one person usually attends more than one religious classes. Mah Husna, a 63 year old woman who is a sister-in-law of my host father, attends several religious classes regularly. Her class schedule of the week is shown in the table 6.1.
Table 6.1. Mah Husna’s Religious Class Schedule in a Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Religious Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>- <em>Kitab</em> class taught by Najidah (in early morning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The <em>Koran</em> reading class at a toh kuru’s house in an adjacent subdistrict (in late morning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>No class (but hosting the <em>Koran</em> reading class at home for 12-15 women including her daughter to study with <em>toh kuru</em> from an adjacent subdistrict)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td><em>Kitab</em> class (the lecture by a famous <em>ustaz</em> who has his own religious radio program) at a <em>pondok</em> in Panarae district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td><em>Kitab</em> class at an adjacent subdistrict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>No class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td><em>Kitab</em> class (the lecture by a famous <em>ustaz</em> from outside) at the mosque in Kampong Ai Hetae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Rotated <em>Koran</em> reading class (<em>Share Koran</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These religious classes are the channels, especially for female elders, who didn’t get a chance to study religion before. I saw some elders in their late 50s and 60s or so just starting learning to memorize Arabic alphabet, which is the very beginning stage to learn how to read the Koran, same as the lesson for kindergarten or first grade students in *tadeeka* class (Illustration 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, and 6.7). The classes also provide the chance for them to better understand religious doctrine.
Middle age women who are now in their 30s to 40s are the majority of attendances of these classes. These women mostly had a chance to study religion before when they were young. Most of them attended pondok, a traditional religious school, after finishing elementary school, the latter mandatory by law. A few years after that most of them left the pondok to get married. Only some of them could finish junior high school and very rarely finish high school from Islamic private schools, which means they had more years in studying religion. After getting married and then having to raise children, they didn’t have time to study religion at all until their kids grew up, so they were able to renew their religious study again by taking these classes.

For people of the younger generation, who mostly are children of these middle age women, after completing elementary school then several of them continue studying in the Islamic private school for their secondary level which provides both religious and regular classes. There is one Islamic private school in the Padae Kuwing Marah district.
and others in nearby districts as well as in Yala city. For these young people they don’t need to study informal classes held in the Kampong Ai Hetae because they get enough religious education from schools. However, when they were young they mostly took the night classes held at toh kuru’s houses for extra learning on Koran reading apart from the classes they take regularly during the weekend from the tadeeka school.

Most of men in Kampong Ai Hetae, especially the ones in their late 20s or 30s and older, have experience in living and learning in a pondok for some years, which can be up to 10 years, before getting married. Even until now many of young men who are now less than mid 20s, still prefer to study and live in the pondok after graduating from elementary schools. Therefore, in the Kampong Ai Hetae female students studying in Islamic private schools outnumber male students. Generally, men in their daily lives they learn religion from religious lectures at mosques. Sometimes well-known ustazs come to give lectures apart from the regular lectures by imams. However, for many male residents, they have been learning more on religion by attending Dakwah’s activities. Dakwah is a religious activity group working as missionaries that originated in South Asia. It has been a part of the broader Islamic reformist trend and has extended noticeably since the 1980s into Thailand’s southernmost region. Since then adherents have regularly travelled through Muslim villages to approach many households in the rural area preaching people for more understanding of Islam doctrine. Dakwah doesn’t advocate an institutionalized track of formal education, so religious lessons are conducted through missionary activities (Liow 2009: 165-166).

By joining Dakwah’s missionary activities one gets the chance to learn religious lessons and to join discussions with leaders of the movement who mostly have been educated in Pakistan. They also have to discipline and practice themselves as a perfect Muslim during Dakwah pilgrimages. It has been widely practiced that Dakwah members have to leave their homes for pilgrimage or missionary work at least three days a month. The longest trip is four months, the trip to foreign countries. However, several Dakwah adherents in the Kampong Ai Hetae don’t follow the course seriously, mainly because they don’t have enough money or time to do so. This is not to mention several of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents who don’t agree with the Dakwah movement, which is the case elsewhere in southernmost Thailand as well. Liow (ibid)
pointed out that the Dawkah movement has introduced tension within Muslim communities. Since the Dakwah movement has been encouraging the local communities to turn away from their ancient cultural traditions, the movement has been viewed with suspicion by traditionalist Muslims, especially the senior religious teachers and imam or toh kuru in pondoks. Also Dakwah people have been questioned by another trend of Islamic reformism, the Wahhabis, on its doctrinal authenticity and the purity of the movement.

The main attribute of the dynamics of Islam in southernmost Thailand is the purification and the prioritization of Islam over local beliefs and rituals or Malay culture that are considered not to be in line with Islam. Even though the reformist Islam favoring the purification has been faced with some limitations to extend their principles and practices and have to be localized to some degree, the trend has been making Muslim communities elsewhere in southernmost Thailand to be more pious and more pure. However, the purification and the prioritization of Islam are far from complete. Anusorn Unno (2010) found that the beliefs in spirits considered non-Islamic are still vibrantly held and practiced in Gu Ba, a village in Yala province. There are at least nine Bor Mors, ritual or spirit specialists performing their services regularly in Gu Ba. Some perform exorcism and some cure diseases with sacred power. Unno points out how Gu Ba residents, who perceive themselves as Malay descendants, employed a variety of techniques to modify their Malay culture and to keep their Malay world alive in the wake of Islamic intensification. Interestingly, one important technique Gu Ba residents employed is Islamization, which is to place Malay practices under the order or the supervision of Islam. Examples of this are chanting the Koran to expel the spirits out of possessed bodies and crediting Allah for giving special ability or power to bor mor (traditional healers)

The Islamization of local beliefs and rituals has also happened in the Kampong Ai Hetae, where the beliefs in spirits has been common and widespread. Some spirits are believed by the residents to be protectors of their lives. My host family used to live in the hill area of Village Tiga, where their rubber plots and orchards have been located. The family believes that there is Toh Tiga, an ancestor spirit, taking care of the lives of the people who used to live there. When some unfortunate incidents happen with family
members, it means that they were remiss in the worship of Toh Tiga. I witnessed this when Muskan, a daughter in law of my host family had a surgery to remove a tumor from her uterus at Yala Center Hospital. A few hours after the six hours of surgery finished, she bleed continually and had to be brought from a common patient room back to the operation room again. At that time we were so worried because Kah Muskan seemed to be in a serious condition. While waiting in front of the operation room, Kah Mariyah, an eldest daughter of my host family, grumbled several times that thing turned out to be serious and difficult because Kah Muskan didn’t inform Toh Tiga that she was going to have a surgery. What Kah Mariyah could do at that time was to send regards to Toh Tiga and then recommended to Ibu, my host mother, to make offering to Toh Tiga right away after arriving home.

The Kampong Ai Hetae residents also rely a great deal on bor mor, traditional healers who have special power from spirits. When they get sick or feel uncomfortable or unfortunate, then they go to meet bor mor either the ones in the village or outside the village since each bor mor has different specializations. Interestingly, while the source of sacred power and ability of each bor mor is from the spirits, each bor mor has to connect themselves to Islam to maintain their sacred power and ability. Apart from the normal practices, such as chanting some part of the Koran while curing people, or crediting Allah for giving them special power and ability, another important thing is to show people that they are good Muslims, or at least have been trying hard to be good Muslims.

Malak, a female bor mor from another district who specialized in curing rhinitis and sinus by using magic spell and smoke, came to stay at my host family’s house for several days and used the house as a station to cure the Kampong Ai Hetae residents. During her stay, she attended religious classes in the Kampong Ai Hetae, especially the largest one taught by Najidah, which is the practice expected for pious Muslims. By doing so, it helped the Kampong Ai Hetae women feel easier to make the decision to receive service from Malak. This is because being a bor mor and at the same time being a pious Muslim helped Malak to be more reliable even though most of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents didn’t know her before.

This case of a female medium carrying the spirit of a bor mor is another example of Islamization of local beliefs and rituals. During September 2011, three
persons in my host family became sick and some seriously ill. My host father, who underwent intestinal surgery several months ago, had pain in his stomach again. At the same time, Kah Muskan, a daughter in law, was being hospitalized to be operated for tumors in her uterus. Also Kah Mariyah, the daughter, got a migraine headache and vomited. At that time they heard the news about the new female medium carrying the spirit of a Malaysian bor mor. Then we went to her house. The medium’s house is a very small one newly built from bamboo. It is located far away in the back of the village center. When we arrived there were several women, teenagers, and children present. The female medium possessed by a Malasian bor mor spirit cured my host father by touching his back and chanting while carrying a rosary. After that she talked to Kak Mariyah about her symptoms. It is important to note that the medium spoke central Malay, not local Malay, which is used in the Kampong Ai Hetae. This is because the bor mor (the spirit) is from Malaysia. While the conversation was going on, azan, the Islamic chants calling for prayer, came from a mosque nearby. Then the medium told us that we should leave and come back again tomorrow because the bor mor (the spirit) already left for Mecca in Saudi Arabia to pray. Then her job as a medium finished and she switched back to speak local Malay and came back to her normal life by going to the kitchen to prepare lunch for her family.

I learnt later on that this medium is very poor. She and her husband have made a living by fishing and making fermented fish to sell. She had hardly taken religious classes before. Since she was young, she has been often possessed by ghosts or spirits. However, it was just recently that she has been possessed permanently by the spirit who is the bor mor from Malaysia. Islamization of local belief in spirits is apparent. Ibu, my host mother, told me that these spirits gain sacred power from studying the Koran all the time. With that power Ibu said that these spirits are able to travel to Mecca just by closing their eyes and they don’t have to eat anything to survive.

It has been widely believed that the ones chosen by the spirit of a famous bor mor as their mediums must be a good person strictly following Islamic practices. In the case of the female medium just mentioned, it is necessary for her to be proved by Ba Bor Muzhir, a respected imam and pondok owner in the Kampong Ai Hetae, that she is a real medium. Since the female medium’s house is close to Ba Bor Muzhir’s pondok, so it seems to be his responsibility to make sure that she is not just a fraud. It is said
that after Ba Bor Muzhir had observed the medium for a while, he guaranteed that she is a real one. Ba Bor Muzhir also pointed out that the sacred power through the medium was limited before the Hari Raya Aidilfirti in late August of that year, but after that the power passed through her should increase. Some of my closed friend confirmed that Ba Bor Muzhir’s statement was true because since the Hari Raya the medium had cured many people successfully and had forecasted several people’s lives correctly. Since then there are not only the Kampong Ai Hetae residents coming to her, but also people from other subdistricts or districts. The medium was also advised by Ba Bor Muzhir to attend religious class taught by Najidah in every Friday morning, which should benefit the sacredness of being a medium.

Modernization, Market Economy, and Islamization

Islam that is made vivid and embedded throughout the course of the Kampong Ai Hetae resident’s lives doesn’t existed from the past. On the contrary, in the past Islam in the Kampong Ai Hetae was something vague and distant. This is the same as many communities in southernmost Thailand. In Gu Ba, studied by Anusorn Unno (2010: 100-101), Islam was laxly practiced in the past. At that time not many local residents performed prayer five times a day and the mosques were poorly attended. Many residents didn’t fast strictly during the month of Ramadan. There were not any kinds of religious classes and there was no religious clothing including the hijab for women. There were a variety of activities such as gambling and alcohol drinking. Such religious laxity and sinful activities are explained by several local residents themselves as their ignorance of Islam. For them, the residents and the religious leaders of that period had little and only vague knowledge about Islam not really knowing what is right or wrong, or what is allowed or not allowed, in Islam.

These conditions were the same in the Kampong Ai Hetae in the past. Most of the Kampong Ai Hetae elders, who are 60s of age years old or more had never been to religious schools before because there was no pondok in the Kampong Ai Hetae and nearby areas at that time. Therefore, several of them have just started to learn how to read the Koran and religious canon not many years ago from various informal classes mentioned earlier, especially the basic Koran classes for female elders held regularly at night and taught by some younger female residents who have more knowledge. While
today every woman in the Kampong Ai Hetae wears the hijab and even girls of four or five years of age practice to wear the hijab, around 25-30 years ago hijab wearing was not required in the Kampong Ai Hetae. It was not wrong for women to not wear the hijab, or they could wear just a small piece of cloth covering only some part of their head. It didn’t have to be a big hijab covering the whole shoulder as well as elbows like today. This is not to mention face covering, which has been practiced more recently by highly religious educated women, far beyond the imagination of women 20-30 years ago. This is the same as what Ayah, my host father, told me about the fun life in the past of the Kampong Ai Hetae. He said that there were usually entertainment activities held at the Baroh Ai Hetae such as nora (southern Thai traditional dancing), music, and importantly gambling. Also Buddhist Thais could come to join these entertainments and even bring liquor to drink at the Baroh Ai Hetae or even in the Kampong Ai Hetae. The things like this are definitely impossible in this area today.

In Gu Ba, according to Unno, the state of religious laxity and the vague and even ignorance of Islam started to change three decades ago because of the return of the religious leader from religious study in Saudi Arabia who then boosted and strengthened Islam in Gu Ba as well as the arrival of reformist trend in Islam, both Wahabism and Dakwah, which both focusing on the right practices of Islam. This trend also happened in the Kampong Ai Hetae as well even though to a lesser degree because there were no religious figures educated from the Middle East like in Gu Ba. One important factor that Unno pointed out and also happened in the Kampong Ai Hetae is the formal religious education among the young generation. They encouraged their families to observe religious duties and practice their lives according to right Islam. However, while clearly pointing out dynamic and the changes within the religious sphere and religious movement, Unno hasn’t yet pointed out how these dynamics and changes in Islam in Gu Ba have been related to other contexts and especially economic change and modernization.

The dynamics and changes of Islam in the Malay Muslim communities in southernmost Thailand, which means to be more intensive, embedded, and pious, including in the Kampong Ai Hetae have coincided with the expansion of the market economy and modernization. The improvement in transportations has been the main
factor that has made religious education possible for many local people. Because of the more convenient and more accessible transportation, ordinary villagers then started to be able send their children to study in reputable pondoks, which are located in other districts or provinces. These pondoks are mostly taught by famous ba bor or toh kuru educated from the Middle Eastern countries. Then, some students graduating from these pondoks came back to teach religion in their home villages. Without the improvements in transportation Ba Bor Mazhir as well as Najidah, who are the main religious teachers in the Kampong Ai Hetae helping the residents get access to Islamic knowledge and canon, might not be able to have a chance to study at the famous pondok in Yarang district, which is far from the Kampong Ai Hetae, around 30 kilometers. Without the religious teachings by Ba Bor Mazhir and Najidah the Kampong Ai Hetae residents would be less enthusiastic and interested in religion.

Ba Bor Mazhire is not only an imam in the Kampong Ai Hetae, but he has also been running the pondok inherited from his father inlaw. Although his pondok is not a big one, it has established a deep relationship and long shared memory with many of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents. Since in the beginning when his father in law was invited by the imam in the Kampong Ai Hetae to found a pondok here, it was a magnet drawing people to move back to settle down in the surrounding area. This area used to be the center of the community before and after most residents moved out to live close to the main road. Several years later, when the pondok was established, then some people moved back to live around it. These residents have been called orkhae pondok or pondok people, which means people who live close to the pondok and frequently assist in its activities and attend evening religious classes regularly.

Many of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents, both men and women in their late 20s to early 30s, used to be students of this pondok. Just only eight years ago the class for woman was discontinued because it was too burdensome for Bar Bor Mazhir to manage. Today the pondok has around 40 male students, half of them are youth in the Kampong Ai Hetae and the rest are from other places. Along with studying religion with Ba Bor Mazhir some students are attending formal schools or take classes from the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education to get formal education certificates that they can’t obtain from studying in a pondok. At Ba Bor Mazhir’s pondok, after early morning prayer the students learn Arabic or Koran reading for around 1-2 hours. After that they
continue studying *kitab* which is about the story of the prophet, doctrine, religious regulations, faith to Allah, hell and heaven, and so on. After the noon prayer, they study *kitab* for one more hour. Then after evening prayer the students attend religious narration with villagers. Most students study in this pondok for around 5-6 years and then some may get married and make a living for their families while some may continue religious study at some bigger pondok where they have more religious textbooks and more *toh kuru* who are more highly educated than Ba Bor Mazhir.

Baboo Mazhir intends to remain in his pondok small. He doesn’t mind not getting financial support from the government except the salary of 2,000 baht ($65) for his imam position. In contrast to several other pondok and Islamic private schools, he doesn’t have any connections to access funding from Middle East countries because he had never studied abroad. He said to run a pondok doesn’t require much money because he and his family can make a living from rubber, and villagers regularly donate money for pondok activities. Also even though pondok is a religious boarding school, students have to take care of themselves for their textbooks, food, and other living equipment. For shelters for students there are simple small huts as in the past. Although sometimes the shelters need some restoration, pondok students and villages can voluntarily help to do so without using much money. However, sometimes it is necessary for him to find some funding to improve the pondok. Last year he required money to build new bathrooms. Finally, the Kampong Ai Hetae SAO provided some amount of money for him to do so, which he joked is because there are several SAO members and executive’s sons studying at his pondok.

It is important to note that Ba Bor Mazhir is not a highly educated religious teacher when compared to others who graduated abroad or from religious colleges or universities. However, Ba Bor Mazhir, as an ordinary rural person living in a remote area, obtained the best and highest religious education he was able to access at that time at the best and most famous pondok with a well educated religious teacher in his area. Thus Ba Bor Mazhir became the one who has been more knowledgeable in religion than other members in the Kampong Ai Hetae.

Through his teaching Ba Bor Mazhir is connecting the Kampong Ai Hetae ordinary residents including the marginalized with the wider Islamic world and knowledge. Interestingly, Ba Bor Mazhir’s pondok is a place where marginalized youths
who are poor, delinquent, and mostly drug addicts can get a chance to learn religion. Ba Bor Mazhir said these students are not welcome in other pondoks since they seem to be incorrigible. However, it is his intention to enhance and strengthen Islam by helping them turn over a new leaf in life and become good Muslims. This is the same as Najidah, a female religious toh kuru in the Kampong Ai Hetae who went to the same famous pondok with Ba Bor Mazhir. It has been 20 years already that she has taught several religious classes in the Kampong Ai Hetae and is now preparing to establish her own pondok in the Kampong Ai Hetae. Most who attend her classes are in their middle age and elders who didn’t have a chance to receive much religious education in a pondok or Islamic private schools before.

It is worth noting that modernization provided Ba Bor Mazhir and Najidah the chance to study in a reputed pondok far away from home, and later on they both started to play an important role urging the Kampong Ai Hetae residents to be a more intensive and pious Muslim community. Modernization, especially the improvements in transportation, was very important in facilitating these developments. That includes the modernization in term of the expansion of the market and cash economy that made it possible for Ba Bor Mazhir’s and Najidah’s parents to have enough money to support their religious education.

In the wider context the development of technologies in transportation and communication, which is one among several attributes of modernization relating to globalization, helps a lot to increase the connection of the Malay-Muslims in southernmost Thailand to the global Muslim community and especially the Arabic world. In the past, for most residents, the Arabic world meant only Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca of Saudi Arabia as the fifth pillar of Islam, a religious duty that only rarely were local people able to pursue. However, around 4-5 decades ago, because of the development of technologies in transportation and communication, the Arabic world has come closer to Malay Muslim lives in southernmost Thailand. Since then there have been more people pursuing religious education from Arabic countries. Also since then it has not been uncommon anymore to have religious teachers educated in Arabic countries working in pondoks and Islamic private schools in southernmost Thailand.
In addition, modernity in term of the expansion of the modern economy relating to capitalism has played an important role in intensifying and growing Islam in the Kampong Ai Hetae. There the more the market economy grows the more Islam blossoms. Living in the modern economy of capitalism doesn’t mean only a greater degree of production and investment, but also the payment in goods and services plus consumption. The growth of the market economy has allowed people to accumulate more cash and then they are able pay more for religious matters.

The pervasiveness of informal religious classes or religious study groups could not happen if the Kampong Ai Hetae residents didn’t have enough money to afford them. For both Koran reading classes and kitab classes, the members have to donate money for payment to the *toh kuru* each meeting. In the case of the weekly *Koran share*, the members have to rotate in being a host for the class at each other’s house. The host of the week must prepare food, snacks, and drinks for everyone. In one big Koran study group held weekly with more than 40 members, everyone has to pay 100 baht to share the expenses with the host who has to prepare a meal for everyone to eat together after the class. Also the host each week has to give some souvenirs to thank everyone attending.

The flourishing of the Dakwah in the Kampong Ai Hetae is possible only because people can afford to attend the activities. In the Kampong Ai Hetae most leaders of Dakwah are wealthy persons mostly running businesses in trading. For members of Dakwah, even though they are ordinary villagers, most of them are the ones with good economic status. This is because Dakwah requires time for pilgrimage, which means that during the pilgrimage they can’t work to make a living. Therefore, the adherents need to have enough surplus money in reserve for themselves and their families at home. Whether or not people are able to attend Dakwah activities always depends on their economic status. Importantly, most people in better economic status are usually the ones who can utilize and get along well with the expansion of the market economy.

Apart from the serious religious activities like study groups and pilgrimages, the intensifying and embeddedness of Islam in the daily lives of residents can be seen in the vivid and enthusiastic merrymaking and festivity of various religious occasions, especially *Hari Raya Aidilfitri* and *Hari Raya Aidiladha*. The rapid increasing degree of
celebrations like never before has been closely related to the growth of the market economy which facilitates the ability of people to spend money for these religious occasions.

It is not only the spending on new clothing for both Hari Raya Aidilfitri according to religious doctrine, the daily expenses during the month of Ramadan for each household are very high, particularly for food for the daily fast breaking which is supposed to be a time of festivity with many kinds of food and sweet on trays. Also during the last night of Ramadan, the Kampong Ai Hetae like other Muslim communities elsewhere in southernmost Thailand is full of the loud noise of fireworks to cerebrate the arrival of Hari Raya Aidilfitri. Many households invest several hundred baht or even a thousand baht on fireworks. In 2011 my host family spent around 1,000 baht ($32) on them. Someone estimated that for the community of Kampong Ai Hetae with around 300 households about 100,000 baht ($3,225) was spent for fireworks on that special night.

Also after finishing religious ceremony at mosques on Hari Raya Aidilfitri and Hari Raya Aidiladha, many people start to travel busily to visit relatives and friends living faraway. Some residents take their family members and relatives to travel to tourist attractions as part of the cerebration for both events of Hari Raya. Interestingly, in the past, the travelling as a part of Hari Raya celebrations was not vital and lively like today. Saad, a 63 year old man, told me that in the past not many people travelled around to visit relatives during the Hari Raya since at that time travelling was difficult with no convenient roads and transportation. Saad said today many people have their own cars or pick-up trucks, thus they can travel easily and they also have more money to travel.

Strictly speaking, these merrymakings and festivities on Hari Raya are not in accordance with religious doctrine. However, obviously these activities have been aroused by the great intensification in Islam for the Kampong Ai Hetae residents. No matter how well-educated Muslim scholars or intellectuals look down on these practices, for the Kampong Ai Hetae residents the merrymaking and festivities are part of their religious practices as Muslims. It is also important to emphasize that the residents’ ability to practice merrymaking and festivity are directly enhanced by
modernization and the growing market economy which allow them access to the outside world to gain more cash.

Embedded Islam and Economic and Political Structure in the Village

Being an Islamic community doesn’t mean only the members practicing and studying religion rigorously. Furthermore, religion in the community is not separated from other dimensions of their life. In the Kampong Ai Hetae religion is closely related to the political, economic, and social lives of residents. Islam has shaped the attributes of the modernizing Kampong Ai Hetae community in various ways and aspects.

The political and social structure of the Kampong Ai Hetae is related to religion because religious leaders are always in the circle of community leadership with no separation between religious leaders and political leaders. In the Kampong Ai Hetae family members or close relatives of religious leaders are usually formal community leaders. For example, one of the imams is an uncle of the SAO chief executive and his brother in law is the SAO vice president. Also, it is not uncommon for religious leaders to run in an election to be a village head or a member of the SAO. Once I heard that one imam was planning to run for an election to be a village head and no one felt that it was improper for religious leaders to get involved in elections or politics.

Religion is also an important source of power for formal community leaders as in the case of Dakwah, which does not only draw people from all walks of life to meet together to enrich Islam, but also is related to politics. In general, the elites of the Dakwah group at the national level are persons with very high economic status running big businesses like construction contractors and real estate investors. These elites also have some connections with the high ranking authorities of the Thai state. Therefore, Dakwah has cooperated with several Thai state agencies, especially the military holding activities in moral training camps to make the “misled persons,” who are drug addicts and who are accused of being insurgents or their sympathizers, to turn over a new life to become good members of the Thai nation state. In the Kampong Ai Hetae, most formal community leaders such as the SAO chief executive and the SAO deputy executive as well as village heads including some religious leaders have been a driving force of the Dakwah group at the district level, which connects them to Dakwah from other areas and Dakwah leaders in high ranks who have high economic, social, and
political status. The connections through *Dakwah* that ordinary villagers previously have never had in some degree helps increase opportunities in businesses for the Kampong Ai Hetae leaders and also helps increase their political and social charisma and status.

Economic status is also closely related to religious status. The Kampong Ai Hetae residents who are poor or economically marginalized are usually religiously marginalized. Imam or religious teachers in Kampong Ai Hetae are usually in good economic status. At least imams must own rubber plots and paddy fields to maintain their lives. If not, it will affect their authority and status as religious leaders. An imam who is struggling economically usually doesn’t have much time for religious duties and then people think that they are no longer appropriate for being a religious leader.

Bae Dawoud, a 62 year old man, had been the imam of Village Satu for several years. A few years ago he was dismissed from the position. Bae Dawoud is very diligent person. He and his wife always start the day in the very early morning to tap rubber at the hill area. They work on their own plot shortly and then continue to tap for one of my host family’s plots. Then they come back home before noon to take a bath, pray, and have lunch. During the paddy season, in the afternoon they go to the field to sow paddy, pull out rice sprouts, transplant sprouts, apply fertilizers, or harvest rice. In the late afternoon they and their monkeys travel on a motorcycle with a wheelbarrow to go collect coconuts from someone’s gardens to sell as a coconut middleman. This couple would not have been in this difficulty and would not have to work so hard if one of their daughters had not been shot dead a few years ago leaving them to care for three grandsons. The worst is that another of their daughters, whom they sent to school at the city of Hatyai and who is now working there always asks them for large amounts of money. With such difficulties, Bae Dawoud is so poor and has to struggle so hard for his family. This condition has prevented him from performing well as an imam. He was dismissed from being imam by Village Satu mosque committee.

In contrast the new Imam chosen has a very good economic status. Apart from owning several rubber plots, he and his wife also work as *saeh* or hajj service providers with a tour company taking people on the hajj pilgrimage in Mecca. *Saeh* works like a tour guide to take care of the tourists in every part of the process ranging from preparing the passport and visa documents to preparing shelters and making food for
their clients while they are in Saudi Arabia. The income of *saeh* depends on the number of customers they get. People working as *Saeh* are usually highly respected since they are the ones who help people get access to the hajj. *Saeh* has to be believable and trusted enough for customers to put their own lives in their hands during the 45 days of the trip for Hajj. *Saeh* are also well known persons since they know more people every year and consequently have opportunities to build strong relationships with their customers from living together during the long trip. It is not surprising when the new Imam’s daughter, who is a teacher at the Kampong Ai Hetae School, was married that the wedding ceremony was crowded. People had to be in line to wait for seats to eat even though the festivity was prepared very well. Also many authorities including soldiers, policemen, and district office staff attended the ceremony. This event for the wedding of the imam’s daughter demonstrates how high economic and political status are related for this new imam.

**Conclusion**

The strategies and adaptations for making a living through modern farming in the context of the growing modern market economy, ecological changes, impacts of development projects, and the conflict and unrest of the region cannot be considered separately from the whole picture of rural changes. According to the literature on rural changes and agrarian transformation, one of their main attributes in Southeast Asia is the increasing role of the non-farm sector. Another general attribute is about modern consumption and lifestyles. For rural Muslim communities Islamic intensification is yet another important aspect of change, and it is also closely related to the growing modern market economy.

During the past 1-2 decades the significance of non-farming occupations has been increasing greatly in the Kampong Ai Hetae which has been caused by insufficiency of farmland amidst the growth of the population. However, even with the decrease of farmland and difficulties in farming, agriculture has still been the source of income for many households in the Kampong Ai Hetae. The more the households have farmland, the more they gain various sources of income. This is a good foundation for them to invest in business, trading, or in education for their children. Importantly,
whether or not wage labor jobs and trading in the village can be flourishing, prosperous, and profitable depends on the conditions of the farming economy, especially rubber which is still the main hiring and cash generating sources for the community.

Under these change processes, the landless with low education cannot get jobs better than through wage labor, small trading in the village, or work in Thai restaurants in Malaysia. These jobs are insecure and for low pay without welfare. They provide no opportunity to accumulate money or capital. Even though state hiring, which has been rapidly increasing since 2004 as the state’s strategy to resolve the conflict and unrest provides employment opportunities for local residents, most positions are short-term with low pay. Moreover, only the ones who have some connection with formal community leaders or state officers at district level can find better and more secure jobs.

Another attribute of rural change is the more intensive consumption and modern life style. It is important to note that this is not only about the residents being lured by materialism and consumerism as believed by the Civil Society Sector. Seemingly luxurious goods like cell phones, motorcycles, and pickup trucks actually are investments in factors of production that help the residents operate in the modern market economy in which they have been living and maintain their benefits and returns. Also some expenses on consumption are for religious purpose related to the spiritual dimension of their life. The increase in consumption and modern lives also enhances the economy of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents by providing jobs in direct sale or installment sale for some. In addition, along with the necessity and the increase in consumption and modern lives, the informal system of loan providing has been established through social relations in the community. This helps the local residents, who usually don’t have access to formal financial institutions, to obtain loans to utilize on important matters such as renovating a house or expanding their trading and businesses.

Specifically in southernmost Thailand, rural change and agrarian transformation can’t be separated from the intensification of Islam. The growth of the modern market economy for which modern farming has been the main foundation promotes the religious intensification. The greater religious piety of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents in Islam is not primordial, but it has gradually increased from a prior laxity in religious practices and knowledge to the far more pious practices as a result of modernization and
the growth of the market economy. In general, the development of transportation and communication has connected people in southernmost Thailand with the global Islamic community and has provided local people access to Islamic education in countries of the Middle East. In the Kampong Ai Hetae since a few decades ago the expansion of the rubber market has facilitated the residents in gaining more cash and being able to send their children to study in the famous pondok. Later on these pondok students return to the community and become religious teachers thereby enhancing religion in the village and providing a chance for all residents including elders, poor, and marginalized greater access to Islam. Also, the growth of the market economy allows people to pay for religious activities like merit makings and holding various classes for religious study.

Islam is embedded in the daily life of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents. It is related to the economy in that most formal religious leaders such as the imam, mosque committees, and Dakwah leaders are expected to be in good economic status. Also Islam is related to many political and social attributes in the Kampong Ai Hetae community since most religious leaders are in the same circle of political leaders or formal community leaders. Besides, through the connection with Dakwah, a nationwide religious network, the political or formal community leaders in the Kampong Ai Hetae can utilize their religious connections to strengthen their political and social status and to gain more business opportunities and connections. With their higher economic and political status, formal community leaders are able to negotiate, initiate and make a decision on state development projects as pointed out in Chapter 3. Although many projects have proven to be ineffective with serious negative ecological impacts, still they provide personal benefits to the leaders if not to the community as a whole.
CHAPTER 7: ECONOMIC LIFE AND THE STRUGGLES THROUGH DEVELOPMENT, MARKET ECONOMY, AND UNREST

This chapter aims to conclude with the main points of the dissertation and look back to the related literature. In this chapter the politics of development in the southernmost region and the political process of ecological changes will be summarized and highlighted both at the wider level related to Thai political institutions, nation state ideology, and the Civil Society Sector (CSS), and at the local level related to the roles of formal community leaders in development projects and the perceptions of the residents toward the ecological changes. The chapter will also summarize the struggles and adaptations of farmers amid the dynamic growing market economy and ecological changes plus highlight the reason behind their unsustainable farming practices and use of natural resources. Also the inseparable relationships of the non-farm sector, modernity, material consumption, and the intensification of Islam will be summarized. Finally the chapter points out the failures of the existing development approaches which aim to stabilize national security in relation to nation state ideology. It will be recommended that development, which can bring well-being to the residents, must be development with the aim of enhancing the cultural and political lives of the residents.

Politics of Development amidst the Unrest

From the perspective of political ecology, an ecological change is a product of political processes closely related to various historical, political, and economic variables and power relations (Robbins 2004). Development has been one of the main factors in ecological changes. In southernmost Thailand, development which aims to improve the living conditions of the local Malay Muslims has long been the apparatus of the Thai state to try to resolve the political unrest of the region. Even though the Thai state has realized that the foundation of the unrest and violence in the southernmost region is an ethno-religious difference, it has believed that the resentment of the Malay Muslims toward the Thai state has been aroused by poverty. This is especially when the poor Malay Muslims in the southern region have compared their destitute living conditions with the comfortable lives of other people who share with them the same ethnicity and religion in the neighboring country of Malaysia. Therefore, development by the Thai
state—both the mainstream approach aimed at promoting the market economy and the alternative approach promoting the Sufficiency Economy—has aimed to stabilize the national security situation and also to promote the Thai nation state ideology.

For mainstream development, apart from the promotion of cash crop planting, especially rubber and oil palm, there are many projects on transforming the wetlands and on irrigation to improve supposed “useless or wasteland areas” to become areas for agriculture. Interestingly, most of these projects on wetlands and irrigation are Royal Projects. The unrest in the region has been a big challenge for the Thai nation state with the monarchy at its center. Through the Royal Projects, the Malay Muslims as people of a minority group with different ethnicity and religion have been transformed to be “true Thais” by being the King’s subjects through getting help and being developed by the projects under the King who is full of kindness, charisma, and intuition. At the same time, the Malay Muslims under the projects have been portrayed as uneducated, poor, and incapable of wisely using the surrounding natural resources to lift themselves out of poverty unless they get help from the projects.

The projects have never recognized the ecological value of the wetlands that they have transformed. They have caused several negative impacts such as acid soil, wild fire in dried wetlands, and changes in water flow. Even though later on these impacts have been recognized and a lot of effort and budget have been spent to solve the problems by doing experimental research, establishing model farms, and funding villagers to plant in acid soil areas, these solutions have never been successful during the past two decades. Nevertheless, the idea in transforming wetlands or rearranging the water flows of the wetlands has still been pursued actively by state agencies and has been implemented widely over wetland areas including the Baroh Ai Hetae.

During the past decade, alternative development approach have been adopted widely by Thai state agencies as well as the Royal Projects, and then it has become the mainstream alternative approach. However, the approach appears not to benefit the local residents as much as claimed by Thai state. Instead, the alternative development approach has been adopted mainly to justify and maintain the power of the establishment of the Thai state. The environmentalism as a part of the alternative approach which leads to wetland sanctuaries helps adjust the role of the monarchy to cover the mission for environmental protection. By doing so, only a pristine wetland
forest is valued while other parts of the wetland ecosystem are left out. At the same time, the Royal Philosophy on the Sufficiency Economy—focusing on self-sufficient subsistence and independence from the market economy—has worked to maintain the role and status of the monarchy and to counter the populist government in dealing with the resurrection of the unrest in the southernmost region since 2004. With the strength of the Thai monarchy and its network to promote the Sufficiency Economy has come the main objective of development projects for all government agencies in the southernmost region. However, the development projects under the Sufficiency Economy have hardly benefited villagers because most of them work only on the discourse level without having concrete outputs that can help improve villager production or help support them to gain better status in the commercial economy. Also to work to promote development based on the Sufficient Economy helps to justify the role of the army sent to stop the unrest and violence in the region, even amidst the demand from local people to gradually withdraw the troops as the way to build the peace process. This is not to mention that the development projects on the Sufficiency Economy by the army have caused serious impacts to the villagers in getting access to public land and its natural resources as in the case of enclosure by the MDU 99.

In addition, formal community leaders—village heads, subdistrict heads, and the SAO executives—have played important roles in development and this provides them with more access to state resources than ordinary residents and good opportunities for them to accumulate their economic and political power. Since the violence has made the southernmost region become a dangerous place, development projects by governmental agencies can be implemented only by assistance from formal community leaders. These leaders do not passively follow the orders from outside agencies, but usually propose, initiate, or give opinions on development projects. Moreover, the SAO has the rights by law to be able to decide and work on their own development projects with their budget. However, the development projects by the SAO have still carried the same flaws as most projects of outside state agencies. Even though there have usually been rumors on improper personal benefits from development projects gained by local leaders, which mostly involve the construction of infrastructure, the leaders as well as the residents sincerely believe that the construction of infrastructure is most useful for the
community. This persists in spite of the obvious ineffectiveness of many projects and their negative impacts on the ecological system.

As discussed above, political ecology is helpful in viewing ecological change caused by development as a political process in the context of ethno-religious conflict. However, the focus on matters like “What causes land degradation/ecological change?” as proposed in Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) is not enough. Here there are political processes happening on the ground among various actors at the community level. It is necessary to observe natural resource struggles playing out in the landscape to see who has power and who resists it, even at the household level or as a part of gender struggles. In the Kampong Ai Hetae, even though formal community leaders play important roles in implementing and initiating development projects affecting ecosystems and gain some personal benefit from these projects, there have hardly been any serious conflicts or struggle over natural resources directly apart from gossip and rumors. The struggles and conflicts will not happen as long as the projects don’t abuse private property and as long as they agree that infrastructure construction is a good direction for development.

Apart from the state sector, local academics and NGOs which later on become the CSS also get involved in development. During the past two decades, they have promoted ecological knowledge on wetlands by constructing the ecological body of Phru Thung Krabue, or Thung Krabue wetland, combining Baroh Ai Hetae and nearby small wetlands together. At the same time, Phru Thung Krabue has been defined as a part of a larger ecological system, the Saiburi Watershed. Moreover, they have publicized knowledge on how local residents depend on and utilize this ecosystem. However, this doesn’t make the state sector start to recognize the ecological values of wetlands, even though the knowledge on wetland ecosystem proposed by local academics and NGOs is a kind of “scientific truth” which usually is a kind of “black box” or unquestioned reality on environmental changes (Forsyth 2003). This is because only some aspects of scientific knowledge are picked, utilized, and maintained by the establishments, whereas other aspects are ignored, although they have been scientifically and academically proven to be correct. Furthermore, with the severity of violent incidents combined with the previous activities on environment conservation affecting the interests of the powerful or formal community leaders the residents of the
Kampong Ai Hetae have not been comfortable to work on environmental and sustainable agriculture with local academics and NGOs anymore.

The CSS views the degradation of the environment and natural resources caused by state development projects as the origin of poverty which leads to the unrest in the southernmost region. It proposes that community-based development with environmental concern can decrease poverty and decrease ecosystem degradation, and thereby stop the unrest and violence. However, the CSS of Thailand is unique in that it has been a part of the conservative establishments in the political power structure of Thailand. It is also hostile to representative or parliamentary democracy, under which the government usually promotes capitalism and populist policies. It pursues faulty policies only for gaining popularity. After integrating with local academics and NGOs in the region, the leaders of the CSS from Bangkok still carry conservative ideology and political bias with them. Therefore, the nationalist ideology and singular sovereignty of the Kingdom of Thailand which can’t be flexible and fragmented have never been pointed out by the CSS as the causes of conflict, unrest, and violence in the region. The CSS also reproduces development discourses of the conservative powers, especially the Sufficiency Economy and understanding (khao jai), accessibility (khao thueng), and development (pattana) without any questions about the politics of these discourses. At the same time, similar to what has been pointed out in critical studies on community about the drawbacks of the dichotomy between ‘premodern’ or ‘subsistence’ livelihood on the one hand and urbanity and capitalism on the other (Li 2007, Weismantel 2006, Joseph 2006), the CSS has been romanticizing the lives of rural Malay Muslims as living based on self-sufficient subsistence and being independent from the market economy and capitalism. This makes the work of the CSS far from the real lives of the residents.

The Economic Life of Rural Malay Muslims

The Kampong Ai Hetae residents have been living in a complex ecological system. Previously their farming production was not intensive and didn’t require high investments and complex farming techniques and machines. They also utilized the resources from diverse parts of the Ai Hetae ecological system. However, this doesn’t mean that the residents had been able to fully rely on themselves with their household
production. On the contrary, their lives in the past were very difficult because of the remoteness and the lack of facilities and cash necessary to sustain them. In the past, they had tried so much to get access to markets by taking a very long walk or moving to live close to the main streets to have the opportunity to gain more cash. Today, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents do farming and use natural resources in more specialized and intensive ways and rely more only on a few cash crops. Besides, some farming activities have been receding, especially the in-season rice crop caused by population pressure that transforms some paddy fields into residential areas. There is also the retreat of herding caused by the decrease of public grasslands.

The changes in farming in the Kampong Ai Hetae have happened through time. On the one hand the changes in farming are responses to the changes of the ecological system caused by state development projects. They are adaptations to continue utilizing the changing ecosystem and resources. When construction projects transformed Ai Hetae wetland to be a permanent lake, several residents adapted themselves to be full-time fishermen. Moreover, when the water flows in the wetland were changed, the residents switched from doing wetland rice farming to early rice farming. Also the bustle of mushroom picking and the changing ways of taking care of buffalo herds are adaptation to suit the changing soil condition and vegetation as well as to suit the decreasing access to common resources occupied by the arrival of some state agencies. On the other hand, the Ai Hetae ecological system has changed because the residents have decided to change their production according to market incentives—as in the cases of the transforming of integrated orchards or integrated rubber plots into monocrop rubber plots as well as the transforming of paddy fields into new rubber plots.

The Kampong Ai Hetae residents have been fully a part of the commercial economy and agricultural industry for several decades. Under the modern market economy, small-scale farmers always lack power to negotiate for fair prices for their farming products and the factors of production they have to buy. However, the development projects by the Thai state as well as by the CSS have not yet been able to help them improve their productivity or to gain more negotiating power in the market economy. Therefore, the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have to face many problems alone including risks often from disasters and price fluctuations. Also some households
have decided to take more risk in farming by planting rubber in areas that flood with the hope that their rubber trees can survive and provide them returns in the long run.

Interestingly, amidst the difficulties from the state’s unsupportive policies on market and production, and with their low status in the market economy, Kampong Ai Hetae farmers can still survive and persevere through their strategies in doing farming. They have searched for, learned, and integrated their knowledge on modern farming that is suitable to the changing landscape and ecosystem. They also select some organic farming techniques to reduce the cost of production. They deal with the risks from commercial economy by making diversity in their farming productions so that they can gain income from several sources and reduce some household expenses on foods. At the same time, the residents have the value system or social-cultural mechanisms to help them deal with economic risk and loss. Sometimes they do not intend to calculate loss and profit strictly and also sometimes they modify the economic loss to serve their religious life. They also have the social mechanisms to solve the new problems like the theft of rubber cup lumps by drug addicts that has been increasing since the resurrection of the unrest and violence in 2004.

Nevertheless, even though the farmers have utilized the strategies mentioned above, Kampong Ai Hetae residents are still struggling to ensure the productivity of the few cash crops they rely on. By so doing it is necessary for them to use modern farming techniques including chemicals which cause negative impacts on environment and human health in the long run. This is similar to what Stonich (1993) points out regarding the vicious circle of environmental deterioration caused by pressures from state interventions, market, and unsustainable farming techniques. The latest environmental problems are in part the result of adaptations to these pressures. However, the case of Kampong Ai Hetae is different from Stonich’s case because the shortage of household labor has not yet been the main cause of the use of unsustainable farming techniques, even though there have been more residents working in the non-farm sector. Instead, the unsustainable farming techniques utilized by the residents have been mainly caused by the lack of effective support and assistance from outside agencies to promote sustainable agriculture as a good alternative with economic feasibility.
In addition, there has been more intensive use of common land by watermelon planting, tighter grazing area, and the over-exploitation of natural resources such as wood and mushrooms. Then these lead to the conflicts from the unclear boundary between private land and state public land as well as the conflicts among the residents over resource uses in the grasslands. However, there is no formal or collective management to solve these conflicts. The one reason for this is that, under the unrest and violence, the residents have to live in fear of the unsafe atmosphere and it is difficult for them to stand strongly and manage the conflicts, which may bring them to confront authorities and some other resource users. Moreover, the sustainable uses of common resources has not been considered by the residents because they don’t feel that the Ai Hetae grassland belongs to them as their communal property, but it is the property of the state agencies which came to occupy and enclose the grassland since 2004.

The unsustainable farming practices and resource uses as well as the disinterest in working with the CSS on sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation and the lack of intention to collectively managing the wetland are contrary to such main questions in ecological anthropology as: “Why do some groups of people exploit resources sustainably and not give up their subsistence productions?” or “How does a shift occur in local communities from endorsing environmental destruction to pursuing environmental conservation?” This is also far from the expectations by the CSS on how the rural residents should do farming and use resources. However, this is not that the residents are ignorant of the values of the ecological system or are too greedy to have environmental concern. Robbin (2004) says that the definition or selection of criteria on degradation is a political choice, a point useful here. According to Robbin, environmental degradation can be measured and evaluated differently in multiple ways and one of the main reasons for this is resource use priority. In the case of the Kampong Ai Hetae, the lack of concern about the degradation of the ecosystem and the impacts of construction projects in the Ai Hetae wetland are caused by the situation that the negative impacts of the projects appear gradually, and also the residents have usually been able to adapt to the changes gradually. When combined with the increase of the population and the growth of non-farming activities, it is hard for the residents and even outside state agencies to identify the ecological impacts of the projects.
The change of fishing from in-season shallow fishing to professional fishing has been caused by the change of swamps and marshes into a permanent lake as a result of the road blockade. However, this has encouraged the expansion of fish marketing locally as well as by the lack of farmland for the current generation which pushes some of them to do fishing as their main occupation. These factors make it hard to connect to the impacts of state development project. Since the transformations of the ecosystem and natural resources in the Ai Hetae have mainly happened on state public land, it hardly affects private land or hardly provides abrupt negative impacts, except in the case of the enclosure of the grazing area. Simultaneously, agricultural activities and utilization of natural resources by the Kampong Ai Hetae residents have been getting less diverse and more specialized. The residents who focus on rubber seldom relate to other parts of the ecological system like the ones who are professional fishermen who only utilize the resource from the Luboh or permanent lake. Then the changes in the whole ecosystem have not been the first priority for the residents as long as it has not affected their farming activities specifically.

The adaptations and strategies to make a living through modern farming—happening under the modern market economy, ecological changes, and the impacts of development projects in the context of conflict, unrest, and violence in the southernmost region—have happened in relation to other dimensions of rural transformation. In southernmost Thailand, one main attribute of rural transformation is the increasing role of the non-farm sector. Today there hardly are households without any members working as wage labors or in the non-farm sector. This has been caused by insufficiency of farmland with the growth of population. However, this may be different from the de-agrarainization proposed by Rigg focusing on the decreasing role of farming sector in rural economy. The factor of the rubber economy providing income to the farmers all year round, which is different from annual crops, is significant here. In the Kampong Ai Hetae, under the decrease of farmland and difficulties in farming, rubber has remained the main source of income for many households. The more the households have rubber plots, the more they gain various sources of income. This is a good foundation for them to further invest in business, trading, or education for their children. Also certain numbers of the residents still depend on the rubber business as a source of employment.
and also a source of income of villagers who are the customers of food stalls and grocery stores in the village. Whether or not wage labor jobs and trading in the Kampong Ai Hetae are flourishing, prosperous, and profitable, depends on the conditions of the rubber economy.

Nevertheless, there are gradually more people, especially the formal community leaders who can gain access to salary and other state budget and then are able to invest in business, trading, or education for their children. This helps improve their political and economic status, even though they have no land or don’t do farming at all. This is like Rigg (2012: 21) points out when land and agrarian production are no longer primarily a matter of class differentiation or inequality both inside and outside the community. However, most landless households are not able to get better jobs than either wage labor or small trading in the village. This is limited because of insufficient openings for hiring and the low purchasing power of the residents that are not able to support well petty traders in the village. Jobs in Thai restaurants in Malaysia become another outlet. But these jobs are insecure, low in pay, have no welfare, and lack opportunity to accumulate money or capital. Even after 2004 there are more opportunities for local residents to be hired by state agencies because the Thai state utilizes hiring as a method to try to stop the conflict and unrest, most positions are short-term and low in pay. Moreover, only the ones who have the connection with formal community leaders or state officers at the district level can get better and long-term jobs.

Another general attribute of rural transformation is about consumption and modern lifestyle. The significance of this point in the Kampong Ai Hetae is not about the residents being lured by consumerism or materialism as pervasively believed by the CSS. This may be different from modernization ethics, which has been internalized and become an uncontested goal of most people in Southeast Asia, as pointed out by Rigg (2001). In the Kampong Ai Hetae the consumption of luxury goods is not only about the need to be modern. The uses of cell phones, motorcycles, and pickup trucks actually are the investment in their occupations which helps the residents catch up with the modern market economy in which they have been living. There are also high expenses for religious activities like merit making, which is a kind of investment as well in terms of spirituality. Furthermore, the increase in consumption and the modern lifestyle also
enhances the economy of the Kampong Ai Hetae providing more jobs and leads to the informal loan system through social relations in the community providing opportunity for the residents, who usually don’t have access to formal financial institutions, to obtain a loan to invest in or expand their trading and business.

Specifically in southernmost Thailand, rural transformation can’t be considered separately from the intensification of Islam. Involvement in the commercial economy of capitalism is one of the most significant factors contributing to the flourishing and intensification of Islam in the Kampong Ai Hetae. It has changed from laxity on religious practices and knowledge to be far more pious. The growth of the commercial economy in farming products has helped people gain more cash and be able to afford as never before religious knowledge and activities as well as for making merit or maintaining their religion.

The intensification of Islam in Kampong Ai Hetae is important to the economic life of the residents in two dimensions. The first one is that religion has a more important role in their daily lives and especially the decisions about their lives that shapes the ways they make a living. The desire to be a good Muslim is a decisive factor for some residents in setting their future plans. To go back to stay at home permanently and preparing to do so by buying land to plant rubber, which is a kind of agrarianization, as a future source of income is a plan of some residents who have been migrating to work in the restaurant business in Malaysia for many years. The main reason for this decision is that there is little if any chance to practice religion in Malaysia. Living at home in the Kampong Ai Hetae with little income in the last stage of their lives to practice religion is their ultimate life goal. Moreover, some families don’t allow their descendants to study or to work outside the village and prefer them to work on the farm with family instead, which for them is an atmosphere unsuitable for being a good Muslim.

These cases show that religion is also one of the factors shaping the character of farming and the farming changes in the Kampong Ai Hetae. These cases are useful to expand the discussion on the relationships between environment and religion, which is becoming one of the important questions in ecological anthropology including among NGOs and development agencies elsewhere as well as with the CSS in Thailand. In some societies religion strongly influences sustainable farming practices and/or natural
resource uses by local people. However, this is not necessarily the case in the Kampong Ai Hetae where the residents use chemicals in farming to ensure their return and this provides money which helps them to follow the religious path. This also leads to the point that in political ecology when examining religion it only views religion as a political practice, or the uses of ethnic or religious identity to meet economic needs, or to get access to natural resources. Religion has not yet been examined as the ultimate objective that local residents want to reach and how this shapes the way they do farming and use natural resources.

The second dimension is about the relation of religion with social and political power that affects the ecosystem. Most formal religious leaders such as imams, mosque committees and Dakwah leaders are usually in good economic status and at the same time are usually the same persons with political leaders or formal community leaders. Through religious connections among these elites, they can strengthen their political and social status and gain more business opportunities. With high economic and political status, they are able to negotiate, initiate, and make some decisions on state development projects as pointed out in Chapter 3. Importantly, most of these several projects are ineffective with negative ecological impacts and mostly provide personal benefits to these elites instead of to the community as a whole.

Development for Well-Being and Peace

It has been believed for a long time that poverty is the main cause of the unrest and violence in this southernmost region of Thailand. Perhaps the old poverty—which means the poverty caused by the remoteness and the lack of access to infrastructure, state services, and market—might be able to encourage the insurgent groups in the past. However, it is hard to relate the new poverty—which means the poverty caused by more contact with the market, modernization and development process—to today’s insurgency. On the contrary, poverty is an obstacle to the Malay Muslims joining the insurgent groups. The insurgent groups have hardly raised such issues as the economy and poverty in their demands. Also amidst the unrest and violence during the past decade, the economy of southernmost Thailand has been growing actively mainly from the huge amount of state budget sent to the region for various development and security projects. When combined with the existing economic base, especially from rubber and
from the restaurant business in Malaysia, the economic growth of the southernmost region has been increasing in spite of the unrest and violence (Pattani Forum 2013). Even though the benefits from the economic growth are uneven and some people remain poor, the significance of poverty to the unrest and violence has not been as believed.

Because of this misunderstanding, carried since Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat’s period, viewing poverty as the cause of the unrest and violence and because of the underestimation by the Thai state on political ideology behind the conflict and unrest, the development by the state in the southernmost region is utilized to try to maintain national security, to continue nation state ideology, and to stabilize power institutions. The Royal Projects and the military run development projects are certainly intended to meet these objectives. Similarly, projects by other state agencies are required to serve these objectives. However, the development has failed to stop the conflict and violence. During the past 10 years, violent incidents have drastically increased against the higher number of develop projects as well as the security forces sent into the region. In term of the economy, the development has neither been able to support people to be better than in the bottom of the market economy.

At the same time, amidst the new round of unrest and violence started from 2004, a number of development projects became the source from which formal community leaders, who assist the state to implement them, are able to gain power and money. This has expanded class differentiation in the community between the rich and the poor. In addition, today only the households with good economic status are able to own several plots of farmland or to buy new farmland thereby remaining in the farming sector. Development projects that mostly aim to promote farming activities may not be able to help the residents at the bottom who are land poor or landless. Rigg (2006, 2001) views policies on agricultural development as actually increasing inequality by supporting the concentration of agricultural resources among a few rural rich. Therefore, according to Rigg, to achieve pro-poor development policies amidst rural changes is to do more on endowing the rural poor with skills, education, and networks, so that they can have more choices in their lives apart from farming. By doing so people from the young generation who don’t have farmland will have more opportunities to gain good economic status and then working as coolies in the rubber business will not
be the only choice in their lives as in the case of Fateemoh’s son mentioned in the beginning of this dissertation.

Regarding the work of the CSS, even though it is helpful in promoting ecosystem conservation and people participation on development and natural resource management, its work has not yet been able to be free from nation state ideology and has also sometimes reproduced that ideology. This is even though the nation state ideology which aims to assimilate people of different ethnicity and religion is the root cause of the conflict and violence in the region. Under these conditions, real sustainable development will not be able to happen. Moreover, the CSS has not been successful in advancing the economic life of local residents because it lacks understanding on how the resident’s lives function on the ground as a part of the market economy and capitalism. Instead it tries to push its moral standard and its value of self-reliance on the residents it is working with.

This author hopes that all drawbacks of development in southernmost Thailand will be solved. It is also hoped that the development approach both by state agencies and the Civil Society Sector will be able to strengthen the economic life of the Kampong Ai Hetae residents helping them to gain access to economic justice, equality, and sustainability. However, these hopes can come true only when the development becomes a part of the effort to enhance the resident’s cultural and political lives based on their ethnic and religious identity, which go beyond the limitation of the Thai nation state ideology.
## APPENDIX 1

### The Violence Incidents Happening In Kampong Ai Hetae during 2004-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time</th>
<th>Incidents</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 16, 2007</td>
<td>A Buddhist Thai SAO assistant was shot into his cheek and the middle of his back, while he just left SAO parking lot to go home.</td>
<td>One person got serious injured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Around 4 pm.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 15, 2007</td>
<td>Two male Buddhist Thais from Saraburi province of central Thailand were shot dead by many shoots from M16 while riding a motorcycle passing Village Tiga. They and other two friends were coming back from animal hunting. The two friends survived because they ran away at that time.</td>
<td>Two persons died.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 22, 2008</td>
<td>A Kampong Ai Hetae resident (a Malay Muslim), who was a sergeant major of the 41th Ranger Paramilitary Department, was shot dead on the district main road while he was stopped by a grocery in adjacent sub-district. His wife and a 10-year-old daughter came along with him in the pickup truck at that time.</td>
<td>One person died.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Around 4 pm.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 26, 2008</td>
<td>A female local Malay Muslim was shot dead while she was riding a motorcycle back from a market with her 9-year-old son. The two gunmen rode a motorcycle following her and then shot her. Her son got minor injured from falling down from a motorcycle.</td>
<td>One person (woman) died.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Around 11 am.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31, 2009</td>
<td>A local Malay Muslim man was shot dead on Kampong Ai Hetae main road in the early morning while he was riding a motorcycle to tap rubber. The gunmen rode a motorcycle following him and then shot him. After the shooting, the gunmen took away his 9 mm pistol.</td>
<td>One person died.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Around 6 am.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 20, 2009</td>
<td>A male local Malay Muslim was shot dead while riding a motorcycle to a tea shop in Village Satu. The man had worked as a wage labor in Malaysia. However, his younger brother is a soldier.</td>
<td>One person died.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and Time</td>
<td>Incidents</td>
<td>Results</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>September 28, 2009 (Around 9 am.)</td>
<td>Two local Malay Muslim men were shot dead at a rented house in Kampong Ai Hetae. (I was told that before this incident, in the same house, there were two female and one male Malay Muslims were killed. They rented this house as well. I didn’t see the news from newspapers so I couldn’t identify the exact date and time of that incident.)</td>
<td>Two persons died.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 9, 2010 (Around 6:30am.)</td>
<td>A couple was shot while they were travelling to tap rubber. The husband who is a local Malay Muslim got not too serious injured since the bullet only grazed his head. The wife, who might be a Buddhist Thai converting into Islam, got hurt at her hand. They both didn’t die because after their motorcycle felt down, they ran away to a house nearby and asked for help.</td>
<td>Two people got injured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 16, 2011 (Around 6 pm)</td>
<td>A female local Malay Muslim was shot dead while she was driving a motorcycle back home in the evening back from planting watermelon at the grassland of Baroh Ai Hetae. She was shot one shot into her head. Other villagers who were coming back from the watermelon plots at that time brought her to the district hospital, and then she dies there.</td>
<td>One person (woman) died.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15, 2011 (Around noon)</td>
<td>Three local Malay Muslim men were shot dead by innumerable shots of war weapons while drinking tea with others at a motorcycle repair shop at Selasa market. It was said that after shooting the gunmen came down from a pickup truck to repeat the shots to make sure all victims died. At the same time, there was another team of attackers, which had hid themselves behind the mosque nearby, firing many shots indiscriminately into the Ai Hetae Police Strategy Checkpoint, which is far from the first scene only 150 meters. Also the attackers sprayed metal spikes to obstruct official hunting.</td>
<td>Three men died. One of them is a sub-district head assistant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 11, 2011</td>
<td>A 60-year-old local Malay-Muslim man was shot dead</td>
<td>One man died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and Time</td>
<td>Incidents</td>
<td>Results</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Late at night)</td>
<td>by two shots and another 33-year-old man got injured from the shooting. It has been assumed that they disputed to each other and then had gun fighting.</td>
<td>and one man got injured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1, 2011 (Around 4 pm)</td>
<td>A Buddhist Thai man, who is a Level 3 Construction Engineer of Pattani Irrigation Project, and his wife, who is a temporary employee of the same project, were shot dead. The couple’s pickup truck was taken away. At that time they were surveying the construction site of the electric pumping station system located at Village Tiga of Kampong Ai Hetae.</td>
<td>A Buddhist Thai couple died.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 16, 2011 (8:45pm)</td>
<td>A local man, who is a Pondok Toh Kuru and Imam of Village Dua of Kampong Ai Hetae was fired by several shots from M-16 and AK-47 by a group of men while he was driving a motorcycle back home after finishing his weekly religious teaching class in the village. Fortunately, he didn’t die or get any injured.</td>
<td>No one died or got injured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 29, 2011</td>
<td>A Malay Muslim man was shot dead on the road in Village Tiga while he was driving a motorcycle with his wife and their 2-year-old daughter. The man died. His wife and his daughter were injured from motorcycle falling.</td>
<td>One man died and one woman and a kid got injured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 31, 2011 (Around 8 pm.)</td>
<td>Unknown number of men drove nearby the Kampong Ai Hetae Police Strategy Checkpoint and then fired several shots into it while several policemen were inside. Then the policemen fought back. The fighting took long for several minutes. Also on the way 1.5 kilometers far from the checkpoint when the reinforcements coming, the reinforcements were attacked from an unknown group and then there were gunfights.</td>
<td>No one died. One police got minor injured at his hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 10, 2011 (Around 1 pm.)</td>
<td>A Chinese retail merchants selling instant curtains was shot dead at Selasa scheduled market.</td>
<td>One person died.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and Time</td>
<td>Incidents</td>
<td>Results</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 16, 2011 (Around 12:30 pm)</td>
<td>Two Buddhist-Thais SAO officials were shot dead by an unknown group using AK-47. The shooting happened in front of SAO office when the victims were driving a pickup truck into the office. Then the gunmen sprayed metal spikes to obstruct the capture by officials.</td>
<td>Two persons died.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX 2

### Religious Activities in a Year in Kampong Ai Hetae

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month in Islam</th>
<th>Religious Activities</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Month 1: Muharram</td>
<td>Al-Hijra: the Islamic New Year</td>
<td>Al-Hijra is celebrated on the first day of Muharram, the month in which Muhammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE (the Hijra).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aashurah</td>
<td>Aashurah is on the 10th of Muharram. Ashura commemorates two events: the day Prophet Nuh (Noah) left the ark; the day Prophet Musa (Moses) was saved from the Egyptians by Allah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In southernmost Thailand, the Malay Muslims make the pudding of Aashurah on this day following what Prophet Noah did with his people after surviving. Some people also fast during Aashurah believing that doing so can gain more merit than regular fasting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 2: Safr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 3: Rabi’ al-Awwal (or Rabi I)</td>
<td>Mawlid</td>
<td>It is on the 12th of the Rabi’ al-Awwal. It is the day to celebrate Prophet Muhammad's Birthday. During the month of Mawlid, each family set the date to provide foods for their neighbors and pray and sing the song for the prophet as part of merit making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 4: Rabi’ al-Thani (or Rabi II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 5: Jumada al-Ula (or Jumada I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 6: Jumada al-Thaniyya (or Jumada II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Month 7: Rajab</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 8: Sha’ban</td>
<td>Pre-Ramadan Fasting</td>
<td>It is on the 15th of the month. Prophet Mohammad supported the fasting to welcome the holy month of Ramadan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People in southernmost Thailand call the day ‘nissafu cha-uban’. At night people bring desserts and fruits to the mosques to eat together and then recite Sura Yasinor the 36th chapter of the Koran, which is referred to ‘the heart of the Koran’ focusing on establishing the Koran as a divine source, and the fate of those that mock God's revelations and are stubborn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month in Islam</td>
<td>Religious Activities</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 9: Ramadan</td>
<td>Ramadan: Fasting Month</td>
<td>Ramadan is a holy month, in which the Koran was sent down as the guidance for people. During Ramadan, those who are able must abstain from evil thoughts and deeds, foods and drinks (including water), and sexual intercourse from dawn until dusk for the entire month. On night 29 while waiting for the appearance of the moon indicating the end of Ramadan, most residents provide 2.4 kilograms of rice for Zakat al-Fitr (required charity) to mosques to distribute to the poor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 10: Shawwal</td>
<td>Id Al-Fitr or Eid al-Fitr</td>
<td>On the first three days of the month, people celebrate their effort of being fasting during the whole month of Ramadan. The festival marks the end of Ramadan. On the 1st day of the month people attend communal prayer (salat) at daybreak. Then it is a time of official receptions and private visits with various kinds of foods. Also presents and money are given, and new clothes are worn, and the graves of relatives are visited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 11: Dhu al-Qa'dah</td>
<td>Preparing for Hajj</td>
<td>This is the month for people who are going to Hajj to prepare for their travelling. People gather at the houses of the prospective pilgrims to pray for them and give them some money. At the same time hosts provide foods for everyone who comes. They also come in group to send the prospective pilgrims at the airport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month 12: Dhu al-Hijjah</td>
<td>Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice)</td>
<td>Eid al-Adha is on the 10th of the month and lasts for three days. It is to honor the willingness of the prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice his young first-born son, Ishmael, as an act of submission to God's command before God allowed the sacrifice with lamp instead. The celebrations start after the descent of the people who are performing Hajj from Mount Arafat, a hill east of Mecca. The activities are the same as those of Eid al-Fitr except the sacrifice of sheep, cows, goats, and buffalos in the name of God. One-third of the meat is given away to friends and neighbors and one-third or more is donated to the poor and needy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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