

Muslimization and Cultural Politics of Islam Propagation among Hmong/Akha Youth in Northern Thailand

By Samak Kosem (Chiangmai University)



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Abstract:

This research studies the propagation of Islam through the “Dawah”, Muslim missionary and the process of Muslimization among the hill tribe youth in Chiang Rai province of northern Thailand. This work aims to find out which strategy of cultural politics that has been utilized by the Dawah to propagate Islam, and how the marginalized ethnicity contributes to such religious conversion. The research also emphasizes how the hill tribe youth make use of their own ethnic identity in order to respond to and negotiate with these propagation strategies. The Muslim identity in this area reflects the complex interaction between the Dawah’s teachings and the hill tribes’ ethnic identity within the context of the Thai state’s attempt to marginalize the hill tribes in highland as well as the transnational context of Islamic fundamentalism. The Dawah’s success in accessing the various hill tribe groups stems from the fact that these groups have not only become a vulnerable point from the Thai state’s perspective, but they also been marginalized by the state’s development process have been well. The Muslimization process can be seen in rules and disciplines which govern the body of the hill tribe youth as for the spiritual side of the Muslimization process. In this process, some face internal conflicts between different identities. These include the Muslim identity that their personally defines themselves, the Muslim identity that is expected from them and the mainstream representation of Muslims. The result can be regarded as an awkward cultural patchwork or a final peaceful subjectivation of these youth.

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Discussant: Liulan Wang (Doshisha University)

Organizer: CSEAS, Kyoto University

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