



MALAY SEPARATIST MOVEMENT IN SOUTHERN THAILAND: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE GABUNGAN MELAYU PATANI RAYA (GEMPAR), 1948–1949

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ABSTRACT

Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya (GEMPAR) or the Association of Malays of Greater Patani was established on 1 March 1948 to defend the plight of the Patani Malays and later to champion political ambitions for Patani's independence from the Thai government. Among its main leaders were Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen, Tengku Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin, and Tengku Abdul Jalal bin Tengku Abdul Mutalib. This study examines GEMPAR's political struggle from 1948 to 1949, highlighting its role in mobilising regional Malay support and advocating for self-determination. This study uses a qualitative approach and library-based research. Primary sources include archival documents from the United Kingdom's National Archives, such as Colonial Office records, as well as relevant secondary literature, including books, articles, and theses relating to the GEMPAR movement. This study argues that although GEMPAR was short-lived, it played an important role in connecting the Patani Malay nationalist cause with wider post-war Malay political movements. Despite its regional significance, GEMPAR remains largely overlooked in existing scholarship. This study addresses that gap by uncovering its political networks and contributions to Malay solidarity. Studies show that GEMPAR's struggle had the support of several Malay political organisations, including the Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung (Peninsular Indonesian People's Union, KRIS), the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) or Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM), the Kelantan Branch of United Malays National Organization (UMNO), and the Singapore Malay Association.

Keywords: GEMPAR, Patani, Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen, Tengku Abdul Jalal, independence

INTRODUCTION

Historically, Patani refers to the Malay Sultanate of Patani, which comprised several districts in southern Thailand. In contrast, Pattani refers specifically to the districts of Pattani in southern Thailand. Geographically, Pattani was an area in southern Thailand that borders Malaya, specifically the state of Kelantan (Ghazali et al. 2018). One of the problems that plagued the people of Patani was the issue of the Malay-Muslim minority, which remains unresolved to this day and attracts public attention. Most Muslims in Thailand resided in southern Thailand, particularly in the districts of Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani, and Setul (now known as Satun) (Suhrke 1970, 1975). The Muslim community in this region had a long history. The conflict in southern Thailand began with the forcible annexation of Pattani in 1832 and the Siamese government's subsequent abolition of the Malay Sultanate of Patani in 1902 (Nik Mahmud 1994). Additionally, conflict between the Raja of Patani and the Siamese government (known as Thai government in 1939) continued throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tensions later expanded to include disputes between the elite and the Patani Malays as well as the Thai government, which culminated in 1947 under the leadership of Tuan Guru Haji Sulong, when the Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya (The Association of Malays of Greater Patani) or GEMPAR was formed in 1948.

Generally, studies on GEMPAR have used two different terms to refer to the movement. The first term, GEMPAR, was used by Suhrke (1975), Malek (1993, 1999), Al-Fatani (1994), and Nik Mahmud (1994, 1999). The second term was GAMPAR, used by Haemindra (1976), Pitsuwan (1985), and Yegar (2002). Because British records from 1948 consistently used the term GEMPAR, this study adopts the term GEMPAR, which is also used by most scholars. The establishment of GEMPAR marked a significant phase in the Patani Malay struggle, as their efforts became more organised and structured. By creating an organisation specifically to unify their goals and struggles, they were able to present a more organised voice for welfare issues and political demands.

Several works have examined the emergence and development of GEMPAR between 1948 and 1949. Suhrke (1975) was the first article to deal with the emergence of GEMPAR. However, the discussion of GEMPAR was limited to only two paragraphs and no references were given to support the information presented. Aphornsuvan (2004) examined the origins of Malay-Muslim separatism in southern Thailand, with a focus on the insurgency, specifically the Kampong Dusong Nyor incident. Nevertheless, he did not highlight the GEMPAR struggle. Haemindra (1976) discussed the activities of GEMPAR, but her analysis relied solely on English-language newspapers and did not refer to other sources, such as British records to provide a broader perspective. The book by Pitsuwan (1985) was derived from his PhD thesis submitted to Harvard University, which discussed the activities of GEMPAR, but relied only on some English-language newspapers and the writings of Haemindra (1976). Another scholar, Che Man (1990), discussed GEMPAR's activities, but relied mainly on the document "Some Facts about Malays in South Siam" published by GEMPAR in 1948 and the works of Suhrke (1975) as well as Haemindra (1976).

While Al-Fatani (1994) examines the activities of GEMPAR, his analysis was brief and general, focusing more on the Patani history. In contrast, Malek (1993) was the first author to discuss the establishment and development of GEMPAR in detail and he mostly refers to secondary sources, including the writings of Haemindra (1976) and Pitsuwan (1985). Another book written by Malek (1999), although it discusses the activities of GEMPAR, provides only a brief overview and focuses more on Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen's involvement in the movement. Furthermore, this book did not refer to primary sources but instead relied more on secondary sources, such as the work of Al-Fatani (1994).

Nik Mahmud is another important scholar on the GEMPAR movement. He has written an article on the separatist movements in southern Thailand, including the activities of GEMPAR, drawing on British records and private correspondence (Nik Mahmud 1994). However, his work did not focus exclusively on British responses to GEMPAR, but also examined their reactions to other separatist movements in the region, such as New Malaya. In another article, Nik Mahmud (1996) examines the reactions of both the Malays and the British to Thailand's irredentist claims to the northern Malay states. However, the discussion of GEMPAR in his article is limited and lacks the depth required for a thorough analysis. The discussion of GEMPAR had been expanded in his book, *Sejarah Perjuangan Melayu Patani, 1785–1954* (Nik Mahmud 1999) and later in *The Malays of Patani: The Search for Security and Independence* (Nik Mahmud 2008). While Nik Mahmud's books provide valuable insights into the activities of the GEMPAR, the main focus is on the broader history of the Malay struggle in Patani, particularly their quest for rights and independence in southern Thailand. Consequently, this study specifically reconstructs GEMPAR's internal structure and networks based on British archival records, thus offering a more detailed and focused institutional analysis, an aspect that Nik Mahmud did not examine in detail.

Yegar (2002) wrote a book on the activities of GEMPAR based on various primary sources, including British records and English-language newspapers. However, his book focuses primarily on Muslim communities living in non-Muslim majority countries, not only in southern Thailand but also in southern Philippines and western Burma. Despite the growing scholarship on the Patani Malay struggle, the specific role of GEMPAR remains insufficiently explored. Most existing studies discuss GEMPAR only briefly within broader analyses of the Patani conflict and Malay separatist movement in southern Thailand. Many of these works rely primarily on secondary sources and limited contemporary reports, resulting in an incomplete understanding of GEMPAR as a political organisation. As a result, several important aspects remain insufficiently explored, particularly the circumstances surrounding GEMPAR's establishment, its organisational structure, its political networks, and the factors that contributed to its eventual decline between 1948 and 1949.

Based on the existing literature, it appears that no specific study has yet examined in detail the emergence and eventual decline of GEMPAR. To address this gap, this study relies on British archival records from the Colonial Office and contemporary sources to reconstruct organisational structure, activities, and political networks of GEMPAR, moving beyond previous research that relied primarily on secondary sources and limited contemporary reports. By focusing specifically on GEMPAR as a political organisation, this study provides clearer findings that GEMPAR's collapse was driven by political changes rather than a lack of local support. It contributes to the existing scholarship by providing a more detailed understanding of GEMPAR's political networks and activities.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the Malay separatist movement in southern Thailand, with particular focus on the rise and fall of GEMPAR during the Patani independence struggle from 1948 to 1949. This study also seeks to address several unresolved issues that continue to be subjects of debate, such as: When was GEMPAR founded? Where were its headquarters and branches located? Who were the leaders of GEMPAR? What were the goals of GEMPAR? These questions will be explored to provide a comprehensive understanding of GEMPAR's rise, development, and eventual fall, particularly in advocating the rights and welfare of the Patani Malays who had long been oppressed by the Thai government.

BACKGROUND OF THE STRUGGLE OF THE PATANI MALAYS BEFORE 1948

The Patani region is located in southern Thailand and was led by the Patani Malay Sultanate. The Patani region was a territory inhabited by the Malays. They are called the Patani Malays, a Muslim community that practices the Malay-Muslim way of life and culture in Malaya. The Patani region included the districts of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. The Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909, signed by the Siamese and British governments, resulted in the southern districts of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, together with Setul (formerly part of the Malay Sultanate of Kedah), being incorporated into the Siamese kingdom without the consultation with the Patani Malays (Malek 1993). The treaty subsequently contributed to clashes of culture and identity in southern Thailand. In addition, the Patani Malay Sultanate system was abolished when the last ruler of the Patani Malay Sultanate, Tengku Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin, was removed from the post of Raja of Patani (Nik Mahmud 1999).

The immediate post-Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 marked the beginning of a conflict and became a problem for the Patani Malays until they rose to defend their rights and oppose the actions of the Siamese government that assimilated Siamese culture, identity, and education, while the Patani Malays in the four southernmost provinces of southern Thailand were Malay-Muslims. Malay culture, identity, and education were forcefully weakened by a string of policies emanating from the Siamese government since the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 (Yaacob and Ahmad 2019). However, Setul differed from the three southern districts of Pattani, Narathiwat, and Yala. Although the population of Setul was majority Muslim, its inhabitants were more assimilated into Thai culture and language than those in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, who had been largely insulated from separatist politics and violence (Yegar 2002).

The situation intensified in southern Thailand, particularly following the Siamese Revolution of 1932, which brought many political changes to the country. Following the revolution, the first general election in 1933 initially raised hopes among Malay-Muslim voters, although these expectations were quickly disappointed (Aphornsuvan 2004). Among these districts, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat were won and administered by Siamese-Buddhist representatives who contested the general election. The district of Setul was the only one won by the Malay-Muslim delegate. Post-revolutionary Siam of 1932 also saw the Siamese government adopt a constitutional monarchy system. With Siamese-Buddhist delegates winning the election, they sought to implement policies rooted in Siamese-Buddhist identity (Nik Mahmud 1996).

On the other hand, the post-Second World War period also saw the awareness of the Patani Malays of the rights of the oppressed and demands for freedom intensified. As a result, Tuan Guru Haji Sulong, a prominent Patani scholar who actively championed the rights of the Patani Malays, and his colleagues led the Patani Malay movement in defending their rights and welfare (Malek 2014). However, in February 1948, Tuan Guru Haji Sulong was arrested and imprisoned by the Thai government on charges of posing a significant threat to its authority. His arrest ultimately sparked the formation of GEMPAR in Kota Bharu in March 1948, a movement that sought to more aggressively advocate for the rights and welfare of the Patani Malays.

ESTABLISHMENT AND ORGANISATION OF GEMPAR

One of the main issues surrounding GEMPAR was the exact date of its establishment. According to Malek (1993), GEMPAR was established on 1 March 1948 as a welfare organisation. However, in another writing, he states that GEMPAR was established on 5 March 1948, but he did not mention the source referenced (Malek 1999). On the other hand, Nik Mahmud (1999) did not provide a

specific date of GEMPAR's establishment, noting instead that the movement had been founded in early February 1948. While Yegar (2002) provides a different account, mentioning that GEMPAR was established on 16 February 1948 in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. This clearly shows that the actual date for the establishment of GEMPAR could not be precisely determined. In contrast, British reports indicate that GEMPAR was officially founded on 23 February 1948, during the inaugural meeting where its establishment took place (Malayan Security Service 1948a). Therefore, this study concludes that 23 February 1948 marks the official establishment of GEMPAR. This date is justified by the fact that the inaugural meeting not only determined the members of its supreme committee, but also outlined the goals and objectives of the GEMPAR's struggle.

The second issue concerns the headquarters of GEMPAR. Suhrke (1975) claimed that the headquarters of GEMPAR was in Singapore, but did not cite any sources to support this assertion. On the other hand, Haemindra (1976) stated that GEMPAR had headquarters in several locations, including Kelantan, Pulau Pinang, Kedah, and Singapore. Meanwhile, Nik Mahmud (1994) identified Kota Bharu, Kelantan, as GEMPAR's main headquarters. Yegar (2002) did not specify the exact location of GEMPAR's headquarters, but emphasised that GEMPAR later established branches in Perak, Kedah, Perlis, and Pulau Pinang. These variations reflect the differing perspectives found in the existing literature. British records instead indicate that GEMPAR's headquarters was located in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaya (Malayan Security Service 1948b), as stated by Malek (1993) and Nik Mahmud (1994). However, another work by Nik Mahmud (1999) did not mention the location of GEMPAR's headquarters.

Regarding GEMPAR branches, Malek (1993) stated that the branches were located in Kedah, Pulau Pinang, and Singapore. In contrast, Haemindra (1979) indicated that the GEMPAR branches were based in Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Singapore, and Kelantan. However, this study showed that GEMPAR branches were also established in Perak, including some small branches. On 2 April 1948, a GEMPAR branch was successfully established in Batu Kurau, Perak, by Abdul Rauf Tamimi, who was one of the leaders of Hizbul Muslimin. On 5 April 1948, Abdul Rauf was also involved in setting up another GEMPAR branch in Changkat Ibol, Taiping, Perak. A GEMPAR branch was also established in Sungai Dua, Seberang Perai, Pulau Pinang (Malayan Security Service 1948c). In fact, GEMPAR was making plans to open a branch in Perlis (Malayan Security Service 1948c).

One of the members of GEMPAR, Ibrahim bin Mustapa, was also actively involved in the activities of the GEMPAR branches in Seberang Perai and northern Perak. However, most of the branches of the establishment were reported to be facing financial difficulties (Malayan Security Service 1948d). The British report dated 15 July 1948 stated that *Cikgu* (teacher) Mohammed Hassan bin Mohammed Yusoff, a pension teacher from Ulu Ijok, was appointed as GEMPAR's representative in the state of Perak. According to the Secretary of GEMPAR, Wan Ibrahim bin Wan Mustapha, there were 26 GEMPAR branches throughout the state of Perak, excluding 16 small branches (Malayan Security Service 1948e). From this information, it could be assumed that GEMPAR was becoming increasingly influential across Malaya through the establishment of various branches across the region.

The third issue relates to the main leaders of GEMPAR. Although Yegar (2002) mentioned the names of Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen and Tengku Abdul Jalal as leaders of GEMPAR, he did not provide a detailed list of GEMPAR senior leaders. According to Malek (1993), among the main leaders of GEMPAR were the sons of the last Raja Patani, Tengku Abdul Kadir bin Kamarudin, namely: (1) Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen; (2) Tengku Abdul Jalal; and (3) Tengku Abdul Kadir Petra. Other leaders of GEMPAR included: (1) Tuan Guru Haji Sulong; (2) Tengku Ismail; (3) Tengku Hussein Muda; (4) Tengku Din; (5) Nik Din; (6) Wan Yusuf; (7) Wan Hussein; and (8) Wan Hassan. On the other hand, Nik Mahmud (1999) argued that Tengku Mahmud

Mahyiddeen did not hold a position in GEMPAR due to his role as a member of the State Legislative Assembly. Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen also emphasised that he did not want to be openly “listed” in the organisation’s top leadership (Nik Mahmud (1999: 72). Furthermore, Nik Mahmud (1999) listed the members of the GEMPAR committee, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The members of the GEMPAR committee

Name	Position
Tengku Ismail bin Tengku Nik	President
Tengku Abdul Jalal bin Tengku Abdul Mutalib	Vice president
Nik Mahmood bin Nik Abdul Majid	Vice president
Nik Mohamed bin Abdul Rahman	Secretary

Source: Nik Mahmud (1999).

Nevertheless, British records (Malayan Security Service 1948a) provide important information stating that the original leaders of GEMPAR included:

1. Nik Mahmood bin Nik Abdul Majid as president.
2. Tengku Mohd Saleh bin Tengku Yasoh [Jusoh] from Kampong Temenggong, Kota Bharu, as vice president.
3. Kamaruzaman Mohd Saleh who served at the Land Office, Kota Bharu, Kelantan, as secretary.

According to the British records (Malayan Security Service 1948a), the official leadership of GEMPAR in the meeting on 5 March 1948, was composed as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The official leadership of GEMPAR

Name	Position
Tengku Ismail bin Tengku Nik	President
Tengku Abdul Jalal bin Tengku Abdul Mutalib	Vice president
Nik Mahmood bin Nik Abdul Majid (former president)	Vice president
Nik Mohamed bin Abdul Rahman	Secretary

Source: Malayan Security Service (1948a).

Table 2 shows that from its leaders, including the president, who was a Patani royalist, the members of the executive committee consisted of Patani political exiles and local leaders from the Kelantan Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) to hold positions in the association. The fourth question relates to the objectives of GEMPAR. Existing writings on GEMPAR have provided several different perspectives. According to Malek (1993), GEMPAR’s objectives included:

1. To unite all the Malays in southern Thailand and their descendants scattered throughout Malaya.
2. To strengthen close ties and family ties in the Patani region and improving their standard of living there.
3. To cooperate and help one another.
4. To improve the standard of education and bringing the culture to life in southern Thailand.

According to Yegar (2002), GEMPAR issued secret directives outlining its true objectives:

1. Combining the four southern districts of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Setul into a single unit within the framework of the Malay Federation.
2. Ending Thai government rule through propaganda in the villages (kampongs).
3. Establishing a secret, revolutionary council.

The association chose a flag, consisting of a crescent moon and four stars on a background of red, white, and green colours; the four stars represent the four Muslim districts in southern Thailand, namely Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Setul.

On the other hand, Nik Mahmud (1994), as referenced in British records (Malayan Security Service 1948a), stated that the struggle of GEMPAR aimed to: (1) unite all the southern Malays of Siam and their descendants, who care about their welfare; (2) promote cooperation among themselves; and (3) advance their education and culture. In another writing, Nik Mahmud (1999) asserts that the goal of the GEMPAR struggle was:

1. To unite the four districts of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Setul as an Islamic state and to release all Malays who were in the four districts from contempt for themselves, race, and religion.
2. To organise a government in the state that was in line with the progress and stance of a country based on the Malay customs and religion of Islam.
3. To elevate the status of the Malays and the quality of life of the children of the state so that everyone has the highest level of humanity, justice, freedom, and education, in line with the demands of time and civilisation.

Moreover, at the meeting held on 23 February 1948, the following decisions were made by GEMPAR (Malayan Security Service 1948a):

1. Distributing a copy of the establishment's founding law to the Malay rulers.
2. Appointing representatives to the Malay States to set up branches of the organisation.
3. Convening a congress of delegates once the branches were successfully established.
4. Organising demonstrations outside the Thai Consulate Offices in Singapore and Pulau Pinang, following the successful establishment of the branches and the congress of delegates.

Based on these discussions, it could be summarised that GEMPAR was officially established on 23 February 1948, with its headquarters located in Malaya, in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Its leadership comprised Tengku Ismail bin Tengku Nik (president), Tengku Abdul Jalal bin Tengku Abdul Mutalib (vice president), and Nik Mahmood bin Nik Abdul Majid (vice president), under the informal guidance of Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen. From the objective of its establishment, it was clear that GEMPAR was formed to unite all the Patani Malays into a more organised movement, which could subsequently become a stronger political movement to pressure the Thai government to advocate for their welfare, particularly in the areas of education, culture, and religion. Consequently, it cannot be denied that GEMPAR also had a clear agenda to liberate the four districts of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Setul in southern Thailand, populated by Malays to become independent states, including being integrated into the Federation of Malaya at that time.

SUPPORT FOR THE GEMPAR STRUGGLE

Throughout its existence, GEMPAR received support from various organisations, individuals, and the press. According to Malek (1993), GEMPAR received support from various political and social organisations in Malaya, such as the Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung (Peninsular Indonesian People's Union, KRIS), the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Kelantan MNP, and the Singapore Malay Association. Meanwhile, the representative of the Penang Malay Association, Haji Ahmad Mokhtar, also urged UMNO to defend and support the cause of the Patani Malays. Moreover, UMNO President Dato' Onn Jaafar also pointed out that the struggle of the Patani Malays had the support of the Malays and UMNO. However, the struggle was in trouble as the Patani issue fell under the Foreign Ministry, which was under the British colonial government.

Besides, the MNP in Kelantan acted entirely on the issue of Patani Malays when, at a meeting held on 10 February 1948, they decided to send an appeal on the issue to the United Nations (UN) Security Council (Haemindra 1979). At a meeting on 6 March 1948, the President of the Singapore Malay Association stressed that the problems of the Malays in southern Thailand must be discussed at the UMNO General Conference. The Singapore Malay Association also wanted to make a formal objection to the world organisation to condemn the Thai government's policy in the hope that the policy would be reviewed, in addition to asking the Patani Malays not to leave their homeland, but to remain in defence of it. At the same time, they also provided donations to assist Malay refugees from Pattani.

Although Malek (1993) discussed the support of the MNP for the GEMPAR cause, the discussion was quite brief. Throughout its existence, MNP provided strong support to the GEMPAR cause. The British report on 30 April 1948 stated that one of the agenda items of the MNP meeting held in Tanjong Malim, Perak, on 14 April 1948, was to support the establishment of GEMPAR (Malayan Security Service 1948c). Another British report dated 30 June 1948 stated that one of the members of the GEMPAR committee acknowledged that the establishment had received official support from MNP (Malayan Security Service 1948f). This indicated that MNP was among the political organisations that strongly supported GEMPAR's political activities.

The existing writing did not discuss the role of another organisation that had been under MNP, Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API), which also provided support to the GEMPAR cause. The British report dated 30 April 1948 explained that Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen had reportedly refused the request of Ahmad Boestamam, the API leader who wanted to supply guerrilla forces to southern Thailand. However, there were reports that Ahmad Boestamam had once again written to him, asking to be given permission to be involved in the affairs of southern Thailand. This time, Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen responded to the letter and asked him to go to Kelantan to discuss the matter more specifically. The request was believed to be for more information on the strength of Ahmad Boestamam's forces, the number of weapons he possessed, and his real goal of meddling in the affairs of southern Thailand (Malayan Security Service 1948c). Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen was worried that extremist factions would take advantage of the movement that erupted in Kampong Dusong Nyor in April 1948 to create even greater chaos. The rebellion occurred suddenly after Phibun Songkhram was appointed as Prime Minister of Thailand, resulting from the violent actions of the Siamese police who shot at the villagers during a feast in Kampong Dusong Nyor. The villagers were believed to have retaliated and forced the police to retreat to Tanjung Mas. The police then reported to the headquarters that 1,000 Malay guerrillas were allegedly planning a rebellion. Despite this, without weapons and outside help, the Patani Malays would not be able to resist the Thai government.

Another British report dated 30 June 1948 stated that one of the members of the GEMPAR committee denied that API, which had been banned by the British, had any connection to GEMPAR, although several former API members led by Ahmad Bostamam had offered assistance to help the cause of the Patani Malays (Malayan Security Service 1948f). Another report explained that Wan Ibrahim bin Wan Mustapha was detained by the police of Kota Bharu, Kelantan, on 8 June 1948 under the Emergency Law. In a statement submitted to the police, Wan Ibrahim denied that GEMPAR had any contact with API (Malayan Security Service 1948g). Based on the discussion, it was clear that in the early stages, API was interested in working with GEMPAR, but GEMPAR leader Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen was not yet clear on what form of cooperation could be established. This led to some of the GEMPAR leaders denying that API was in a relationship with GEMPAR.

Additionally, the existing writing did not discuss the support of Majlis Agama Tertinggi (MATA) based in Maahad al-Ihya' al-Syarif, Gunong Semanggol, Perak, which helped the struggle of GEMPAR. The British reported on 15 March 1948, the events of several Malays who went to Grik, Perak, and met six Patani Malays, with one of them carrying a small pistol. They all then moved from Grik to Belum, Perak, and then met Omar bin Ali, who had led a group of robbers operating on the Siam-Kelantan border. Omar bin Ali then took them to a camp located on the Siam-Kelantan border, but still in the state of Kelantan. There were around 600 Malays between the ages of 20 years old and 40 years old in the camp. Most of them were from Pattani, but some were from Kelantan and Perak. About 400 Malays had rifles, carbines, shotguns, and pistols. They also underwent Japanese-style military training there. There was information that they were awaiting instructions from the MATA Congress at Gunong Semanggol, Perak; however, there was no clear evidence to support the matter. The activity was also reported to be related to the struggle of GEMPAR (Malayan Security Service 1948a). This discussion shows that MATA was also in support of the GEMPAR cause and intended to establish cooperation with GEMPAR.

Another political organisation, Hizbul Muslimin, had also reportedly shown interest in and support for the GEMPAR cause. Nik Mahmud (1999) discussed Hizbul Muslimin's support for the struggle of the Patani Malays. However, the discussion of this issue remains relatively brief. He pointed out that Hizbul Muslimin, in a meeting held on 13 March 1948, at Gunong Semanggol, Perak, not only condemned the actions of the Thai government against the Patani Malays, but also decided to send objections on the issue to the UN Security Council, Human Rights Council, the Prime Minister of Siam, and the Arab League.

The British report on 31 May 1948 explained that Abu Bakar al-Baqir, the President of Hizbul Muslimin, upon his arrival in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, on 18 May 1948, had given his views to strengthen the struggle of GEMPAR. When he was informed that GEMPAR was only a charitable organisation and had nothing to do with politics, he suggested that GEMPAR establish four more sub-committees, namely the propaganda committee, fundraising, underground activities, and the sending of volunteers to the southern Thailand. When asked if Hizbul Muslimin could supply weapons to GEMPAR, he stressed that Hizbul Muslimin's own registration arrangement was still pending (Malayan Security Service 1948b). Another report stated that one of the members of the GEMPAR committee denied that Hizbul Muslimin had any relationship with GEMPAR, although Haji Arifin bin Hamzah, one of the leaders of Hizbul Muslimin, had offered assistance to help the cause of the Patani Malays (Malayan Security Service 1948f).

The British report dated 15 July 1948 stated that *Cikgu* Mohammed Hassan bin Mohammed Yusoff, a pension teacher from Ulu Ijok, asserted that GEMPAR had never had direct contact with Hizbul Muslimin (Malayan Security Service 1948e). Another British report dated 31 July 1948 explained that Wan Ibrahim bin Wan Mustapha was detained by the police of Kota Bharu, Kelantan, on 8 June 1948, under the Emergency Law. In a statement submitted to the police, Wan Ibrahim denied that GEMPAR had any relationship with Hizbul Muslimin (Malayan Security

Service 1948g). Based on the above discussion, it was clear that Hizbul Muslimin supported the GEMPAR objectives, although no formal relationship was established between GEMPAR and Hizbul Muslimin. In fact, the comments given by Abu Bakar al-Baqir were only in the sense of giving personal views to strengthen the struggle of GEMPAR, as GEMPAR also struggled to free itself from the oppression and brutality of the Thai government.

Unfortunately, the existing writing did not discuss the support of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) towards the GEMPAR cause. The British report of 15 April 1948 explained that some MCP members, such as Abdullah CD and Rashid Maidin, also showed sympathy for the struggle of the Patani Malays. At a meeting held on 13 April 1948, in Taiping, Perak, to discuss the proposal to send Malay agents representing MCP to Pattani, Abdullah CD stated that they were sympathetic to the tyranny of the Thai government towards the Patani Malays, but stressed that they should intensify their efforts to achieve freedom but not by cooperating with the British by joining the Federation of Malaya, which was like “falling from the pan into fire” (Malayan Security Service 1948h). This was because Malaya itself was not yet independent and even the Malaysians themselves were fighting for their own independence. Nevertheless, they still sought to help their comrades in southern Thailand (Malayan Security Service 1948h). The British report dated 30 April 1948 explained that the Secretary of GEMPAR had received a letter from Abdul Rashid Maidin, representing MCP, asking about the true purpose of the GEMPAR struggle (Malayan Security Service 1948c). However, there is no information on whether GEMPAR responded to the letter or expressed views on the possibility of cooperation between the two organisations.

By mid-1948, some GEMPAR leaders had begun rejecting the communist influence. The British report dated 30 June 1948 explained that on 23 June 1948, the Vice President of GEMPAR, Nik Mahmood bin Haji Abdul Majid sent a letter to the Kelantan State Secretary. In the letter, he proposed the establishment of the Peace Maintenance Corps or Peace Maintenance Force in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, which consisted of various races to defend Kelantan from the communist insurgency that was rampant at that time. He also wanted to be sure whether the government would recognise the force in the event of an emergency (Malayan Security Service 1948f). The Secretary of GEMPAR Kelantan Branch, Mohamed bin Haji Abdul Majid, also sent a proposal to the British colonial government to solve the communist threat in Malaya, where all farmers were to be supplied with weapons, all faithful Chinese were to be supplied with weapons, all Chinese who did not explicitly support the government should be considered communists and the abolition of all communists, and their conquered family members (Malayan Security Service 1948i). Therefore, it was clear that in the early stages, MCP was sympathetic to the GEMPAR cause and was interested in cooperation, but GEMPAR did not give any clear response regarding the possibility of such cooperation. However, the rejection of some GEMPAR leaders towards the communist cause may explain why GEMPAR did not publicly express support for cooperation with MCP and the communists.

Interestingly, the GEMPAR struggle also received support from individuals. In its efforts to strengthen the movement, GEMPAR received the cooperation of a British journalist, Barbara Whittingham-Jones. Apart from being a reporter for the *Straits Times*, she wrote numerous essays and articles related to the Patani Malays' struggle for international newspapers such as *The Times* and *Eastern World*. She also contacted representatives of the Arab and Asian governments headquartered in London and brought the Patani issue to the UN (Nik Mahmud 1999). To further support the Patani Malays movement, she made her home in London, known as Rumah Patani, as the GEMPAR Activity Centre.

Apart from the support from political organisations, the Patani issue championed by GEMPAR also attracted attention from several Malay and English-language newspapers in Malaya. Among them was *The Singapore Free Press*, which, in an article released in February 1948, asserted that the Patani Malays were victims of a cruel and deviant government. In March 1948, the *Warta Negara*

newspaper criticised the Aphaiwong government, which was seen as allowing the atrocities (Nik Mahmud 1999). The newspaper also urged the UN to send a special commission to investigate the actual situation in southern Thailand.

ACTIVITIES AND STRUGGLES OF GEMPAR

In the early stages of its establishment, one of the strategies used by GEMPAR was the publication and distribution of specialised leaflets to spread its influence and struggle. A pamphlet dated 7 March 1948, for example, was sent to the Penang Malay Association and several other organisations. Among the contents of the pamphlet were related to the case of Tuan Guru Haji Sulong. The pamphlet also hoped that readers would remember the pressures and tribulations faced by Malays living in southern Thailand (Malayan Security Service 1948a). This reflected GEMPAR's effort to mobilise Malay support in Malaya to not only sympathise with their cause, but also to continue to support and assist their cause.

The British report dated 30 March 1948 asserts that the Information Bureau successfully obtained a nine-page pamphlet in the English language, dated 16 March 1948, published by GEMPAR. The pamphlet began with a brief history of Patani, followed by the total population of the four southern districts and the economic resources available in the region. The pamphlet also affirmed the seriousness of the establishment, which devoted itself to the atrocities of the Thai government (Malayan Security Service 1948j). Additionally, a copy of the letter sent by Tengku Abdul Jalal bin Tengku Abdul Mutalib (*Nya Adol Na'Saiburi*) to the Prime Minister of Thailand, Phibun Songkhram, in 1944, regarding the Governor of Patani's cruelty to the Patani people was also attached.

Another copy of the letter sent by Tengku Abdul Jalal to the Prime Minister of Thailand, Nai Kuang Aphaiwongse, in December 1944, regarding the same issue was also attached. However, the letter reportedly received no response. The three pages of the letter reportedly featured the brutality of the Thai government and the claims of the Malays in southern Thailand under the title, "Some Facts about Malays in South Siam". Copies of the letter are also believed to have been sent to several individuals in Malaya, England, and the United States (Malayan Security Service 1948j). At the same time, the spread of news on GEMPAR had reportedly attracted the interest of many people in Thailand. As a result, more agents of the Thai government were sent to investigate the activities of GEMPAR (Malayan Security Service 1948j). This shows that by the end of March 1948, the Thai government had begun to realise the influence of GEMPAR in attracting the support of the Malays and thus, they attempted to suppress GEMPAR's independence campaign.

Additionally, the British report dated 1 May 1948 explained the findings of two pamphlets published by GEMPAR. The first was related to the story of the murder of Kemenan Mat as a result of the firing of the Siamese police in front of the Sungai Padi Club on 29 April 1948. The pamphlet also reported the brutality of Siamese police and soldiers, who acted cruelly towards civilians regardless of whether they were men or women. The second was related to the bitter situation in southern Thailand, which was further exacerbated by the Thai authorities, thus becoming a good reason to enable them to send more police and troops into the area (Malayan Security Service 1948b). The findings of these two pamphlets showed that GEMPAR continued to be consistent in attracting the sympathy and support of the Malays for their cause despite various obstacles, especially from the Thai government.

The British report dated 31 May 1948 stated that a GEMPAR committee meeting was held on 14 May 1948 at the GEMPAR office in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. Among the results of the meeting was the formation of a committee to investigate and receive reports on refugees from southern Thailand who arrived in Kelantan. There were two members of the committee, Tengku Din bin

Tengku Mansor and Nik Ishak bin Nik Idris. Another committee was responsible for monitoring the welfare of refugees and also consisted of two members, Haji Yaa'kob bin Haji Abdul Rahman and Tengku Mohamed. Another result was the sending of one or two members of GEMPAR to Perak and Kedah to inform them of the objective of the establishment of GEMPAR, as well as to gain the Malays' sympathy for the fate of the Patani Malays. Furthermore, the decision was also reached to publish a special pamphlet for Muslims to urge the public to donate to continue their cause (Malayan Security Service 1948b). This development showed that GEMPAR was becoming more aggressive in planning and carrying out its struggle to defend the plight of the Patani Malays who took refuge in Kelantan. They also made efforts to attract the support of the Malays, especially in Kedah, as well as to obtain financial resources through fundraising to cover the operating costs of the establishment.

In a statement issued by GEMPAR in May 1948, the organisation urged that peace in the four Malay districts in southern Thailand be restored. GEMPAR also requested that Tuan Guru Haji Sulong be released. In this regard, the Prime Minister of Thailand, Phibun Songkhram, stressed that he would work to resolve the issue. GEMPAR also called for justice from all mankind to feel the fate of the Patani Malays, who were oppressed by the Thai government. In addition, GEMPAR sent a letter of objection to the Secretary-General of the UN Security Council, threatening to refer the case of the persecution of the Patani Malays to the Committee on Human Rights and Civil Liberties (Malek 1993). At the same time, GEMPAR condemned the Thai Prime Minister's administration, which ran a military-style government and was fascist. GEMPAR urged the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, to suspend recognition of the newly formed Thai government.

Furthermore, GEMPAR planned to hand over the Patani problem to the British Colonial Office in London, through its minister, Lord Listowel. They also wanted to ask the British government to send a representative to Bangkok so that the British could change their foreign policy towards Thailand (Malek 1993). As a result, their foreign policy made it easier for the Patani Malays to leave Siam to join the Federation of Malaya. In this context, the British decided to stick with the Thai government because they were aware of the continued American support for Thailand at the time, despite certain misgivings about the manner of Phibun Songkhram's return to power (Suhrke 1975).

Raising the GEMPAR flag in Kelantan also raised concerns for the Thai government. Following the raising of the GEMPAR flag in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, the Thai government in Narathiwat implemented document and weapon checks on all individuals crossing the Siam-Kelantan border, starting on 5 March 1948 (Malayan Security Service 1948j). This highlights the significance of the GEMPAR flag, as its display prompted considerable anxiety within the Thai government about the potential threat posed by GEMPAR members sheltering in Kelantan.

Simultaneously, a new flag was created specifically by GEMPAR members to represent their desire to be under British protection. On 31 July 1948, the Secretary of GEMPAR, Nik Mahmood Abdul Majid, wrote to the Criminal Investigation Department of Kelantan, enclosing specimens of a flag and badge representing the new government of "South Siam" (Malayan Security Service 1948i: 590), which would encompass the districts of Pattani, Yala, Legeh, and Setul to be declared in the event of a revolution (Malayan Security Service 1948i). The flag was designed to symbolise that the new Malay state would be under British protection. It featured a rectangular design, nearly twice as long as it was wide, with the upper half displaying the Union Jack. The lower half was divided horizontally, with equal red and white sections. In the centre of the lower half was a gold design of crossed kris. The badge was a smaller reproduction of the flag. The writer noted that when British government officials or British troops entered southern Thailand, the Patani Malays would wear the badge to symbolise their acknowledgement of being under British protection.

Furthermore, the writer requested that the Criminal Investigation Department in Kelantan inform police officers across Kelantan, Kedah, Perlis, and throughout Malaya that if they encountered a Malay wearing such a badge, they should not harass them, but instead offer assistance. This clearly showed that one of the GEMPAR struggles was to have these four southern provinces of Thailand incorporated into the Federation of Malaya, in addition to being willing to remain under British protection. Nevertheless, the British could not fulfil the aspirations of the Patani Malays, as they were bound by their good relations with the Thai government.

THE FALL OF GEMPAR

Despite initial successes in organising local resistance, GEMPAR faced major challenges. One of the main factors in the fall of GEMPAR was the series of actions taken by the British, with the help of the Thai government. As a result of the pressure, the Patani Malay movement began to weaken and falter. By the end of 1948, the GEMPAR struggle had begun to face various obstacles. In November 1948, the Singapore police began raiding GEMPAR's office in Singapore (Suhrke 1975; Malek 1993). As a result, the British government also acted to ban GEMPAR as one of the strategies to cripple the struggle of the Patani Malays in southern Thailand. This action also indirectly undermined GEMPAR's activities, especially in the state of Kelantan.

Meanwhile, the British government was increasingly concerned about communist insurgency hiding in the Malayan-Siamese border, thus having to renegotiate with the Thai government on the issue. This led to the Songkhla Conference on 6 to 7 January 1949 to re-discuss the Malayan-Siamese border (Nik Mahmud 1999). In those discussions, the two sides had different goals. The British were more interested in securing the assistance of the Thai government to fight the communist insurgency who took refuge on the Malayan-Siamese border, while the Thai government was more interested in stopping any assistance and support from outsiders to the separatist movement among the Patani Malays. In addition, representatives of the British government expressed the willingness of the Kelantan government to take action against those who were found to have misunderstood that the Malayan government was giving weapons to the Patani Malays. The British government also pointed out that many GEMPAR leaders had stopped their activities, thus leaving GEMPAR almost paralysed.

As a result of the conference, the British government in Malaya had to take action against the Patani leaders, including GEMPAR leaders, who took refuge in Kelantan. During this period, the GEMPAR movement was suppressed, with key leaders arrested or forced into exile and the Thai state solidified its control over the region. For instance, Tengku Abdul Jalal was sentenced to residency in Perak from February to July 1949, before being allowed to move to Singapore. Tengku Abdul Kadir Petra was also sentenced in Pasir Puteh, Kelantan (Nik Mahmud 1999). Tuan Guru Haji Sulong was sentenced to three years in prison, while Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddeen was advised to stop all his activities. As a result, external factors, particularly the actions taken against some of the GEMPAR leaders, eventually contributed to the collapse of GEMPAR towards the end of 1949, having only been able to operate for about a year. This situation ultimately brought an end to GEMPAR's struggle to defend the welfare and future of the Patani Malays in southern Thailand.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the arrest of Tuan Guru Haji Sulong led to the radical rise of the Patani Malays and contributed to the establishment of GEMPAR. GEMPAR sought to reunite the Patani Malays while improving their standard of living under the Thai government. Various efforts and

measures were undertaken by GEMPAR to raise the issue, although the outcomes remained limited. Additionally, GEMPAR received support from various Malay political organisations, such as KRIS, MNP, the Kelantan Branch of UMNO, and the Singapore Malay Association, which were sympathetic to the GEMPAR struggle and the oppression experienced by the Patani Malays. However, the consequences of British pressure on some GEMPAR leaders eventually led to its dissolution in 1949. While the GEMPAR struggle for independence was ultimately unsuccessful, the movement became an important historical episode that showed that there was an effort made by the Patani Malays to reunite and liberate Patani.

The experience of GEMPAR and the failure of the Patani independence movement led to further marginalisation of the Malay-Muslim population in the southern provinces of Thailand. The failure of GEMPAR did not end the question of Patani's status and the issues of self-determination, autonomy, and identity continued to resonate in the region. This also contributed to the emergence of future uprisings and movements that continue to the present day, with groups like the Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani, Barisan Revolusi Nasional, Patani United Liberation Organisation, and Gerakan Islamiyyah Mujahideen Patani advocating for autonomy or independence for the Patani region.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that the study was carried out without any financial or commercial ties that might be interpreted as a potential conflict of interest.

NOTES

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