

Dissertation Title : Chularajmontri: A Religious Institution Amidst Thai Social Changes
Researcher Name : Ms. Plubplung Kongchana
Dissertation Advisor : Dr. Imtiyaz Yusuf
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ABSTRACT

The Chularajmontri Shaikh Al-Islam is a religious institution for Thai Muslims. The institute holder, called Chularajmontri, assumes the responsibilities of the leader of Thai Muslims, and in the past he also assumed both military and civil institutionaldom. In the 19th century, however with the Thai society being modernized, the role and duty of the Chularajmontri also underwent changes. Then there came administrative reform in 1932, the absolute monarchy has since been changed into a democracy of constitutional monarchy. The repercussion from the modernization and democratization is that though the Chularajmontri still remains the leader of Thai Muslims, secularization in it remarkably outshines its basic function as a religious institution. At the same time, Islamic world sees a trend of Islamic purification and revival movement, a desecularization. This refutes the long-held secularization theory and confirms Peter L. Berger's desecularization thesis which the researcher has made the conceptual framework of this dissertation. The thesis statement is "Thai society is currently in a struggle between secularization and desecularization, the Chularajmontri office is an appropriate organization capable of leading Thai Muslims during this secularization-vs.-desecularization era". The main objective of this research is to propose recommendations to the Chularajmontri in responding to the social changes in terms of secularization and desecularization.

The research output points out that the institution of Chularajmontri institute should return to its genuine status and function as a religious institution. In achieving that the Chularajmontri should build up charisma by conducting himself according to Islamic principle so as to set a good example for fellow Muslims. The Chularajmontri should also adjust this Islamic Institution in synch with the social changes in the aspect of secularization and desecularization in order to be truly functional as an Islamic religious institution and to make contributions to the wellbeing the whole society.

