

The Payap University Archives: A Resource for the Study of Thailand

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This note provides an introduction to the holdings of the Payap University Archives, Chiang Mai, Thailand, and describes research subjects contained in those holdings. The note provides advice for potential users of the archives and details concerning the hours when the archives is open and restrictions on the use of certain collections.

In the years since its founding in 1978, the Payap University Archives, Chiang Mai, Thailand, has acquired a large collection of materials related to the history of Protestant missions and churches in Thailand. Those materials represent a unique window on a diverse range of fields and subjects related to the history of Thailand. The archives, however, remains relatively unknown outside of Thailand, hence this note.

In 1978 the Protestant churches of Thailand celebrated the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries in Thailand. At that time the Church of Christ in Thailand sought means to care for older records that were then being stored in a godown in Bangkok, and it approached Payap University (then Payap College) with the problem. In May of that year the university opened its archives with a part-time staff of two instructors and one student. Within two years the archives employed five full-time staff members and drew on several student assistants as well. The Payap archives became the second fully functioning archives in the Kingdom and was the first private archives, the first university archives, and the first archives outside of Bangkok. It is also one of the few "full-service" church archives in Asia. Two members of the staff have been trained at the archives school of the National Archives of India.

The years since have seen steady growth in the size of the Payap University Archives and in the usage of the archives by researchers. In the first year of reader service, 1979, the archives served readers only fifteen times whereas in more recent years it served readers nearly 400 times per year. From January through November 1990 it has served readers just over 200 times. The Payap University Archives' collections now contain approximately 900 linear feet of archival records, books, periodical titles, and photographs. The archives has three departments, records processing, manuscript repair, and reader service, and employs seven full-time employees.

The Holdings of the Payap University Archives

The Payap University Archives contains a number of different types of records, all of which are related directly or secondarily to the history of Protestantism in Thailand. First of all, as the official repository of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), the largest Protestant church in Thailand, the archives contains some 500 linear feet of denominational records from the central offices, the various departments, institutions, and regional bodies of the CCT, including local churches. Among these records are the Records of the American Presbyterian Mission, dating back to the nineteenth century. That mission was the major Protestant mission in Thailand from the 1850s until the 1960s. The bulk of the CCT's records, however, date from after World War II and are in Thai, although substantial amounts of English-language materials are also contained in these records.

In addition to official records of the CCT, the Payap University Archives houses a substantial number of related personal papers donated by local leaders and missionaries. Notable among these related collections are the records of the Thailand Baptist Missionary Fellowship, which has worked with tribal groups and ethnic Chinese since the 1950s. Finally, distinct from the records of the CCT but adjunct to them are the records of Payap University itself, notably those of the President's Office and of the Faculty of Theology (the former Thailand Theological Seminary).

Secondly, the archives has collected more than 50 reels of microfilm records from various American denominational bodies which sent missionaries to Thailand. Taken together, these records provide substantial documentation for nineteenth century Protestant missions in Thailand. They include the records of the Siam and the Laos (northern Thailand) missions of the Board of Foreign Missions, Presbyterian Church in the United States; the records of the Bangkok Mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions; the records of the Bangkok Mission of the American Missionary Association; the records of the Siam Mission of the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Union; and the Personal Papers, as well as the Diaries, of the Rev. Dan Beach Bradley.

In addition to these materials, the archives also contains microfilm copies of a number of significant missionary publications containing substantial references to Presbyterian missions in Thailand. These include *The Foreign Missionary*, *Woman's Work for Woman*, and *The North Carolina Presbyterian*. The archives also holds a microfilm copy of the *Bangkok Recorder*.

Thirdly, the Payap University Archives holds a large collection of primary and secondary works related to missionary work. These books include missionary books and biographies, locally produced church publications and works, bibles and tracts, and secondary works such as denominational materials, theses and scholarly publications, and general works related to the Protestant missionary movement. The library collection contains denominational publications by the sending missionary boards and a number of books by prominent Presbyterian leaders in the international missionary movement including Robert E. Speer and Arthur J. Brown. The archives also retains a wide assortment of discrete items, newsletters, local church bulletins, and individual manuscripts. Among these holdings are local church records dating back to the nineteenth century, notably the records of the "First Presbyterian Church of Chiang Mai" dating from 1869. The archives also has a rare complete set of the *Laos News* (1904–19), an invaluable missionary publication concerning Presbyterian work in northern Thailand.

Finally, the archives contains some 30,000 photographs as well as films, videos, and tape recordings. It also holds hundreds of hours of

taped interviews (conducted in English as well as Thai) with missionaries, former missionaries, and Thai church leaders. And in addition to all of this, the archives has a collection of thousands of blue prints for church buildings, school buildings, hospitals, and missionary houses, including several maps of missionary property.

Although not officially a part of its holdings, the Payap University Archives also houses the library of the Dhamma-Logos Project, an interfaith dialogue project that ended in the late 1970s. The collection of more than 200 volumes contains both English and Thai publications concerning Thai Buddhism, interfaith dialogue, and religious studies generally. The archives also has access to the library of the Office of History, Church of Christ in Thailand, which contains some 300 volumes including secondary materials related to the American and European cultural sources of Protestant missionary activity, the international missionary movement, and the sociocultural and religious setting of Protestantism in Thailand. The theological library of the McGilvary Faculty of Theology, holding more than 10,000 volumes and housed in a nearby building, provides yet another supplementary resource for users of the Payap archives.

Uses of Materials Contained in the Payap University Archives

The Payap University Archives limits its collecting field to primary and secondary materials related to the history of Protestantism in Thailand. The usefulness of those materials grows out of both the role of Protestantism in recent Thai history and the relative lack of other archival sources for the study of Thai history. Which is to say, missionary and indigenous church records have something to contribute in and of themselves and are often one of the few sources of historical information available to many researchers.

Missionary records take on a particular importance for the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries particularly in subject areas related to Thai social, economic, and religious history. While the actual role of Protestantism in Thai modernization and Westernization awaits deeper study and further clarification, it is clear that the Protestant missionaries participated in the early stages of modern social change in Thailand. In

many cases, thus, missionary and church records document the earliest beginnings of processes of modernization in the fields of education, medicine, printing, and the transfer of Western technology. To date, a number of researchers have used records of the Payap University Archives to study the emergence of Western-style education in Thailand, including the role of the missionaries in Thai education. But in most other areas of Westernization, such as medicine and printing, few researchers have made use of the available material in the archives. The field of the history of medicine, for example, remains particularly neglected even though missionary records offer a rich source of information on the beginnings and development of Western medical practice in Thailand. The same remains true to an even larger extent for less obvious potential uses for missionary and church records, for example, the history of communications and transportation, the development of banking and postal services in regional centres such as Chiang Mai and Phet Buri, or urbanization and social and geographical migration. To date, furthermore, virtually no research has been done at the archives on the role of the convert church in Thai modernization, even though the Protestant converts represent one of the earliest groups of ethnic Thai (and northern Thai) to experience the impact of Westernization. Because of their close connection to the missionaries, the converts were intimately and intensively exposed to Western values and ways at an early date. That contact led many converts to enter newly emerging professions, such as teaching. It caused them to migrate to the cities. It led them into a money economy.

Little use, to take another example, has been made of the resources of the archives for the study of linguistic subjects and of printing. Protestant missionaries involved themselves from an early date in the production of dictionaries and other linguistic tools and further contributed directly to the modernization of the Thai language through printing. They established the first presses. They played a particularly large role in the aborted modernization of the northern Thai dialect and script. Missionaries from the times of Dan Beach Bradley and Samuel J. Smith also played an important role in the emergence of the newspaper and of modern literature both in central and northern Thailand. They and

their converts were among the first to actively distribute printed literature throughout the country. Thus, a variety of subjects related to the emergence of the modern Thai language could be productively researched at the archives.

At the same time, missionary and church records contain a wealth of observations on traditional Thai society, again especially in central and northern Thailand. Missionary writings and publications record traditional rites, describe animistic practices, recount stories, and describe traditional values and beliefs. As is true of all historical records, missionary sources must be used judiciously because the missionaries, particularly those before 1900, brought with them deep ethnocentric prejudices regarding traditional Thai culture and religion. On the other hand, the very fact that the missionaries were especially interested in religious issues led them to give special attention to those issues. Missionary records offer the further advantage that many of the missionaries spoke Thai or northern Thai well (a few, even fluently); and they had ample opportunity to observe the lives and ways of the people, especially because they travelled widely throughout the country spending large blocks of time living near small rural communities. One must also not forget that the missionaries themselves went through a process of trying to adapt to life in Thailand, a process which softened the edges of their prejudices.

Some use has been made of the Protestant missionary and church records at Payap in the field of women's studies, but far more awaits to be done. Protestantism plays a major role in the field of women's education and in changing the nature of women's roles in Thai society, and in the process the Protestant missionaries devoted a great deal of attention to the place of women in traditional Thai society, particularly in central and in northern Thailand. In this regard the Presbyterian publication, *Woman's Work for Woman* (available from the Presbyterian Historical Association in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the United States) stands as a rich and still largely untapped resource for the study of the place of women in Thai society and the impact of modernizing change on that place. The archives' holdings also contain information on family ways, child-rearing practices, and the place of the aged.

To date, the records at the Payap University Archives have received the most scholarly attention for their value in northern Thai studies and history. The archives contains great amounts of information on missionary work in Chiang Mai (from 1867), Chiang Rai (from 1896), Lampang (from 1885), Lamphun (from 1891), Nan (from 1895), and Phrae (from 1893), and contains data for sub-regional centres such as Fang, Wiang Pa Pao, and Chiang Kham. The archives also contains substantial materials for the central region as well, particularly Bangkok (from 1828) and Phet Buri (from 1861). The Protestant missionaries entered work in southern Thailand at a relatively late date, mostly after 1900, and so there is less material available for the south. In any event, the archives holds a significant amount of material related to regional and local history.

Beginning in the 1890s the Presbyterian missionaries in northern Thailand gave a great deal of attention to the question of expanding their work to reach all of the "Tai" peoples outside of Thailand proper. In pursuit of that goal they took a number of ethnographic survey trips, collecting ethnographic data from Kengtung in Burma, Yunnan in China, and even from northern Vietnam. At about the same time they engaged in an acrimonious feud with the Baptists over the occupation of Kengtung, which feud produced large amounts of ethnographic material. In 1916 the Presbyterians finally established work in Yunnan. Thus, the Payap University Archives contains some amount of materials for peoples and regions beyond Thailand, including a small collection of rare photographs concerning mission work in Yunnan in the 1920s and 1930s.

Those interested in the recent history and ethnography of a number of hill tribal groups in northern Thailand will find the archives of particular help. Protestant missionaries began working with hill tribes in the 1890s and have continued that work down to the present. The most helpful archival collection regarding recent tribal work is the Records of the Thailand Baptists Missionary Fellowship, which begins in the middle 1950s and contains reports, surveys, and correspondence of missionaries working with tribal groups. And in addition the archives has a number of oral history interviews taped in the early 1980s with missionaries working among tribal groups. The archives is particularly strong in Karen materials, but it also contains material for most of the tribal groups found

in northern Thailand. These materials include publications in tribal languages, particularly religious publications.

While a number of researchers have availed themselves of the materials at Payap for tribal research, virtually no attention has been given to the potential of missionary and church records for the study of the Chinese in Thailand. Yet, from the 1830s Protestant missionaries sustained work among the Chinese until the 1890s and took up that work again after World War I. While many of the records available have to do with Bangkok, there is also a fair amount of material related to the Chinese in other parts of the country.

In terms of the more traditional historical fields such as political and diplomatic history, the missionary records at the Payap University Archives stand as a potentially useful secondary source, particularly as the missionaries at times participated in events. This is particularly true for Bangkok into the 1870s and for northern Siam from 1867 onwards. Those studying the centralization of power in Bangkok will find missionary records helpful for the north. To date, missionary records have been largely ignored for the general study of Thai history, thus representing a largely untapped reservoir for political and diplomatic history. Missionary records tend to give attention to the comings and goings of royalty, particularly as travelling royalty often visited mission institutions.

The records and materials at the Payap University Archives are most immediately relevant to those interested in religious, particularly Protestant, subjects. The archives is potentially useful for virtually any subject one can think of in terms of the history of Thai Protestantism, particularly because its library collection taken together with the separate library of the Office of History, mentioned above, also offers a large amount of supplementary and secondary resources relevant to the study of Thai Protestantism. To date, scholars have used all of these sources to study the relationship of missionary work and the convert churches to Thai culture, the history of local churches, the history of Karen Christianity in Thailand, the history of Protestant churches in northern Thailand, and the history of Protestant worship, to name only a few subjects. Those interested in the world-view and the theology of the missionaries and/or the convert churches will find vast amounts of

relevant material.

The usefulness for church history of the records at Payap University are limited in a number of ways. The archives does not actively seek materials from the Roman Catholic Church in Thailand nor from organized local Protestant bodies other than the Church of Christ in Thailand, simply because it could not adequately encompass such a broad collecting field. It does contain a certain amount of materials for Thai Catholicism, mostly published items such as newsletters and pamphlets, obtained passively. It also has a larger amount of materials generated by the various bodies related to the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand, again primarily printed items obtained "in the course of events". It should be noted, however, that the archives does house the Records of the Thailand Bible Society, an independent church agency. And at this writing, the Christian Conference of Asia (formerly based in Singapore) and Payap University are discussing the possibility of making the Payap University Archives the official repository for all CCA records.

Advice to Overseas Researchers

Those intending to do research in Thailand in any of the fields or topics suggested above should make it a point to visit the Payap University Archives. While this is particularly true for those engaged in research topics concerning northern Thailand, those studying in other regions should not overlook the archives.

Researchers who might want to come to Chiang Mai and Thailand particularly because of the archives should definitely write first. For Asian and Pacific region researchers, it is hard to give any blanket advice. They should write and ask. Much depends upon the subject being researched and the importance of missionary and church records for that subject. In some cases, such researchers may be able to purchase relevant microfilms from the repository of the records in question. It will be difficult, however, for most researchers in the Asia and Pacific region to gain access to the same materials as found at Payap. North American researchers studying any historical subject dating up to roughly 1950 would find such a trip a waste of time (but otherwise enjoyable) as most

of what is housed in the Payap University Archives can be found in the relevant denominational archives or larger missionary library collections in the United States. The Presbyterian Historical Association in Philadelphia remains a key repository for missionary records relevant to Thailand (and many other nations of Asia) and contains a great deal not found at Payap.

For any potential user, however, the Payap University Archives offers at least two advantages. First of all, it contains the best single collection of records and resources for the study of Thailand Protestant missionary and church topics. A second advantage lies in the fact that the archives has a close working association with the staff of the Office of History of the Church of Christ in Thailand, and that staff has years of experience using and advising others on the use of the Payap Collections.

NOTE

The Payap University Archives is open Monday through Friday from 8.00 a.m. until 12.00 noon and again from 1.00 p.m. until 4.30 p.m. It is closed for one week at Christmas and another week during Songkran (in April) and closes for official Thai holidays. All of the official records of the Church of Christ in Thailand, Payap University, and the Thailand Baptist Missionary Society are subject to a twenty-five-year restriction, which may be waived in individual cases upon written request. General holdings, microfilm materials, and the library collection are not subject to restriction; but no materials may be borrowed under any circumstances. They must be used in the archives reading room. Photocopying by the staff is available at one baht per page.

The archives is happy to respond to questions concerning the contents of its collections but is not able to do research for readers, local or overseas. For further information contact Mr. Larry Ashmun, Director of the Archives, Payap University, LPO Chiang Mai 101, Chiang Mai 50000, Thailand.

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