

HeRD 1995

Herb's Research Diary

Orientation Blurb for New Recipients

HeRD stands for Herb's Research Diary. I started it in August '95 with a small mailing list made up mostly of family and a few friends. It's one purpose is to share thoughts and ideas that come out of my research experience. Time and again, I come across interesting tidbits, many of which I'll never have reason to publish. HeRD allows me to share these tidbits with others. I try to keep the items short, somewhere between 150-400 words. I started out trying to do one every day, but that proved to be a bit hectic. So, my "contract" with you is that on most days, if I'm in C'Mai, a HeRD will appear in your Inbox. And they'll keep appearing there 'til you let tell know that "Enough is too much! Stop!" -- or until I get tired of it. I not only welcome but encourage your responses, comments, and suggestions. The people getting HeRD are mostly people connected with church work in one form or another. I hope you enjoy HeRD and maybe even find it useful as well as occasionally entertaining. Peace, Herb [cnxhswns@cmu.chiangmai.ac.th] [11/95]

HeRD #1 - Elder Inta, C'Mai Boys' School teacher

One of the most serious problems facing any researcher of northern Thai church history, is that the bulk of the sources are from missionaries. They are addressed to church bureaucrats and others overseas. They tend to not give much information about specific, named northern Thai Christians. Northern Thai church leaders and members remain mostly shadowy figures, and it is hard to measure the significance of their role in their own history. In the last couple of weeks, I've come across such a figure. He is ELDER INTA (also spelled In Tah and Intah). I know nothing about his background, but he was evidently an important figure in northern Thai church history. In March 1888, the North Laos Mission [northern Thailand] started its first boys' school (today's Prince Royal's College) under the Rev. D. G. Collins. Collins was assisted by Intah, "a young Christian man." Kru ["teacher"] Inta taught northern Thai language courses. Collins wrote that although In Tah had never taught before he was to be congratulated both for his faithfulness and his effectiveness. Collins intended to give him further special instruction so he could teach other courses than just northern Thai. He was evidently successful in doing so, because in 1889 Kru Inta began teaching other subjects. In 1890 Collins reported that the Chiang Mai Church had elected Kru Inta an elder and avowed that he became more useful to the school with every passing year. In 1891 the church appointed Elder Inta as its first northern Thai Sunday school superintendent, thus putting him in the front rank of northern Thai church leaders. In 1894-95, the Chiang Mai Station of the mission experienced a severe shortage of missionary workers, and in that situation Elder Inta took over the full load of leading the Sunday school and assumed responsibility for the actual running of the Boys' School. The station' 1894 annual report called him "remarkably efficient" as head of the Sunday school. In 1895 Elder Inta worked with at least one missionary in translating materials into northern Thai, and he was described as having some English language skills. In 1890, Collins made these observation of Elder Inta, which sum up what we know about him. Collins wrote that Elder Inta was growing intellectually just as was the school. He was faithful, competent, and "a favorite of the boys."

I'm just now working on the material for 1895 and following and will let you know if I learn anything more about Elder Inta. One of the things I am increasingly impressed with is that the northern Thai church had strong leadership potential in the early 1890s. Elder Inta stands as one of the most important of those "native" leaders. He was one of the first northern Thai

Western-style educators. He was one of a handful who could speak some English. He assumed the highest office open to lay church leaders, superintendent of the Chiang Mai Church's Sunday school. He was, according to the records we have, a man of administrative ability and a winsome teacher.

[Collins, "Report of the Boys' School for the year ending Sept. 30th, 1888," 15 November 1888, v. 22, BFM; Collins, "Report of the Boys' School for the year closing Oct. 31st 1889," 26 November 1889, v. 22, BFM; Collins, "Report of the Boys' School for the year closing Nov. 30th. 1890," v. 22, BFM; Collins, "Report of the Boys School of Cheung Mai for the year closing Nov. 30th. 1891, v. 22, BFM; Nellie McGilvary, "Annual Report of Cheung Mai Station Dec 1 1893-1894," v. 22, BFM; Denman, "Report of Chieng Mai Station for year Ending December 1, 1895," 10 December 1895, v. 22, BFM.]

HeRD #2 - McGilvary's views on Evangelism, 1889

Daniel McGilvary was the Father of the North Laos Mission and the northern Thai church. No one compares with him in influencing the beginnings of both the mission and the church. He wrote the Chiang Mai Station's annual report for 1889, and in it he discussed his views on evangelism. They are important because McGilvary's colleagues in the mission largely agreed with his views, and because they influenced missionary directions well into the 20th century. One still hears strong echoes of them in the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) today. He wrote: "To this [evangelism] we think we have given relatively a greater prominence probably than is done in most Mission fields. This as a foundation, has been blessed to the growth of the Church and has at the same time created the demand and supplied the material for all our other departments. We believe too that the whole superstructure is thus placed on a surer Scriptural basis. While laying our plans with a view to the ultimate and permanent establishment of the church and its requirements, we believe the great aim of the present generation of missionaries should be to reach and evangelize the present generation of lost men." Missionary work is closer to the work of the Apostles than any other work. "They were pioneers in most of their fields as we are." Wherever they were "...their first time and strength were devoted to preaching the gospel. They infused the minds of their converts with the same great idea. The fact we emphasize is that the great work of the Church is the pulling down the strongholds of Satan. This can be done only by a working Church. Missionaries as leaders must enlist the militia, if not trained soldiers or theologians, and make each citizen a soldier."

HeRD #3 - Overview Of Northern Thai Church History

A comment from one of you reminds me that most of you don't have an orientation in northern Thai church history. It's hard to put these little vignettes into perspective. So, here's a quick overview. The story began in April 1867 when the Rev. Daniel McGilvary and Sophia Bradley McGilvary arrived in Chiang Mai. C'Mai was the distant chief city of Siam's northern dependencies. The Wilson family joined them a year later, and by Sept. 1869 the "North Laos Mission" had 7 converts. In that month, C'Mai's ruling prince ordered the execution of several of the converts and two were executed. This event set church life back seriously for a decade or so. In 1885 the mission founded its second station in Lampang. The late 1880s and early 1890s were a period of expansion and hope. By 1897 the mission had five stations and one sub-station spread across northern Thailand. Its institutional base also grew to include boarding schools and hospitals in all of the stations as well as a mission press in C'Mai. Converts were scattered across the region. In 1920 there were 37 churches and 6,649 communicant members. The North Laos Mission was eventually renamed the North Siam Mission, and in 1921 it united with its sister mission in south and central Siam to become the American Presbyterian Mission (APM).

Within its own context, the story of the northern Thai church is significant in a number of ways. From a Christian perspective, it is the story of expanding the church into a whole new cultural region, and not a small one at that. From a Thai perspective, both the missionaries and the converts played an important role in social change and modernization. From a personal perspective, this story is an endlessly fascinating one.

HeRD #4 - Pa Wan, Training School, Night School

It's hard enough trying to recover information about northern Thai Christian men. It is even more difficult when it comes to women. One woman of some potential importance was PA WAN ("Pa" meaning auntie). Here's what I know about her:

The North Laos Mission started its Theological Training School in 1889, on the assumption that the school would train men for evangelistic and pastoral work. In its second year, however, Pa Wan joined the school. She wanted to improve her Bible knowledge. The school's principle, the Rev. W. C. Dodd, described her as an "intelligent, zealous woman" who was working at the Mission Hospital as an evangelist. She, in fact, seems to have been something of a chaplain, visiting patients and teaching them about Christianity. She was a leader. Dodd reported in 1891 that the students of the school were beginning to show such zeal in evangelism that they were having an influence on others. He singled out Pa Wan as an example and wrote, "So earnest became this spirit of personal work that it was seen to extend itself beyond the members of the school. Especially did Pa Wan, the only woman in attendance, draw to her and associate with her a number of other women for work among women." Pa Wan put her theological education to use. Dodd reported in 1890 that she was in charge of the Mission Hospital's "night school" that had started up in September of that year. The school's pupils were primarily hospital patients and their families, and she had an average of 13 students, ages 8 to 50, in attendance. The school was open every evening but Sunday. She taught reading and religious subjects. The school continued on for the year 1891 with a fluctuating attendance that went as high as 15 to 17 and as low as 6 or 7. After 1891, the school disappears from the records of the mission as does Pa Wan herself.

Our glimpse of Pa Wan, thus, is limited to the years 1890-1891. Even this glimpse, however, reveals a great deal about the role of women in the church and provides a bit of an insight into a remarkable woman's life. Northern Thai women, traditionally, had no leadership role in religious activities (except in certain animistic rites). Pa Wan, however, broke that mold and the mission (and her fellow students) were willing to have her to do so. It is most remarkable that a woman of her time would seek, let alone receive, a theological education. It is perhaps equally remarkable that a woman would teach reading and religion to others, including men. We should also focus on the fact that she apparently ran the night school on her own. There is no record of any missionary taking formal charge of it. This makes her one of the first independent northern Thai educators, male or female. We should also note, finally, that the mission and church allowed her this role. In the context of northern Thai society this is remarkable enough. It is also surprising that ordained American clergymen of the 1890s would tolerate a woman enrolled as a full and equal theological student.

[Dodd, "Report of the Cheung Mai Mission Station For the year ending November 30, 1890,," 1 December 1890, v. 22, BFM; McKean, "Report of the Medical Missionary Work in Cheung Mai, Laos for the Months Jan'y 21 to Nov 30, 1890," v. 22, BFM.; "Report of the North Laos Mission Training School for the Year 1891," 23 February 1892, v. 9, BFM; McKean, "Report of

Cheungmai Station of The North Laos Mission For the Year Dec. 1, 1890 to Dec. 1, 1891," v. 22, BFM.]

HeRD #5 - Hospital Problems

The history of the introduction of Western medicine into northern Thailand by the missionaries deserves a book of its own. It was no easy matter to import the medicines, the equipment, the techniques, and the values associated with Western medicine. One incident, told by Dr. William A. Briggs of the Lampang Station in 1892, illustrates the problem of values. It seems that a patient died in the men's ward of Briggs' make-shift hospital. Immediately the rest of the patients and their attending families and/or friends fled the premises. Briggs was left with one patient, probably too feeble to make good his escape. He didn't discuss the reason WHY a death in the ward emptied it, but there is no question about it. The other occupants were deathly afraid that the spirit of the deceased would return to the scene and, probably, cause them frightful trouble. In late twentieth-century Chiang Mai with its numerous hospitals it is easy to forget that just a century ago, the very concept of a medical institution was alien. It didn't always fit very well with people's values and attitudes. But, then, what would you expect of the ignorant, superstitious northern Thai people who were so primitive (and naive) that they only paid their doctors IF THEY WERE CURED! Weird, huh.

HeRD #6 - Pastoral Counseling

The Chiang Mai Station Annual Report for 1891 provides details in the life of the Chiang Mai Church, the "Mother Church of the North," and offers the following brief observation, "The pastoral work, visiting the sick, counseling the listless and straying, performing marriage and burial & ceremonies and giving attention to cases of discipline has become a large and taxing part of the work of this church."

This sentence provides us with one of the few clear descriptions of what the Presbyterian missionaries meant by pastoral care. It defines pastoral care as giving special attention to the ill, performing Christian rituals (marriages, funerals, other ceremonies), and protecting the purity of the church (counseling and discipline). One could devote a 20 page paper to "unpacking" the implications of this sentence.. What I find striking in it is the stated use of pastoral counseling. It was not simply "available" to those with life problems but actively directed towards members whose interest in their faith and the church was flagging. It was the first step in a process that could end with disciplining individuals when necessary. In the missionary mind, counseling and discipline were important for at least two reasons. They, first, had ultimate and eternal consequences for those who were straying from the only path of eternal salvation. They, second, protected the purity of the church as the community of the saved, and they insured the effectiveness of the church as a body of committed, active members. Pastoral counseling wasn't directed towards helping members solve immediate, personal problems so much as it was the means for keeping converts converted.

Recent research suggests that CCT pastors practice a similar form of counseling today. When parishioners come to them for solutions to life problems, the pastor frequently sees the problem as being a lack of faith on the part of the parishioner. If the parishioner "really" believed the problem wouldn't exist. I would, propose as a hypothesis for further study that the historical association of counseling with preserving conversion is one source of this present attitude. The CCT's historical experience since the missionary makes this hypothesis likely. Until very recently, the CCT has consistently sought church renewal through the use of revivalistic techniques imported largely from America and China. Revivalism began in the 1920s and has had as its goal the same as missionary counseling, namely the "re-conversion" of " the

listless and straying." It is likely that revivalism reinforced the use of pastoral counseling it inherited from the missionary era of the church' history.

HeRD #7 - Converting the Hmong

The following quotation was written by a scholar describing the historical experience of the Hmong people in northern Thailand. He gives a great deal of attention to both Catholic and Protestant missionary work among the Hmong and observes that the Catholics have been much more successful than the Protestants in winning Hmong converts. He states, "I believe one of the reasons for this is because the Catholics in Thailand, as one senior priest told me, have pursued a strategy of working with rather than against the beliefs of the people they are seeking to convert. This gradualist approach has fared better than the culturally radical techniques of many Protestant missionaries in Thailand, who have often encouraged the burning of altars and shamanic equipment." [Tapp, SOVEREIGNTY AND REBELLION, p. 90] Any thoughts on this one?

HeRD #8 - Medicine & Religion

Some years ago an American scholar wrote a book in which he argued that in the 19th century American Protestants initiated numerous reforms aimed at making American society more Christian. Most of their reforms had a strong impact on American life, but they failed to make the country any more Christian. The same thing happened here. The introduction of Western medicine provides a good example. Dr. Thomas, Lampang Station, reported that in 1896 the Lampang hospital had 37 patients who stayed an average of 5 weeks each. On the average two or three individuals (family or friends) stayed with them to take care of them. Thomas made it a point to explain that all of these individuals received substantial Christian instruction so that "...all the hospital patients have thus been impressed day by day with the fact that their healing does not depend so much upon the means used as upon God's blessing upon those means that we all are only poor, weak instruments in His hands to accomplish His work."

This was not just old-fashioned piety at work. In northern Thailand traditional medicine was closely allied to animism and Buddhism. Religion and ritual were central to medical practice. The missionaries didn't want to lose that association. They wanted to replace animism and Buddhism with Christianity. In the long run, however, it didn't turn out that way. While quite a few people did convert to Christianity through their encounter with missionary medicine, they were an incredibly small percentage of all who received treatment. The basic rationale of Western medicine was to divorce religion from medicine. A Buddhist doctor or an atheist doctor could use the same techniques as a Christian one and achieve the same results. Missionary medicine had a major impact on medical care in northern Thailand right down to the 1930s. But the North never became Christian - not even remotely close.

HeRD #9 – Transliteration

For some years now, a few missionaries in northern Thailand have been considering the possibility of producing a northern Thai dialect Bible using central, or standard, Thai script. In the "old days" northern Thai had its own script and was virtually a separate language. Millions still speak the dialect, but the script has fallen into disuse. I had always considered this issue a recent one, but come to find out not so!

The North Laos Mission, in 1889, had been struggling for nearly twenty years to set up a mission press, and in that year it still had to depend on handwritten copies for distributing its northern Thai Christian literature. The mission dealt with the problem by emphasizing Siamese

(central Thai) literacy among its converts. There was a relatively large Christian literature in Siamese, including the Bible. This solution was not satisfactory, however, because so many central Thai words were foreign to the people. They found it hard, thus, to understand Christian literature and the Bible in Siamese even when they could read the script. In 1889 the mission came up with a new solution. It would combine the northern Thai dialect with the Siamese script. The Chiang Mai station annual report for 1889 recorded that the mission voted to have a "tentative edition of a Scriptural Catechism" prepared by Sophia McGilvary in "idiomatic Laos." It intended to print this catechism in central Thai script. The report stated further, "If it meets our expectation the Gospel of Matthew will be printed in the same manner. It will have the advantage of being more easily understood than a Siamese book, and at the same time it will facilitate the learning of the Siamese character by those who know the Laos and those who know neither Laos nor Siamese." The Chiang Mai Station report for 1891 records the completion of Sophia McGilvary's translation of the Gospel of Matthew and that "...its having been printed in the Siamese character by the American Bible Society is the most important item in the literary work of the year."

As far as I know, this is the only instance of printing northern Thai in Siamese at that time. The mission opened a press in 1892, just a year later. That press undertook to produce a Christian literature in northern Thai script.

[McGilvary, "Annual Report of Chiengmai (N. Laos) Mission from Oct. 1st 1888 to Nov. 30th 1889," 2 December 1889, v. 22, BFM; McKean, "Report of Cheungmai Station of The North Laos Mission For the Year Dec. 1, 1890 to Dec. 1, 1891," v. 22, BFM.]

HeRD #10 - Mission Treasurer

The Rev. Howard Campbell had a distinguished missionary career, serving as many years as the supervising pastor of the Chiang Mai First Church pastoral team. As a young missionary, however, he was "stuck" with one of the most burdensome tasks the North Laos Mission had, that of Mission Treasurer. I leave you to ponder his remarks, given in his personal report to the Board for 1896.

"If the chief functions of the Mission Treasurership are to cultivate irritability & loss of appetite on the party of the Treasurer, to lessen the number of his friends and shorten the probable duration of his term of service as a missionary, the year's work has, no doubt, met all reasonable expectations. If the functions of the office be other than these, it would hardly be wise to hazard an opinion as to whether the year's work has been a shining success or a miserable failure. One thing, however, is certain, viz. when the millennium has arrived, if there still remains mission treasury work to be performed there will be a layman to perform it."

HeRD #11 - Mission Treasurer Again

Dr. Edwin C. Cort, an outstanding physician who achieved an international reputation in tropical medicine, shared the sad fate of Campbell, the subject of yesterday's HeRD. As a young missionary, he served for a time as mission treasurer. He gave his assessment of the job, just as he was getting into it, in a letter to his father dated 28 April 1910. He wrote, "...I am beginning to appreciate the compliment, if not the work. It will be valuable experience for it has given me a grasp of the problems of the mission that it would have taken years to gain otherwise and it has perhaps also given me an influence that I would have been slow in gaining otherwise, so in the long run it will doubtless prove worth the "strenuousness" required but I shall be glad to be relieved of the burden as soon as possible."

Campbell treated his "treasury work" with humor, and Cort approached it optimistically (or cynically), if a tad unenthusiastically. Their comments point to one of the more perplexing daily problems facing the missionaries. They spent endless amounts of time on what they termed "temporal" work, the business of managing the mission. Much of this time went to property, finances, and transport. They didn't feel very good about it, but they also saw no way around it. For years the clergy missionaries asked the Board to send out a lay business manager. Some of them worried about the impression all of this made on the "native" Christians, when they saw the chief exemplars of their new faith spending so much time on so-called "secular" matters.

HeRD #12 - Chiang Dao Church, 1898

Here's a snapshot of the life and problems of a local northern Thai church in the 1890s. The congregation is the Chiang Dao Church, located north of C'Mai on the road to Fang. The church was founded by McGilvary in 1893. He visited the church for two weeks at some point before this report was written, visiting church families and holding worship services. The source of this report is the C'Mai Station's bi-monthly letter for November 1898.

McGilvary wrote, "The short tour emphasized the fact too well known before, that the church has suffered from the want of ministerial or official oversight. The native minister put in charge of this church three years ago has no connection with it this year. We believe that he is a good man and maintains his Christian character, only the character is too weak to leave its impress on the church. During our visits he does excellent service. The rest of his time he devotes to his farm for a living." He went on to state, "On the other hand, the church has some good material in its membership. These, with a bench of five reliable ruling elders, and the past efficiency of the church give us good hope for it in the future." McGilvary noted that the financial condition of the church was improving. He went so far as to state that their future danger would be their prosperity rather than poverty. He concluded that it was not the church's fault it had received so little missionary oversight. They appreciate missionary visits, he avowed, and each visit left the church in better condition.

Harris, "Cheung Mai," in "Bi-monthly Letters of North Laos Mission," November 1898, pp. 87-90. v. 22, BFM.

HeRD #13 - Peace Celebrations

For us The War will always be World War II. It's hard to get behind that war to see the impact of World War I on world history. Maybe the following will help. It describes the peace celebration held in Chiang Mai in September 1919, some 10 months after hostilities ceased. The story is put together from 3 sources, listed below.

Mabel Cort wrote, "Just now we are having our peace celebration and we are having a holiday. We had no school Friday because the boys were getting ready for our peace service on Sabbath. We invited all the officials from the Viceroy down. It was a great undertaking, one which will long be remembered in Chiengmai." [1] The peace service was held on Sunday September 21st. First Church, C'Mai, was decorated with Siamese flags. Just before the service, the boys of the Prince Royal's College, the mission boys' school, marched through the streets and into the service, accompanied by a Siamese army band loaned to them for the event. They carried all of the flags of the Allies and placed them at the front of the church. Kru [Teacher] Kham Ai, a senior member of First Church's pastoral team, read Psalm 86. Dr. Gillies of the Seminary prayed for the King, Siam, and world peace. Dr. Campbell, supervising pastor of First Church, preached. The PRC boys sang an anthem. After the service the boys with their military band marched through the city and back to school. Cornelia Harris felt it the service was a high point

of the 3 days of celebrations. All of the highest officials of the North attended. [2, also 1] Other festivities followed. The government held a huge official reception on the following Tuesday evening. Among the guests was the Siamese Viceroy for the North, Chao Dara, one of the wives of the late King Chulalongkorn, and the British Consul. The building where it was held was illuminated, and all of the princes, princesses, and government officials attended. Selected missionaries were included on the guest list. They had an informal supper that included a number of toasts. Harris wrote, "The toast to America and the Mission in this country was really wonderful. It was put on too thick but it showed that our work was appreciated." [3]

[Mabel Cort to Mother, 23 September 1919, Cort Papers; Cornelia McGilvary Harris to Christina Kneidler, 23 September 1919, McGilvary Family Papers; Cornelia McGilvary Harris to Christina Kneidler, 26 September 1919, McGilvary Family Papers.]

HeRD #14 - Medicine & Self-Support

Today's vignette is in the "The Best Laid Plans of Mice & Men" category. In the mid-1890s the North Laos Mission began emphasizing "self-support" in all of its work. For almost 30 years the mission had provided free education, free medicine, and paid dozens of evangelists from mission funds. In a great shift in missionary thinking going on around the world, it was decided that all of this only hampered the growth of the "native" church. The mission changed its policy to one of encouraging self support. Using missionary medicine as an example, I would like to argue that this shift had unintended consequences.

Phrae. 1896. Dr. Briggs changed the medical policy of the station from one of giving away free medicine to one of expecting payments. He reported, "The result of the change this year was as expected. People who would spend all they possessed, if necessary, for treatment by Native Doctors, refused to give the smallest amount for our medicine. Christians well able to pay for their medicine, would rather see their babies go around with sore eyes & themselves unable to work for a week from fever, than spend three cents for a bottle of eye-wash or the same amount for a ill and some quinine." He noted, however, that by the end of the year the situation was improving. People, including the Christians, were getting used to the idea of having to pay for their medical care and medicines.

The missionaries, we saw in an earlier HeRD, wanted to keep the close link in northern Thai culture between medicine and religion. They also wanted to impress people with the loving concern of God. The policy of self-support frustrated these ends. Medicine was no longer a religious matter. It was a financial one. Payment was expected for services. To be sure, the missionaries didn't turn away the indigent, but the long term consequences of the self-support movement secularized medical care. It took medical care out of the religious realm. In traditional medicine money was involved, but it was for paying for the rituals, rites, and incantations that were linked to traditional practice. Missionary medicine, after self-support, became a straight financial transaction. It speeded the introduction of and made medical care available in a Western-style money economy. Self-support turned missionary medicine into an agent of modernization and reduced its effectiveness as an agent of missionary evangelization. I leave this with you as a hypothesis - not yet "proven" but well worth considering.

[Shields, "Report of Praa Station," 5 December 1896, v. 22, BFM; and Briggs, Personal Report, 1896, v. 22, BFM.]

HeRD #15 - Pastoral Care & Self-Support

Let's pursue the theme of self-support for another day. I am more and more impressed with the unforeseen consequences the drive for self-support had for the North Laos Mission. Theological education provides another example. Beginning in 1894, the mission attempted to do two things at the same time. It tried to put an ordained pastoral care system in place and to get the churches to pay their pastors themselves. Up to this point, there had been no pastors and the mission evangelists had been paid by the mission. Both churches and pastors would have preferred the mission to pay pastors, esp. since most of the newly installed pastors had previously been salaried evangelists. At this same time, the mission stopped hiring evangelists. This meant that there was a sudden, drastic dropping off of the possibility of employment for Christian workers. It followed that the number of students at the mission's Training School for Christian Workers dropped off drastically. Where previously it had a dozen or more candidates for ordained work, there were only two or three left. The Rev. William C. Dodd, head of the school, put the best face on the matter when he wrote in 1896, "But in the present transition period, in view of the prominence of the subject of self-support, it is doubtful if this is a matter of regret. A rapidly increasing ministry beyond the ability of the churches to support them, would tend to defeat the whole plan, and might be a calamity to the Church of the future."

This change was one of the most important events in northern Thai church history. The drive for self-support virtually killed a full-time, professional pastoral care system. Such a system was just beginning. It had not existed before. Northern Thai church leaders had been doing paid and unpaid evangelism for two decades or more, and they continued to do evangelism even when there was no pay involved. This was not possible for a full-time, professional pastoral care system. First, there was no tradition of pastoral care. Second, full-time pastoral ministry requires a salary. The mission's action stunted and delayed the growth of professional pastoral care for over 80 years (until the 1980s!).

HeRD #16 - Ethnocentrism?

History is always a matter of interpretation. Finding a proper interpretation isn't always easy. Here's an instance. In an 1898 bi-monthly report intended for an American audience, Hattie Ghormley wrote the following:

"It is the policy of Cheung Mai station to give our native Christians as much responsibility as possible, for the work along every line. In many cases, we are pleased to see the interest taken by them. However, there are exceptions. For example: On a certain evening, we were discussing the advisability of having an alternate teacher for each Sabbath School class [for the C'Mai Church]. One teacher thought it an excellent plan. One of the missionaries laughingly suggested that possibly he was in favor of the plan that he might have a chance to shirk his duty. The teacher made no reply but did not press the question. O dear friends, we have some Christians, even here in Laos-land, who live but a stone's throw from the place of worship, yet remain at home from the church services for very trivial excuses. We, who are the leaders of this flock, need your earnest prayers that we may be gentle, loving and very patient in our dealings with them."

On the face of it, this appears to be an example of the missionary tendency to judge northern Thai Christians unfairly. Why else would the missionary assume that the teacher just wanted a lazy, easy way out of his duties? How should we interpret this event? Is it just an incident of which we shouldn't make much? Or does it reflect some deeper prejudice? Comments on this one would be welcomed.

Hattie E. Ghormley, "Cheung Mai," in "Bi-monthly Letters of North Laos Mission," July 1898, pp. 68-72, v. 22, BFM.

HeRD #17 - Missions & Capitalism

The missionaries played an important role in the modernization of northern Thailand. For them, that role was a part of their evangelization efforts. Examples abound, and we will revisit this theme frequently. This one is taken from the Chiang Rai Station annual report for 1898.

The station had acquired a new piece of property. In the process of clearing, grading, fencing, and occupying the land, it hired large numbers of day-laborers. To us it seems commonplace that the station would pay them a wage, but even then corvee labor was still the order of the day. The upper class commanded the labor of the people in return for their patronage of the people. Like any system it was one open to abuse, and the missionaries offered an alternative form of patronage. The report states that the workers learned many things from working for the missionaries. "They have learned what steady work means. They have learned to respect us, and seemingly to love us. On all hands we hear comparisons made in favor of the Christian system of fair pay for fair work, in contrast with the forced service and ill pay of the country....The abbot of one of the largest monasteries in the city recently said, during a visit by one of us to him, that our system of medicine and humane treatment of laborers is far ahead of the Buddhist customs. Thus the Lord is opening the door to us through the humanitarian sides of our work." It is an open question, which made the larger impact: the workers experience with Christianity or with the capitalistic economic system.

HeRD #18, - Missionary Culture

Missionary life in 19th century northern Thailand was not an easy life. Aside from the physical discomforts of heat and a multitude of health problems, missionaries found living in such an alien culture difficult. It was for them a heathen, only half-civilized culture of strange folk-ways, strange foods, and sometimes incomprehensible people speaking a language that was hard to learn. One of the ways the missionaries coped with their sense of isolation and separation from their homeland was by getting together in an annual meeting that lasted for many days. The Chiang Mai station's printed bi-monthly letter of March 1898 comments, "This meeting annually is a very wise provision, as it brings us together and keeps us in touch with each other and the work as a whole. The social reunion is also a great help and a pleasure to us. If it is a joy to those of us in the larger stations to see the faces of our friends, how much more it must be true for those in the smaller stations who see no one year in and year out." Embedded in these words is an important insight. Whether consciously or not, one of the things the missionaries did, as a matter of self-preservation, was to replicate as much of their own American culture as they could. It is not far from correct to view their stations as American frontier outposts. This has great importance to northern Thai church history, for the northern Thai church is the product of two great cultural streams - one northern Thai-Asian and the other frontier-American-Western. Annual meetings played an important part in preserving the latter for the missionaries. They helped them to feel more "at home" in northern Thailand.

[M. A. McGilvary, "Chiang Mai," in "Bi-monthly Letters of North Laos Mission," March 1898, pp. 48-52, v. 22, BFM.]

HeRD, #19 - Missionary Medicine & the Church

In March and April of 1898, the Chiang Mai Station held a one month training session for elders. Nine attended, including five from rural areas where they were in charge of Sunday worship as well as the life of the local Christian community. The curriculum included Medical lectures given by Dr. James McKean. The station's bi-monthly letter for May 1898 makes the following comment, "Such instruction is especially helpful because of the intimate relation

between the crude medical practice of the heathen and their religious beliefs." One of the most difficult problems facing the mission was how to prevent converts from using traditional northern Thai medicine. Traditional medical practitioners, "spirit" doctors, used various forms of ritual, incantations, amulets, and the like in their practice. In missionary eyes, for a Christian to consult a spirit doctor was tantamount to rejecting God and the Christian faith. Yet, most Christians lived in small, scattered, and distant rural groups. They were far away from missionary medicine. In times of serious illness, many Christians "went back" to traditional medicine either out of desperation or because of intense pressure from concerned non-Christian relatives. We begin to see here why the North Laos Mission emphasized medical missions. Among other important functions, it was for them a tool that preserved the Christian integrity of the church.

HeRD #20 - Medicine Again

The following paragraph illustrates graphically the problem raised in yesterday's HeRD concerning converts and medicine. The problem, again, was that the mission forbid converts from relying on traditional medical practices yet was hard pressed to provide distant, rural groups with care. The following example refers to our friends at the Chiang Dao Church [HeRD #12]. It provides a brief, graphic description of the medical predicament of Christians. The source is the Chiang Mai bi-monthly station letter for March 1898: "All their lives they have depended on spirit worship and spirit charms in the treatment of disease and they know almost no other methods of cure. When they become Christians they are of course cut off from all spirit worship and from the employment of spirit doctors. Little wonder is it, therefore, that in the anxiety and often the despair of sickness they return to their former practices, when urged to do so by their heathen friends and relatives, especially when it seems to them to be the only hope of cure and particularly when they are so far away from the foreign physician or missionary, who alone can give them rational treatment." The letter goes on to state, "We felt deep sympathy with these poor wandering sheep, who in their extremity had forsaken the Lord for the worship of devils."

HeRD #21 - Translating Missionary English

It takes a bit of time to learn how to read 19th century missionary writings. Because it is so similar to our own language, it is easy to assume that we can read missionary English without translation. Here's a little exercise in translating missionary English into our English. The Chiang Rai Station annual report for 1898 included the following paragraph about the state of religion in C'Rai: "Prejudice is deep seated. Heathen customs are deep-rooted. Superstition is ingrained. Not a tittle of the people yet feel free to approach into the august presence of foreigners. The majority are afraid to visit us in our homes--afraid to take books--and especially afraid to attend a Christian service in a Christian chapel. Not all abbots are fair minded. And some hint has reached us that not all Siamese officials respect The King's Proclamation of Religious Toleration. The monasteries are well filled on sacred days. Devil shrines and 'sacrifices to devils' are everywhere. The trail of the serpent is over all."

Certain words in this selection need to be defined in order to understand the meaning of the passage. "Prejudice" means a reluctance to accept either Christianity or other things Western. "Heathen" means anything that has to do with a religion that is not Christian. "Superstitions" are all the beliefs of non-Christians excepting only those that are similar to Christian beliefs. "Fair minded" means those who were tolerant of or even open to the Christian religion. "Devil shrines and sacrifices" is a reference to animistic practices. The "King's Proclamation" was an edict issued in 1878 by the Siamese Commissioner in C'Mai in the name of the King that established the rights of Christian converts and of the missionaries in the three northern Thai states of

C'Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang. Perhaps the most important sentence is the very last. The missionaries were convinced that virtually every aspect of northern Thai culture and life was under the rule and influence of Satan.

HeRD #22 - Discipline & Church Renewal

Many committed church members, pastors, and missionaries share a similar concern, namely how to maintain the faithfulness of local churches. Retaining a healthy, alive, and spiritually meaningful congregational life over long periods of time is difficult. In the history of the northern Thai church, a variety of means for "church renewal" have been used. In the missionary era, a key means was discipline. Individuals were called before church sessions. They were suspended or even excommunicated in significant cases. The following quotation, taken from the Chiang Mai Station annual report for 1898, provides the causes and rationale for disciplinary action. After reporting on the statistical growth of churches during the year, the report concludes, "Yet we must record that five of the ten churches within our bounds report no accessions upon confession, that in some of them the state of religion is far from satisfactory, and that some sad cases for discipline have saddened our hearts. Still in the clearing of the rolls that has been in progress far the greater number of cases for discipline are of long standing and we feel that wholesome discipline is promoting a stronger and healthier Christian life and setting up a higher Christian standard."

HeRD #23 - Kawilorot's Threat

In September 1869, Chao Kawilorot, the Prince of C'Mai, moved forcefully to nip the Christian movement in the bud. Two Christians died at the hands of his agents, and the rest of the small Christian community fled his anger. C'Mai in those days was a semi-autonomous client state of Siam, and Chao Kawilorot wielded the powers of life and death within its boundaries. For some time after that the two missionary families in C'Mai, the McGilvarys and Wilsons, feared for their own lives. In the meantime, the King of Siam sent a special representative up to C'Mai to investigate the situation. That representative met with Chao Kawilorot and the missionaries on the morning of 28 December 1869. In the course of the interview, McGilvary challenged the Prince with the murder of two Christians for no reason other than their religion. Chao Kawilorot had previously denied that religion had anything to do with the executions, but he was so upset with McGilvary that in a fit of rage he shouted, "Siam is one government. Chiang Mai is another. The King at Bangkok may permit his subjects to become Christians. I will kill every one of mine who forsakes Buddhism for the religion of Jesus. Those who embrace Christianity are rebels against me & will be treated as such. If the missionaries teach their religion & continue to make Christians I will banish them from the country." He then stormed from the audience hall. He soon left on a trip for Bangkok. He became seriously ill while in Bangkok and died on the last leg of his return trip.

The moment of Chao Kawilorot's rage is a moment etched in the history of northern Thai Christianity. Two missionaries who had traveled north with the King's representative were appalled at McGilvary's temerity. The representative himself felt compelled to urge the mission families to leave. Chao Kawilorot soon calmed down, but he had a fixed determination to squash the up-start Christian movement before it could threaten his own power. That power was based on religious pillars, and he felt Christianity undermined those pillars. The source of McGilvary's courage? He was absolutely convinced that God intend the Christianization of northern Siam. Chao Kawilorot and all his actions were within divine providence, a providence that McGilvary trusted with full faith. For McGilvary the issue was not courage but faithfulness.

HeRD #24 - Christian Love

The Rev. Hugh Taylor's report on the Lampang Church for 1898 noted that among the infants baptized during that year three were adopted. He then related the following. "One of these was being starved to death when a Christian woman's eye saw it and a Christian heart took pity and saved it from that unseemly death. Its birth and its mother's death being the consequence of sinful conduct no relative would receive it to their homes for fear of the evil spirits and hence their consent to its being adopted into a Christian family. This is something new in this church." Although one has to make allowances for 19th century missionary/Western prejudices, Taylor's account reminds us that traditional northern Thai culture had its brutal, inhumane side. Christianity, in some instances, provided a loving, liberating alternative. The Christian woman experienced that alternative in being freed from her fear of the spirits. The baby experienced it in the woman's consequent love for a helpless, dying child.

HeRD #25 - Ghormley, Harris, & PRC

Historical research is endlessly fascinating. You never quite know what to expect next as you read along. Miss Hattie Ghormley [See HeRD #16] provides us a case in point. She was a newer missionary, but by 1898 she had proven herself a capable educator and a warm person. The North Laos Mission intended that she take over the C'Mai Boys' School from the Rev. D. G. Collins so that he could concentrate on developing the mission press. Ghormley, however, did not have the physical strength needed to withstand the climate. In 1898 she had to leave the field, permanently as it turned out. Collins discussed the loss of Ghormley in the school's report for 1898. He stated, "We were hoping before this time Miss Ghormley would have been able to enthuse some new life into the school, but now that she has returned to America we will not attempt to predict the future of the school. The school as well as the teachers need an experienced head. By experienced we mean some one who has either been trained to teach, or what is better a natural born teacher to lead us. The principal has always felt his inability in this department of his work, and as other work grows from year to year he feels this more than ever. No one can regret more than Mrs. Collins and I that on account of Miss Ghormley's prolonged sickness it became necessary for her to return to the U.S.A."

Why a turning point? Collins was carrying a heavy load of press work in addition to being the Boys' School principal. C'Mai station, at Collins' request, decided to assign another newer missionary, the Rev. William Harris, as assistant principal. Harris soon took over the school and he and his wife Cornelia, daughter of the McGilvarys, eventually turned the school into a major educational institution. Under its new name of Prince Royal's College, it was arguably the premier school in the North. C'Mai old-timers know the name of Harris. They never heard of Ghormley. One can't help but wonder how things might have turned out if Hattie had been a bit healthier. A turning point.

HeRD #26 - Pastor & Church at Bethel

In the later 1890s the Rev. J. H. Freeman served the Christian churches in Lamphun province. He also carried considerable mission responsibilities including the dreaded work of mission treasurer. In his personal report for 1898, Freeman discussed the problems facing the 3 churches under his care. Bethel Church, south of Lamphun, had a pastor, but things weren't going all that well. Freeman stated, the pastor "...is an earnest man but somewhat discouraged by the failure of his people, who are able to contribute rather liberally, properly to support him financially or to second heartily his efforts to reach those outside the church. With efficient

oversight, he is able and willing to do good work. As it is, save a couple of visits with its pastor to villages in the upper Maa Lee valley 70 miles away from Lamphun, I have been unable to give to the church any considerable care or oversight. Most of its people are faithful but no new families have come in in two years."

As the decades passed, the North Laos Mission was increasingly frustrated in its attempts to provide adequate pastoral care to the churches. In this brief passage, we identify two reasons. One, the church was unenthusiastic about having or following a pastor, even a relatively good one. Two, the missionaries (the original pastoral care givers) simply could not do it themselves. How did things come to be this way? The short answer is, that prior to the mid-1890s the mission did without pastors and relied on roving, paid evangelists and itinerating missionaries to look after rural Christians. Then, suddenly and without preparation, in 1894-95 it tried to change over to pastors paid by the local churches. The rural churches were happy with the old missionary-centered system. But the missionaries were increasingly unable to pastor them. Hence, Freeman's comments.

HeRD #27 - Pastor & Church in Lamphun

Freeman again. [See HeRD #26] This time he's reporting on the situation in Lamphun Church itself. You will remember from yesterday that he supervised 3 churches in Lamphun Province. Things were better in the Lamphun Church than in the Bethel Church. He tells why, "Kru Chailungka, the licentiate who is my assistant in the Lamphun Church, is an earnest and efficient man faithful in visiting and teaching both Christians and any outsiders who are ready to listen or to learn. Three families have 'entered' the religion the past year largely through the blessing on his efforts. Could I give to the other parts of the province as much oversight as I have been able to give here, I feel that the results would have been far larger. Yet even in Lamphun I have not been able to follow up the openings made for the Gospel by medical work, and have had to leave practically all effort for those not already Christians in native hands."

Freeman was far from alone among the missionaries in believing in the necessity of missionary oversight for "efficient" pastoral work. That belief raises some difficult questions. Were the 19th century converts unable to pastor themselves? Or did the missionaries just BELIEVE that to be the case? To what extent did the mission's own methods & strategies frustrate the creation of an effective northern Thai pastoral care? Was the whole concept of "pastoral care" so alien to northern Thai converts that it was unrealistic to expect them to do it well? Or did the missionaries simply mess up the whole process by their own ineptness? The problem is that one can "squeeze" the available data into an affirmative answer to ALL of these questions. Where lies the truth?

HeRD #28 - The Missionaries

Here, without the footnotes, is a paragraph from the current draft of the first chapter of my book on northern Thai Christian history. It should give you better idea of just who these Presbyterian missionaries were.

"Webster's helpful study of two American Presbyterian missions in nineteenth-century northern India points out that the Presbyterian missionaries who served in those missions shared a common cultural heritage rooted in their Presbyterianism. They were mostly rural Americans from the Middle Atlantic states or the Midwest. They attended Presbyterian colleges and universities and Presbyterian seminaries. Webster's observations fit the missionaries of northern Thailand perfectly. According to data collected by Paul Eakin in the late 1950s from Board of Foreign Missions' records 127 men and women served in northern Thailand between 1867 and

1920. Of them, 71 (55.9%) were women, 95 (74.8%) came from rural or small town backgrounds, and 75 of the 113 (66.4%) for whom data on place of birth exists were born either in the Midwest (42 individuals) or Mid-Atlantic states (33). Only 27 (21.3%) had no higher education or equivalent training. Of these 127 individuals 37 (29.1%) had received a theological seminary training, and of these only 8 (29.7%) studied at seminaries not affiliated with the Northern Presbyterian Church (Presbyterian Church U.S.A.). Two of those studied at a Southern Presbyterian (Presbyterian Church U. S.) seminary. While missionaries to northern Siam attended a total of 41 undergraduate colleges and universities only 11 missionaries attended state universities while 32 attended either Park College (15), Wooster College (7), Grove City College (5), or Princeton University (5), all originally Presbyterian institutions. Individual biographies of leading missionaries such as Daniel McGilvary, Jonathan Wilson, Edna Cole, William Harris, Howard Campbell, Hugh Taylor, and William C. Dodd indicate that American Presbyterian culture enveloped them from infancy to the grave."

HeRD #29 - Parochial Schools

The Presbyterian missionaries in the North possessed an abiding trust in education. It provided an important means for transforming "heathens" into Christians and for creating faithful churches. The mission founded its first boarding school in 1879. The city boarding schools, however, failed to reach the mass of Christian children, who lived in the rural country side. Thus, in the late 1890s the mission began to encourage small village "parochial schools." The C'Mai Station annual report for 1899 describes the need and format of those schools:

"Organized on an almost if not altogether self-supporting basis, buying their own supplies, collecting their own fees, paying their own teachers, and quite independent of the mission except for the counsel and oversight of a foreign missionary, they approach very nearly the ideal towards which we are all laboring in our mission work....The importance of this work cannot be over-estimated. Only the occasional boy or girl from our out-village parishes finds his or her way into the city schools. To many of them it is practically an impossibility. But the parochial schools, with their very small fees, their short daily sessions of three hours or so, and their short terms of but a couple of months, near at hand at the children's' homes bring the 'Three Rs' within the easy reach of all, the poor as well as the better circumstanced. The spiritual influence of these schools upon our churches is one of the greatest blessings they carry with them. Almost every child who learns to read and sing in the parochial schools means one more intelligent, interested worshiper in God's house."

Themes to ponder: The on-going emphasis on self-support. Independence tempered by missionary oversight as part of the ideal the North Laos Mission sought in its work. The concern to provide equal educational opportunities for poor & rich The relationship of education to spiritual life, to intelligence, and to involving Christians in worship. The principle seems to have been that a strong church must be an educated church. Any thoughts?

HeRD #30 - Leper Work Beginnings

Not too long after 1900, Dr. James W. McKean founded the mission leprosy hospital at Ka Klang ["Center Island"] near C'Mai. That hospital eventually became a show piece of mission humanitarian work. Northern Thai society traditionally has despised lepers as those totally lacking in merit. In most cases families and villages threw out those discovered to have leprosy, and the lepers lived in a pitiable state at the far edges of society. The C'Mai Station annual report for 1899 records one of McKean's early efforts on behalf of lepers. It states, "In January Dr. McKean collected and superintended the distribution of a fund for the alleviation of the terrible sufferings of the lepers. And throughout the year he has made occasional visits to their

settlements and ministered to their necessities. The exceeding bitter cry of these unfortunate, suffering outcasts rises to heaven daily, while a heathen government looks on with indifference." One comment: a more balanced appraisal of the difficulties the Siamese government had in creating a national medical infrastructure might temper the report's judgment concerning governmental indifference.

HeRD #31 - First Impressions

Mary Campbell arrived in C'Mai for the first time in April 1879, fresh out of school and 21 years old. She came with her classmate and close friend, Edna Cole, to start the first Western-style educational institution ever established in northern Thailand. She was full of enthusiasm and found being a missionary a thrilling experience. Here are excerpts from one of her first letters from C'Mai. She wrote, "Each evening we take Mrs. McGilvary's children for a walk and with them as interpreters, we often make calls along our way. We are always received gladly, and are invited to call often. In this way we find that we can now do a great work by gaining the confidence and love of the people. They are much more accessible than those of some heathen countries, for as we go to the houses, the husband and wife together entertain us....We like the Laos much. They are a quiet, affectionate, social people, more energetic and reliable than the Siamese, we think. They receive us very kindly, and are proud to have us call on them, always giving us the seat of honor, on the best mat, and when leaving we are urged to come again....The first week we were here, the queen sent over two carriages to take us to call on her. We went, and were pleasantly received by king and queen. They expressed an interest in our coming, hoped we would be happy, but could not understand why we were willing to come so far from home....We have called on most of the princesses, and many have returned the call." Imagine! Strolling thru the streets of C'Mai in 1879. [Note: well into the 20th century, foreigners referred to the northern Thai as "Laos" - not to be confused with the present-day Laotians.]

HeRD #32 - First Impressions - from the other side!

Yesterday we heard from a missionary, who was learning about the northern Thai. The learning process was a two-way street. I am convinced that the Presbyterian missionaries played a significant role in broadening the world view of the northern Thai people. For decades after the McGilvarys arrived, missionaries frequently attracted large, curious crowds. Here is an example from Lampang Station. Dr. Hansen reported in the station's quarterly letter for April 1899 that two missionaries of that station had each taken two evangelistic trips into the countryside. He then stated, "It was found on the second tour that comparatively, only few gathered about the tent, while on the former tour, when the family went with the missionary, crowds would come to the meetings. Many would come to the tent to visit with the ladies and children. In this way opportunities were given for personal talks with the visitors, and this also gave them a glimpse of the home life of the missionary, surrounded by his wife and children."

It must have been like a circus come to town! Strange clothes, strange behavior, strange customs. By 1899 the "natives" were used to seeing foreign men - there were the British loggers as well as the missionaries. But women! and children! What a sight, what a treat! And, it seems plain, what a learning experience as well. As they encountered missionary families, they gained some sense of an "outside" world peopled by people like these. Missionary records are constantly filled with these encounters.

Hansen, "Lakawn," in "Bi-monthly Letters of North Laos Mission," April 1899, pp. 106-107, v. 22, BFM.

HeRD #33 - Women's Education

The Laos Mission started its Girls' School in 1879. The Boys' School didn't open until 1888. In part, the mission didn't have the personnel to start the Boys' School earlier, but it was not entirely fortuitous that it began women's education first. McGilvary explained why in his autobiography. He avowed, "No greater work can be done than that of educating the wives and mothers of the church and the land. Educated Christian men are greatly handicapped when consorted with illiterate and superstitious wives. Without a Christian wife and mother there can be no Christian family, the foundation both of the church and of the Christian State."

HeRD #34 - Pastoral Care Struggles

As we go along in northern Thai church history, themes are starting to emerge. One of the themes we will return to is North Laos Mission's struggle to meet the challenge of pastoral care for its churches. While there were some strong churches, by the late 1890s many of the congregations seemed to be facing a number of problems and were not very strong. Among these was the Christian community at Nang Lae (in the following, called Yang Laa). Dodd wrote in the Chiang Rai Station bi-monthly letter for April 1899 that he had visited the Christians at Nan Lae, 10 miles north of C'Rai, for three days. He found the members discouraged. They had just one weak elder to lead them. After returning to C'Rai, Dodd reported, "Soon after our return, we had a called meeting of the men of the Church and Elder Chow Ph'ya Puck Dee, who is one of the members of the Court here, and was the life of the Yang Laa congregation while he lived there, was made the head of a movement to supply Yang Laa with some one from the city congregation to assist them in the Sabbath services every Sabbath until the rains make traveling impossible. so the Yang Laa people seem to feel very much encouraged and hopeful."

In the absence of a system of resident pastors, the missionaries joined with Christians in the urban centers to try to provide pastoral care for small rural groups that languished without such care. This quotation already points to one of the factors that limited the effectiveness of urban-centered rural pastoral care, namely, travel conditions during the rainy season (5+ months/year). Another thing to note in this quotation, however, is that in C'Rai Station the missionaries were beginning to involve northern Thai Christians in meeting pastoral concerns. It was a small station with limited missionary personnel (usually only two families). They couldn't do everything. They had, furthermore, a capable leader in Phya Phakdee. He was someone who knew the people and the problems. He was, in fact, the founder of the group at Nang Lae. Still, we will find as we go along that the issue of pastoral care was a major headache for the mission.

HeRD #35 - Evangelism Interview I

Here's a bit of a change of pace. I've been interviewing a few people concerning evangelism in the CCT for a presentation I will make in October. I'd like to share the results of two of the interviews with you, one today & one tomorrow. Ach. [VK] is moderator of the Third District, Lampang. I asked him to talk about successful evangelistic methods in northern Thailand. He made four points. FIRST, he observed that he has never seen a successful mass evangelism project, such as a Billy Graham crusade, work in the North. Western-style revivalistic healing services may generate momentary enthusiasm, but there are no long-term results. Northern Thai respond best to a "northern Thai" style that emphasizes closeness, friendliness, and mutual respect based on a longer-term relationship. SECOND, he strongly emphasized the importance of Christian education and biblical knowledge. His motto is, teach, teach, teach. He has seen first-hand results when church members begin to know their faith more deeply. They bring friends to church and can explain their faith to others more clearly. Churches that know their faith grow. THIRD, he said that the pastors are particularly important. They must give time to teaching and preaching. FINALLY, he noted that there are several obstacles to conversion. In some places overt oppression of new Christians drives them out of the church.

Zealous-type Christians, at other times, create unnecessary opposition, and people are repelled by Christian faith rather than drawn to it. On the other hand, uncommitted, disinterested Christians give the impression that Christians are just like everybody else.

A general theme in most of the interviews was a rejection of Western evangelistic styles and a missionary role in evangelism. One interviewee said, jokingly, of the missionary role in evangelism, "I let them drive, but I don't let them get out of the car."

HeRD #36 - Evangelism Interview II

Views on evangelism again. Ach. [SD], moderator of the CCT's Fourteenth District, also specified four factors for "successful" evangelistic work among northern Thais. **FIRST**, church leaders must be committed to evangelism. If the pastor and elders aren't enthused the church won't be. **SECOND**, there needs to be a strong Christian education program that will enable Christians to know and share their faith well. Ach. [SD] emphasized that this must be Christian education directed specifically at training for evangelism. **THIRD**, where there is a new church to be started up substantial money is required up front for buying land, building a church, and creating a place to bring potential converts. He cited the example of a successful CCT new church in C'Mai and argued that it's success was in part due to the foreign mission funds available to it. **FINALLY**, Ach [SD]. emphasized the importance of giving close, loving, friendly attention to new Christians and to potential converts. In general, Ach. [SD] believed that successful northern Thai evangelism was a gradual process. People came to the church thru relatives and friends. He used the term "natural increase."

It is interesting to note the points at which Ach. [VK] [HeRD #35] and Ach. [SD] agreed and disagreed. The main point of disagreement would be that Ach. [VK] felt that emphasizing evangelism as such is not necessary or even desirable. Teach and the church will grow! Ach. [SD] would not accept this premise. He argues that major emphasis has to be given to evangelism for a church to grow.

HeRD #37 - Women's Roles

Nowhere did missionary work have a greater social impact than on the role of women in traditional northern Thai society. Traditional Buddhism looked upon women as religiously inferior, tho it assigned them a relatively strong role socially. Things changed in the church. Here is an example, taken from the C'Rai Station bi-monthly report for April 1899. The "C.E. Society" is the Christian Endeavor Society, an organization for study, prayer, and missionary activity imported from the United States about 1894. The report states, "Another innovation in this Church, and a decided innovation in the conservative Orient, was perpetrated at the last monthly business meeting of the city C.E. Society. Three out of the four officers elected were women. Mrs. Dodd was the first one elected, and she was put into the chief seat in the C.E. synagogue!" Note the role of Belle Dodd. She was a strong, capable personality, and it is likely that her leadership example inspired the society to elect her to the office of president. That election then made it "O.K." to elect two other women to office as well.

HeRD #38 - Wilson Comes Home

Dr. Jonathan Wilson first arrived in Siam in 1858. He & Kate Wilson, his second wife, joined the McGilvarys in C'Mai in February 1868. Wilson had a difficult missionary career. His health was never very good. His first wife died in Bangkok. He and his second wife suffered a long separation because her health was not good. She died as well. He lost children in Siam. A much loved niece who came out to be with him eventually died. He labored under the shadow of

McGilvary, not always happily. He made his contribution as well, esp. in the area of hymnology where he was praised as the Watts & the Wesley of northern Thai church music. Towards the end of his life, in 1907, he was in ill health and needed an operation. He had to decide whether to have it in Canton or the U.S.A. He chose Canton. The LAOS NEWS, a mission publication, carried the following notice. "We are greatly gratified to hear that Dr. Wilson safely underwent an operation in Canton and is now progressing favorably in a hospital in Hong Kong. When sufficiently recovered and rested, Dr. Wilson expects to return to Lakawn [Lampang]....Much as he desired to go once more to see his native land and loved ones there, he could not bring himself to the thought of closing his life's work anywhere but in Laos." Wilson died in 1911. In Lampang. At home.

HeRD #39 - A Revived Church

The North Laos Mission at the turn of the century struggled to provide its churches and rural groups adequate pastoral care. In earlier HeRDs, I described a couple of situations where inadequate pastoral care was being given. Here's a success story. The Rev. William Harris in 1899 was the assistant principal of the C'Mai Boys' School and had numerous other mission duties to carry out. He was also in charge of the congregation at Mae Dok Daeng, 20 kms out in the country. The C'Mai Station's bi-monthly report for June 1899 paints the following brief portrait: "Mr. Harris found time despite school work, for several visits to Maa Dawk Dang Church, his especial charge. He is encouraged by the growing congregation, and by the return of many who seemed hopelessly backslidden. The people have 'pointed' and white-washed afresh their brick chapel, put new matting on the floor, and provided a new communion table. Recently seven adults, most from heathen homes, came asking baptism. Three of these have already been received. Easter Sabbath marked a mile stone in their history. A congregation of 180 came together where a year ago forty was an unusual congregation. They had themselves decorated the church with palms and flowers, and all rejoiced together in a risen Christ, and in a revived church." Mission records leave the strong impression that when a specific missionary took a pastoral interest in a specific congregation, that congregation usually grew in faith and numbers.

HeRD #40 - Lazy Readers

Back in HeRD #35, Ach. [VK] said that the key to evangelism (and, in effect, all of church life) is teach, teach, teach. Dr. Thomas of the Phrae Station, 1899, would have been amazed to hear a northern Thai Christian say such a thing. Here, from the Phrae Station bi-monthly letter for June 1899 is his perspective on the difficulties of Ach. [VK]'s approach. He wrote, "We have tried especially to stir our people up to Bible study, and this is the hardest task of all. Busy with their work they think that they do not have time to read. But, however much time they may have they are not inclined to read much, not so much because of unbelief, but because it is their habit to do no work that they can get out of, and I am much persuaded that, throughout the churches there is but little Bible study on the part of the natives themselves."

Dr. Thomas' statement is unfair. If I read him correctly, the natives don't read because they are lazy. His attitude feels condescending. In this and many other situations, the missionaries imported an essentially Western approach and then made statements like these about "the natives." It remains true today that many, many northern Thais don't read much...esp. don't read for pleasure. Reading is not on the sanuk (fun, interesting, pleasurable) list, and if it isn't on the sanuk list people by and large don't like to do it unless they have to. I would like to submit for discussion the thesis that Thomas failed to approach the "problem" of Bible study creatively and from within the context of the people's lives. He closed the door on finding ways to communicate within the northern Thai situation. Any thoughts?

HeRD #41 - The Missionary Life

William & Belle Dodd spent the first half of 1899 as the only missionaries in the Chiang Rai Station. In the station bi-monthly letter for June, Belle wrote, "These are the days when our feet grow heavy and want to lag behind, when the finger of Duty beckons one way, and the hand of Malaria pulls in another. But 'prayer and quinine' are all availing. And after a few days, life resumes its wonted aspect until the next time. With so many irons in the fire, and the weather alternating between pouring rain and sweltering heat, what can two people do? Not much but keep other people at work, which we have tried to do in every way possible, with some success."

HeRD #42 - Then Why Come?

In HeRD #41, we got a glimpse of the difficulties inherent in missionary life at the end of the 19th century. Heat. Rain. Malaria. Overwhelming Duties. So, why go through it all? Dr. James W. McKean [see HeRD #30] experienced his share of all of these problems. The missionaries called them "discouragements." In his case, even when his medical work made a large impact on northern Thai life, those weren't quite the results he wanted. So why come? Why continue? In his medical report for 1899, he gave as good an answer as any. He wrote, "While we often long to see greater spiritual results, we are yet encouraged to preach the Gospel and heal the sick according to our Savior's command, believing that there is constantly a greater fruitage from this work than appears on the surface and confident that he who gave the command will also give the increase." McKean was quite happy to help people physically, but that's not why he came. He came to convert the heathen to Christ. It is one of the ironies of history that, in fact, his work had a greater medical than religious impact. You will find this theme constantly reappearing here, for it lies at the heart of the missionary experience in northern Thailand. The North Laos Mission was better at modernizing than it was at evangelizing northern Thailand.

HeRD #43 - Resistance to Evangelism

One of the problems we face in northern Thai church history, is that the missionary sources so fully dominate the historical record that it is hard to hear northern Thai voices. From time to time, however, they appear. The vast majority of the people who heard about Christianity rejected it or, more likely, never took it seriously enough to consciously decide about it. The LAOS NEWS for July 1907 (p. 75) offers us the following insight into the people's thinking. "To the invitation to cast away the spirits and give herself to Christ, a certain old woman hotly replied, 'I leave the spirits of my ancestors! Never! I will go with them, even if it must be to hell.' She meant of course the Buddhist hell - a fearful enough place to think of - which the sacred books declare must become the abode hereafter of all demonolaters." The article offered the following one sentence commentary on the old woman's statement. "It seems strange how the Laos people with all their acknowledgment of the evils they suffer from the spirits, still cling to them so tenaciously." Christianity, for this woman, did not offer a viable spiritual alternative. The author of this little piece, evidently, could not fathom why that would be so. Is there a message here?

HeRD #44, - Children's Bones

By 1899, missionary doctors were reporting a growing acceptance of Western medicines and medical practices among the northern Thai. But prejudices against them remained. Dr. Hansen of Lampang described one such prejudice in his annual medical report for 1899. He wrote, "...recently a church member of seven years standing asked one of the missionaries if it was really true that we use children's bones for medicines, one of the current beliefs being that

we try to get hold of all the children we can to send them to American where medicine is made out of their bones."

HeRD #45 - Baptist Questions

The American Baptist Mission in Thailand was reestablished in the 1950s. The Mission Secretary's Report for 1959 reflected on the advantages the ABM had as a new mission and the issues it had to wrestle with in that situation. The report was sensitive, as well, to certain dangers it faced. It states, "Our Thailand mission has the advantage of not being bound by old, established patterns. It is our privilege and responsibility to help formulate policies and work out relationships with the indigenous churches with which we are related. In our desire to get on with the task and function with the greatest possible efficiency, there is sometimes a tendency to drift into certain ways of administering the program without reference to policy or our ultimate goals." The report avows the importance of constantly reviewing the mission's relationship to the church bodies, such as the Karen Baptist Convention, it worked with. It then asks, "Is it our purpose to establish Mission-controlled and supported institutions such as student hostels and the Leadership Training Center or do we want to provide for joint administration and promote local support? Is efficiency and rapid program development our primary concern or do we prefer the more gradual growth of essentially indigenous institutions?" The report concluded with the thought that the way the ABM answered these questions would affect the future of the mission. Good Questions.

["Mission Secretary's Report, 1959," TBMF, Bx 1 F 10]

HeRD #46 - MM1 - Marburger Background

In 1993-94 I did preliminary research into the history of the Marburger Mission (MM) in Thailand. The MM began work here in the early 1950s. In this HeRD, we'll look at the roots of the MM. Tomorrow, we'll reflect on how those roots influenced their work in Thailand.

The MM has its roots in the German pietist movement which arose in the 17th century. That movement sought to counter-act the rationalism and liberalism in the church. In the early 19th century there was another awakening, one that emphasized salvation through personal decision. By the late 19th century, Pietism had evolved the principle of wanting to be a core of true believers within the organized church. The MM began indirectly in 1899 with the Rev. Carl Ferdinand Blazejewski. His powerful, pietistic preaching inspired eight young women in his church to become deaconesses, and he founded a deaconess mother-house for them. Eventually the mother-house moved to the city of Marburg where another mother-house was established and a seminary for missionary work was founded. The movement was called the *Deutscher Gemeinschafts-Diakonieverband* (DGD, in English "German Fellowship Deaconry"). The MM itself began in 1909 when the DGD started sending deaconesses as missionaries to China, where the women fed the hungry, cared for the sick, and housed orphans. In 1929 the MM began sending out men, called "Tabor-brothers," as well. They were sent only to China, and by the end of World War II there were 13 couples and 15 deaconesses serving in China. Between 1949 and 1951 they all had to leave China. Some went to Japan, some to Taiwan, and in 1953 the Pretels moved to Thailand. The MM in Thailand focused on evangelism and local church nurture. Several of their missionaries lived in country villages. They were instrumental in founding a Bible school department for the McGilvary Theological Seminary. Since the mid-1950s the MM has had a major impact on the life of many CCT churches in northern Thailand.

HeRD #47 - MM2 - Germany or Thailand?

Historians of the Thai church need a strong grounding in American and European church history. The MM's experience shows why this is so. Interviews and discussions with four MM missionaries, one of whom came in the late 1950s, reveals that the pietistic Marburger experience in Germany strongly influenced their understanding of the CCT. The MM missionaries saw dangerous parallels between the CCT and the "established" churches in Germany. In Germany those churches were, according to MM thinking, dying spiritually because of liberalism. They lacked a strong evangelical spirituality. MM missionaries saw the same thing happening in Thailand. The CCT was the Thai equivalent of the liberal, official church. As one Marburger said, "We have seen the terrible results of such theology in the German church." Pastors, he said, don't give the people "the Bread of Life." This doesn't sustain a Christian life. In Germany, we saw in HeRD #46, the MM movement adopted a strategy of remaining within the established church. It did not form a separate denomination of its own. It sought, rather, to reform the church from within. In Thailand, the MM quickly adopted the same strategy. It stayed in the CCT.

It is striking that the MM interpreted the Thai situation as being quite like that of Germany. It found familiar conditions here - and familiar problems! This is not a characteristic limited to the MM. In my research, I'm beginning to appreciate more and more the difficulties missionaries have had in coping with long-term cultural disorientation. One of the ways they have coped is by transforming the unfamiliar into the familiar.

HeRD #48 - MM3 - A Mistake

The MM has not been as successful in evangelizing the northern Thai as it expected to be. Why? Answering that question would encompass another book. MM missionaries themselves believe that the MM's missionary strategy has been part of the problem. It began 40 years ago with a strong evangelistic emphasis that failed to emphasize nurturing local church life. The emphasis was on personal piety. Through their work a cluster of churches soon appeared in the Phayao District of C'Rai Province. The MM eventually realized that this individualistic emphasis results in weak Christians in Germany & in Thailand. It then began to emphasize local church life more. At first, the MM pursued a paternalistic approach that seemed fitting to northern Thailand's hierarchical society. Missionaries lived with the churches and pastored them. Mission funds, medicine, materials, and equipment were dominant. The churches grew fairly rapidly. Then, however, one faction in the MM decided that missionary dominance did not lead to strong churches. This group, composed of younger missionaries, eventually "came to power" and instituted an abrupt change in policy. The missionaries moved out of the churches and replaced themselves with northern Thai pastors. The MM emphasized self-support. The churches stopped growing and have not grown since. MM missionaries now believe that the MM spent TOO much time on policy matters. It over-managed its work. And it changed its policy too rapidly.

Observations: 1. The importance of missionary administration, policy, and behavior as the context out of which the Thai church has grown can hardly be over-emphasized. 2. Self-support again! I am increasingly believing that the quest for self-support has had a major impact on church life here - and not a happy one.

HeRD #49 - MM4 - Why Missionaries Quit

In his research into MM history in Thailand, the Rev. Emil Scharrer, an MM missionary in C'Mai, found that MM missionaries assigned to Thailand stay, on the average, about 15 years, which means 12 years actually on the field. Missionaries themselves, 9 times out of 10, claim

that they left because their children could not get adequate German-language schooling in Thailand. Health was a cause in some cases. But Scharrer feels that the actual cause was the problem of being a missionary in Thailand itself. The rate of MM missionary "drop-outs" is much higher in SE Asia than anywhere else in the world. Scharrer believes that one cause is disappointment with lack of evangelistic success. The missionaries come with unrealistic expectations, which are soon shattered. Another cause, perhaps even more important, is that SE Asian cultures are especially alien. Other cultures may be different too, but feelings are still expressed openly in them while here they are not. It is harder for the missionaries to understand the people and their feelings. One consequence of this pattern is that the MM in Thailand, after 40 years, has failed to create a group of senior missionaries.

HeRD #50 - Tourist

The following item appeared in the July 1907 issue of the LAOS NEWS (p. 71): "A pleasant, interesting and interested visitor to our far inland regions left Lakawn [Lampang] for her home land in America last month. It is not often we see tourists in Laos hence quite a curiosity was aroused when report came that a Miss Jones of San Francisco was coming to spend some months in Northern Siam. Miss Jones who, after the painful experience of the earthquake and great fire, found she needed change and rest accompanied Mrs. Huffman to Siam, and spent near six months in Lakawn. The work of our Station quite interested Miss Jones, who herself is a church worker at home. We trust she will always pleasantly remember her visit to Laos; her stay here was certainly pleasant to the missionaries. It is hoped when the railroad to our North Country, now under construction, is completed, many visitors from the outside world will think it worth their while to the Laos land." It's almost impossible for those of us living in C'Mai now to realize how isolated it was 90 years ago -so isolated they could look forward to an influx of tourists!

HeRD #51 - Distance

Is the way we experience distance changing? In his personal annual report for 1899, Dodd described the rigors of pastoral visitation. He and his wife, Belle, visited nearly all of the members of two congregations under the care of the C'Rai Station. He observed, "As these Christians are scattered in sixteen villages, in three provinces, we required twenty three days in making the rounds of the houses themselves, besides the eighteen days of horseback travel between villages." To put this in perspective we should note that the Dodds were unable to visit the Christian members of these church that lived in three ISOLATED districts. Forty-one days simply to make routine pastoral calls. A century later, I don't think we'd put up with the tedium, the discomfort, and the sheer amount of time involved. Is the relationship of time to distance changing in our cyber-world?

HeRD #52 - Confusion

We've been stuck in 1899 for some time now, and I wasn't going to impose any more 1899 HeRDs on you. But I just couldn't pass up this one. We've mentioned the poor old Chiang Dao Church before. There were lots of problems up there, most of which were familiar ones. Loss of interest. Decline in membership. But here's one I'd never heard of before. A bit of background is necessary. For the first 25 years or so of its existence, the Laos Mission expected its converts to learn to read Siamese (central Thai). There were no Bibles, tracts, or hymnals in northern Thai except for a few hand produced manuscript copies. With the opening of the Mission Press in 1892, however, the mission began to have northern Thai materials. It dropped its emphasis on Siamese literacy. I never considered before the ramifications of this seemingly straightforward change. Dr. McGilvary, in his personal report for 1899, opens our eyes. He related, "The original

members when they became Christians had learned, with great effort, to read the Siamese Scriptures and to use the Siamese hymnal as then we had no others. Some of the later accessions have learned only the Laos. This makes a confusion that it is difficult to remedy. It seems impossible to inspire the same enthusiasm in the study of the Lao, especially as some of them are getting old." File this one away in that "Best Laid Plans" folder!

HeRD #53 - Webs of Meaning

Events take place within intricate and highly textured webs of events, beliefs, cultures, and all of the rest of what it means to be human. Take the following example from Dr. Charles Denman's personal report for 1899. Denman was the station doctor in C'Rai. He reported, "I have completed and issued a mimeograph edition of a little pamphlet on treatment of the most common diseases for use among the more distant villages. This I trust will be helpful in making the use of foreign medicines, in the hands of natives, more efficient and thus open a way for the Gospel."

On the face of it, the issuing of his pamphlet is a simple enough event. Note, however, the strands of the web involved: One, medical modernization - which leads to the whole issue of the missionary role in modernization. Two, the use of modern print media for disseminating modernizing information. Three, the role of northern Thai Christians in transferring Western ways into northern Thai culture. Four, the use of medical modernization for evangelization. This is a central theme in Laos Mission literature. Five, the use of Western medicine to keep converts from going back to the use of traditional, animistic medicine. (Denman, in another source, gives this as a reason for the pamphlets). Six, the relationship of urban-centered mission work to rural Christian groups. One could do a book on the meaning of "native" in the late 19th century. The concept of "efficiency" is an important subject in the field of American business and industrial history. And it would be important, in a full explication of these 2 sentences, to look at Denman's understanding of "Gospel." That would take us far afield into major currents in American theology. Another book - or more!

HeRD #54 - Paul Lyn

It isn't history until historians say it is. At first, that sounds arrogant - until you think about it. History and the past are not the same thing. History is a collective memory of the past constructed thru research and communicated to an audience. The role of the Rev. Paul Lyn, Chinese evangelist, in Thai church history is a case in point. Before World War II, the famous Chinese preacher, Dr. John Song, set Thai churches alive with a series of revivals across the nation. Our historical understanding of 1930s Thai revivalism has focused on him. It turns out, however, he was but the culmination of a series of revival-ist movements that began in the mid-1920s. In an article written in SIAM OUTLOOK in July 1936, the Rev. Boon Mark Gitisarn describes the revivalistic campaigns of Lyn. For seven months in 1936, Lyn visited churches in various parts of Thailand and held revivals. Boon Mark traveled with him as his interpreter. He wrote, "I myself had a wonderful experience in prayer at Petchaburi." His soul, he reported, felt overjoyed with the presence of God. He felt both happy and yet also oppressed at the thought of his own sins. He told how many others had similar experiences, including many "backsliders" who returned to the churches. He concluded, "Mr. Paul Lyn's meetings were so successful, that the National Christian Council has asked Rev. Charoen Sakulkan to go to all the churches in Siam and hold revival meetings."

The CCT's official history, written in 1984, makes extensive mention of Dr. Song. It doesn't refer to Paul Lyn. The church here had all but forgotten there ever was such a person. It has only been in the last two years that we have "discovered" Lyn. His name now appears in

historical writings (including here!). He was an important part of the Thai church's past. Now he is also a part of its history. It isn't history until historians say it is.

[Boon Mark Gitisan, "A Chinese Evangelist," *Siam Outlook* 12, 3(July 1936): 128-129]

HeRD #55 - Casting the Net

Northern Thailand is not an easy field for those who want to convert its people to Christianity. The Rev. H. S. Vincent of C'Rai wrote the following in the July 1907 issue of the LAOS NEWS, under the title "Casting the Net." You may find it informative as one missionaries' view on evangelism in the North. "In America some of our friends have the mistaken idea that the heathen are fairly climbing over one another to get to the missionary to learn the truth. They are not. If the missionary has not a well baited net, the heathen of this part of the world are inclined to scramble in the other direction. They have heard that the Christians are free from the 'evil spirits' of the country; but they have also heard that the missionary simply works to get converts and having fattened them takes them to the sea coast and feeds them to the great sea devil. But what is more potent to cause them to shun us is, that they have heard the Christian may not get drunk, nor lie, nor steal, nor have more than one wife, and they prefer the darkness with its shadows and fright, to the light with its purity."

HeRD #56 - Growth

In the later 1880s, morale was very good in the Laos Mission. There was a sense of growth and expansion. The missionaries felt the Holy Spirit was present and making their work effective. The following brief paragraph from the 1887 Narrative of the State of Religion in the bounds of the Laos Presbytery reflects this confidence:

"Another result, not to be counted by figures but none the less important, has been the steady growth of the older Christians. While a few disciples have lapsed in faith and in practice, the majority have not only remained firm but have made progress in knowledge and grace. The number of men able to lead in public prayer is proportionally larger and the nature of the petitions offered in some cases has shown encouraging growth. This growth has manifested itself also in the increasing number of Christians who are desirous of giving their whole time to direct personal Christian work."

We have to understand this paragraph in the context of northern Thai church history. After 1895 the situation in the North was very different. Missionaries were more critical of the churches and esp. of northern Thai church leadership. One of the central issues in the history of the northern church is the question of how this change came about. What went wrong?

HeRD #57 - The Sum of It All

The 1887 Narrative of the State of Religion in the bounds of the Laos Presbytery provides one of the best brief summaries of missionary thinking about missions there is. After reviewing the state of the Laos Mission and its churches, it states, "The work is great, the enemy is mighty, the issues are eternal, the responsibility is terrible, and the host that must oppose these great odds is only a little company whose poor faith can but imperfectly behold their mighty Leader. What are we against so many! Surely the work is the Lord's and not man's."

This is a soaring vision of mission work. It contains, however, the seeds of the serious defects also found in that work. If the work is great and the issues eternal, compromise even in details was rendered impossible. The mighty enemy included not only Satan but also Satan's

minions, the northern Thai and their culture, society, and thinking. If the responsibility was terrible, the pressure to expand and expand and expand the work to meet that responsibility-- even beyond the capacities of the mission--was a forceful one. The sense of being "a little company" caused feelings of isolation, loneliness, and alienation from the surrounding society. And if OUR work is really the LORD'S work, then those who oppose it or do it differently or disagree with us are opposing or disagreeing with God.

HeRD #58 - Getting Married Properly

The Laos Mission faced numerous problems in establishing a viable Christian presence in northern Thailand. One problem had to do with marriage and marriage ceremonies. Northern Thai Christians were getting married "without benefit of clergy." Only ordained clergy could perform marriages, which until nearly 1890 meant only the missionaries. Couples were sometimes not willing to wait until a missionary could come around and do the wedding. Christians were also marrying "outside the faith" and occasionally resolved the ceremonial problem by not having a ceremony. The North Laos Presbytery appointed a committee to consider a resolution that Christians MUST be married in a proper Christian service if they were to remain church members. The 1887 minutes of presbytery contains the brief report of that committee:

"The Com. to whom was referred the resolution concerning the marriage of believers without Christian ceremony, reported as follows; which was adopted.

"Your Com. to whom was referred the follow motion, viz:- 'That Presbytery order that in all cases of marriage of a disciple without Christian ceremony, such ceremony be required as a condition of continuation to Church privileges', would recommend that it be expressed as the judgment of Presbytery that it is inexpedient to send down the proposed positive injunction to the Churches. We recommend, however, that Presbytery call the attention of the Elders of the various churches to the importance of the subject and urge them to instruct the people as to the necessity of having all marriages solemnized with the proper Christian ceremony."

In seeking to deal with the practical realities church members faced, the presbytery (dominated by the missionaries at this time) refused to take a hard stand. It refused to excommunicate those who failed to have a proper wedding ceremony. At the same time, in good American and Presbyterian fashion, it called for education of the members as the solution to the problem of wedding ceremonies.

HeRD #59 - Marriage Again

In HeRD #58 we discussed the problem of Christians who married without benefit of a Christian service. The North Laos Presbytery, we saw, in 1887 considered the possibility of disbaring from membership such individuals. In 1891 the presbytery returned to this problem and made the following decision: "Authority to solemnize marriages in remote congregations was given to Elders or those who are regarded as leaders where there are no Elders. Such leaders to be designated by the Stated Supply of the congregation and to report such marriages to him. Rev. W. C. Dodd was instructed to draw up a form of marriage to be used in such cases." This was a rather significant concession to the realities of church life in northern Thailand. The prerogatives of the clergy were sacrificed to the necessity of ministering to widely scattered, small Christian communities.

HeRD #60 - And Marriage One More Time

The issue of marriage kept reappearing in the discussions of the North Laos Presbytery. The minutes for 1908 contains the following: "Presbytery appoints the following committee to further consider the question of marriage and to confer with the civil authorities as to whether it may be practicable to obtain sanction to a special marriage law applying to Christians" In 1910 the presbytery returned yet again to the issue and made the following decision: "A committee consisting of Koo Punya and Elder See Mo was, on motion, appointed to prepare a letter of instruction and admonition for all Christians regarding marriage." These entries suggest that the northern Thai church had to wrestle with two issues. First, it attempted to establish the full legality of Christian marriage as distinct from Buddhist-based traditional and legal forms. Second, it sought to instruct northern Thai Christians in the "Christian" moral understanding of marriage. The mission, in sum, was trying to do nothing less than establish the legal, ritual, and moral "place" of Christian marriage in northern Thai society. We should note the strong emphasis on the DISTINCTIVENESS based on Christian exclusiveness in all of this. Where Christianity draws the boundaries between itself and the world has always been a central and frequently divisive issue for the faith.

HeRD #61 - Paradox

Foreign missionaries in Thailand have frequently found themselves trapped in paradoxical situations. Maria & Anders Hovemyr provide us a case in point from a draft of their history of the Kwai River Christian Mission. The KRCM was located at Sangklaburi on the Burma border West and North of Bangkok. Baptist and Disciples of Christ mission-aries began working there in 1961. At that time Sangklaburi could only be reached by river and was relatively isolated from the rest of the world. Among other work they founded a hospital, which is the subject of the following paragraph.

The Hovemyrs write, "The greatest challenge facing the Kwai River Christian Hospital had to do with a paradox. As long as the hospital was located in an isolated place with inadequate infrastructure, it had a real mission to accomplish. But it also faced great difficulties in recruiting staff to keep it running. It was closed down several times due to lack of qualified staff. Improvements in infrastructure and staff recruitment, however, threatened to make the Christian hospital superfluous, because those same improvements meant the patients also gained easy access to a governmental hospital. This vulnerability was perhaps the most characteristic trait of the KRCH during the first 15 years of its existence." As long, in other words, as the hospital was doing an almost impossible job under the most difficult of circumstances, no one questioned its necessity. As soon as its task became manageable and it could develop its services, however, the necessity of even doing so came into question. There must be a lesson there. Any thoughts?

HeRD #62 - Democracy's Beginnings

Parliamentary democracy has become the world's preferred form of government. The idea of "prachathibathai" (democracy) was powerful enough to impel tens of thousands of Thai citizens into the streets of Bangkok and other cities in its defense in May 1993. Those citizens would probably find it hard to believe that Thai representative democracy first appeared in the Protestant churches. But it's true. Take the case of C'Mai First Church. McGilvary wrote in February 1880, "...we completed the organization of the church by electing and ordaining a regular board of elders and deacons." The church previously had only one northern Thai elder. As McGilvary implies, the church's government was irregular by American Presbyterian constitutional standards. Now, the church elected 4 more elders and 3 deacons. McGilvary expressed his gratitude that not only did the church have so many qualified candidates to choose from, but also there were several others nearly as suitable as these.

Embedded within McGilvary's rather cursory comments is a remarkable social and political transformation. A group of northern Thais were called upon to decide for themselves who they wanted for leaders of an organization. The very existence of a voluntary religious organization was in and of itself an extraordinary social achievement. That this organization would organize ELECTIONS in a hierarchical society where social status determined political status was revolutionary - at least in its potential.

[McG to Lowrie, McG, 9 February 1880, v. 4, BFM #53]

HeRD #63 - Persecution

The following anecdote will help us understand that being a northern Thai Christian in the 19th century was not easy. Wilson, in a July 1880 letter to the Board, told the story of an aged Christian's daughter who happened to be the slave of a princess. The daughter's owner had her whipped severely for no reason other than that she had been attending Christian worship services. The princess, according to Wilson, was a quick-tempered woman who was given to such beatings. The Christian mother lived out in the country, but she herself was a "client" of the princess, which meant that she was liable to be called for service at any time. Shortly after the daughter's beating she was, indeed, called into town. In fear, she went to the Wilsons and asked them for protection, but they decided that they couldn't do anything legally. It would be better for her to go to the princess. Having no choice, she did that taking along with her a little gift. Much to her relief, she was sent to work in the princess' gardens for a period of time and not bothered or oppressed in any way. Eventually she was allowed to return home.

One still hears the charge that the old-time missionaries "bought Christians" and that no one would have converted otherwise. The converts, so this line goes, were the victims of religious imperialism. Not true. Many of the earliest generation of northern Thai Christians experienced the uncertainties and fear of this woman. Whole groups were subjected to long-term petty persecution. Missionary assistance was of only limited value to them in many cases.

[JW to Lowrie, 23 July 1880, v. 4, BFM, #80]

HeRD #64 - The Good Life?

Visitors to C'Mai are still surprised, even in the 1990s, at how well most missionaries live. They have this Sunday School image that missionaries live in grass shacks or urban slums. The truth is, of course, that most missionaries live quite comfortably. This has been so in C'Mai at least since the 1870s and 1880s. Two visitors in those decades have left us with the following description of missionary life in C'Mai. In 1882 Mr. Karl Bock, a Dane, visited C'Mai, and he found the missionaries living in comfortable, neatly furnished homes waited upon by willing servants. He wrote, "So far as material comforts go, these ladies and gentlemen are probably as well supplied as the most fortunate of their fellow-creatures" Even so, he observed, they were not to be envied because they were cut off from families, friends, and their former society. [Bock, Temples and Elephants, 222] Mr. Holt Hallett, an Englishman who visited in 1884, confirmed Bock's observations. He particularly mentioned the McGilvarys' "glorious garden." Hallett wrote that he thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of his visit. He stayed with the McGilvarys in a commodious house in pleasant surroundings that included a splendid view of Doi Suthep. Hallett liked to sit on the McGilvarys' verandah and watch the "changing moods" of the mountain. He avowed that his first meal with the McGilvarys was the best he ever ate. It included fresh vegetables and pumpkin pie. It was, he wrote, "a feast for the gods!" [Hallett, Thousand Miles, 95-96]. It was not always so idyllic in C'Mai, to be sure, and even in these

pleasant surroundings the heat, the isolation, and tropical diseases had a constantly debilitating affect on all but a handful of missionaries. Yet, there were compensations as well.

HeRD #65 - Wilsons' Fears

In May 1882, the Chiang Mai Station was staffed by only three missionaries. They were expecting the arrival of nine missionaries, old and new, to reinforce them. Jonathan Wilson, senior missionary on the field, felt that the fact that the Presbyterian Church would send so many missionaries to C'Mai symbolized its enthusiasm for missions. That thought wasn't comforting. He wrote, "I sometimes fear that if they could have a peep under the surface of our work how they might be a little damped in their enthusiasm. We find out occasionally that the ruling powers here are entirely opposed to our work. Their interest in us personally is mostly of a selfish nature. Again, one portion of our Christian converts are from the oppressed portions of the people. Those who had been accused of witchcraft are from a despised & hated class. Sometimes it seems as if some of these people had chosen Christianity merely as a refuge & that if we could not protect them they would soon drift away from us. They do not seem to grow. AS THE CHURCH GROWS, SPIRITUALITY DOES NOT KEEP PACE. Our work has always been carried out under great disadvantages. These do not appear to lessen." [emphasis added]. In January 1883 Wilson showed that his thoughts of May were not written in a passing moment of discouragement. He wrote, "Wish I could report better of the spiritual life of the churches. Many of the members seem to have settled down into a mere routine service of Christ. They do not inquire after the truth as we would like them to do. Some act as if having [to] attend the church was all that is required of them. But here again our help is in the Lord. His Spirit can waken the dead to life. We do not intend to yield to discouragements."

[Wilson to Irving, 25 May 1882, v. 4, BFM. #160.]

HeRD #66 - A Hope

Daniel McGilvary had a "burden" for theological education. In 1883 he took concrete steps to initiate theological education. He wrote, in an April 1883 letter to his daughter Cornelia, "I begin a theological class today. There will be four regular pupils the first day. One of Loong Nan Intah's sons (Oon Huan) is one and Nai Intachek and Inta and Nai Chai. Besides these there will be four or five others to begin with who will study with the others and as they are younger we will hope if they decide to be teachers or preachers to carry them on further-it will be a nice class and I think it is the best movement started in the mission yet. The great work of the mission is to raise up a native ministry, and I am glad that I have taken the first step towards it. Presbytery gave their official aid after some stirring up-and have become interested in it. They asked me to take charge of it, and the whole ordained members of the Pres. are a committee of examination of applicants just as younger men are examined before Presbytery-on being received as candidates for the ministry." "Presbytery" here refers primarily to the other missionaries, who comprised the majority of its voting members. We should note McGilvary's initial hopefulness and enthusiasm. As we'll see in HeRD #67, things didn't quite work out as he planned.

[McGilvary to Cornelia, 23 April 1883, McGilvary Papers.]

HeRD #67 - A Hope Shattered

In HeRD #65 we saw McGilvary's hopeful initiation of a theological class in 1883. As it turned out, the class never materialized. In his autobiography [pp. 260], written about 25 years later, he explained why. His missionary colleagues took up his initial ideas for the class and "improved" upon them They created a formidable, complex, foreign administrative structure with

a "Board of Education" and American-style rules and regulations. They initiated an in-depth scrutiny of each potential student as if they were candidates for ordained ministry. They had a sliding scale of fees, based on need. In the end, most of the individuals McGilvary had intended to include in the class declined to join. McGilvary started with a couple of students, but one withdrew after a week. The experiment in theological education ended. Summarizing McGilvary's own analysis, the class died an early death because it was too elaborate, formidable, and alien. The "lesson" seems obvious.

HeRD #68 - Did God Do It?

God has nothing to do with history. History is the disciplined, methodological study of the past. It has rules of evidence. One of them is you can't cite super-natural causes for human events. There is, however, the question of whether or not God is present in the PAST. In the spirit of that question, I offer you a brief quotation from a letter written in May 1883 by McGilvary to his daughter Cornelia. In it he described the death of C'Mai's "Second King" (a position of considerable authority just under the First King): "One of the last acts of his life was to have a letter sent to all the temples to have the people avoid the foreign teachers as leading them away from their own spirit worship, which or who they think have the power of inflicting evil on them if their worship is neglected. Poor man, he is the 3rd in the short history of this mission who has raised his puny hand against the church and has been removed out of the way. When I left for home, the 2nd king was the largest and fattest of the princes. He died about two months before my return. When he was taken, it was with hemorrhage of the lungs and died a mere skeleton."

McGilvary himself rejects the spirits as an agent in human affairs. He implies, tho, that it was through divine action that these three adversaries of the mission were "removed." Other missionaries said so directly. THAT possibility involves us in the age-old theological debate over whether or not God WOULD purposefully cause the death of any person, for any purpose-- and in such a painful manner. It is just as well, I think, that church historians avoid the pitfalls of a theocentric interpretation of the past. It is just as well we keep God out of history. Any thoughts?

HeRD #69 - Coincidentally

In a letter from Sophia McGilvary to her daughter Cornelia, written in February 1884, Sophia reported that her husband Daniel had just bought a small farm a few weeks earlier. They were having trouble buying paddy rice and so decided to go into the farming business for themselves. They put tenants on the farm and expected to fill about half of their yearly need for rice from it. The farm was located Ban Mae Dok Daeng (Rev Flower Creek Village), where there was an active, alive church. The Swanson family bought a piece of property on the edge of Ban Dok Daeng (formerly Ban Mae Dok Daeng) in 1990.

[Sophia McGilvary to Cornelia McGilvary, 14 February 1884, McGilvary Family Papers]

HeRD #70 - Reply to [J]

Thank you, [J], for raising some important issues from HeRD #68. In response, I'd like to make the following points. First, historians value the integral unity between so-called external fact and internal meaning. All significant human discourse, not just ancient or religious, has a core of meaning. Historians attempt to discern that core and use it as evidence for understanding the course and the causes of events. The fact that some missionaries attributed the death of the Second King to divine intervention is important evidence concerning missionary beliefs, which

were a crucial factor in the formation of the northern Thai church. The historian's task is not to "weed out" the supernatural, but to take into account peoples' beliefs about it as data for understanding the past.

Second, the historian can't go beyond evidence about human actions and beliefs to assert divine activity in human affairs. To say a person died of cancer and then to say that divine providence caused that death is to refer to two different types of "data". One type is physical, observable by all. The other requires religious faith for which there is no observable data. We can be sure beyond any reasonable doubt, on the basis of the evidence at hand, that the Second King died on a particular date [15 November 1882] of a particular disease. The claim that he died through divine intervention is not open to the same type of verification while it IS open to dispute. Northern Thai sources would not support it for a moment. Many Christians would also dispute it. How could one establish beyond reasonable doubt, on the basis of the evidence at hand, that the ACTUAL cause of death was divine intervention? A theologian might be able to do so theologically, but it is not possible to do so as a historian.

Third, we need to be very precise about the distinction between the past and history. [J]'s statement, "In the search for 'one authentic' history we take away 'someone's' history." fails to make this distinction. The second "history" should read "past." History is not the personal possession of individuals. It is most certainly not the collective memory of peoples or nations. History is not the past. It is how historians describe the past. It is but one of several ways of knowing the past. I would urge that it is the business of the theologian to integrate elements of faith, memory, past, and history into a holistic Christian view of the past. We have ample precedent for this in the Old Testament. History, thus, is grist for the theologian's mill in the search for the divine presence in the past. Theology is grist for the historian's mill in the search for a credible description of past events--and nothing more.

HeRD #71 - Sanitarium

There was so much the missionaries had to cope with, in spite of the fact that in some ways they did lead the "good life." [HeRD #64] Heat. Culture shock. Work pressures. Illness. Eventually, most stations had their own hill "sanitarium" where missionaries could get away from it all. In an 1883 letter to the Board, McGilvary describes one of C'Mai Station's earliest efforts at establishing a sanitarium on Doi Suthep. He wrote, "In order to meet the constant wants of the mission we had selected a station on the Mountain or hills about 900 feet above the plain and near a beautiful cascade with a charming prospect and would have had a temporary house nearly done by now if workmen could have been employed. We think that must be mainly above the malarial altitude and hope not only that Mr. Hearst but all our new comers might acclimate [?] there and study the language and in fact do no little of our work there. It is only two hours from the city and the schools and possibly the hospital and the literary work might be conducted there to advantage in more respects than one." One of the reasons the station set up a sanitarium at this time is because of a large party of newcomers that arrive in 1883 nearly all became seriously ill shortly after arriving. Hearst was among them.

HeRD #72 - - A Baptist Family in C'Mai

Presbyterian missions so dominated 19th century work in northern Thailand, that it is easy to overlook the work of the Baptists among the Karen. In fact, it comes as a bit of a surprise that a Baptist missionary couple actually lived in C'Mai from 1884 to 1886. They were the Websters, who came over from Burma to work with the Karen. They came without the sanction of their own mission. Hallett, the Englishman traveling in the North at that time, described the Websters this way: "I have never met a missionary more in earnest than Mr. Webster. He and his wife and their

golden-haired little daughter seem utterly regardless of creature-comforts and make long journeys among the hill-people, bearing all sorts of inconveniences in order to carry out their good work." While living in C'Mai, Webster made several long trips to Lampang and Phrae. Mrs. Webster became ill in 1886, and they had to return to Burma.

[Hallett, *Thousand Miles*, 19, 278-79; Hovemyr, *Karen King*, 146-147.]

HeRD #73 - The Holy Spirit at MDD

In HeRD #65, we quoted Wilson's pessimistic feelings in 1882-83 about northern Thai Christianity. McGilvary gives us a different view. In Jan. 1884 he spent a week out at the Mae Dok Daeng Church. He reported that the people were "hungry to hear the word." He said of the church, "It is becoming the gem of our Laos churches." During the week, at the church's request, he held two services daily. "And it is delightful," he wrote, "to preach to people so faithful in the observance of the means of grace." He went on to say, "There is an earnestness in their worship which is truly charming, and particularly so among the young people of whom there is a large proportion in the congregation." The concluding Sunday service was esp. meaningful: "...it seemed as if the **WHOLE CONGREGATION** numbering seventy or seventy five **MIGHT HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED** as I trust and believe many of them were baptized by the Holy Spirit." McGilvary then contrasted the Mae Dok Daeng Church with the Chiang Mai Church, writing "I wish we could report so well of this church but it seems to have lost somewhat its first love." McGilvary's description of his week at Mae Dok Daeng broadens our understanding of the situation in the early 1880s. We see more than just the negative side presented by a despairing Wilson. McGilvary's last remark, however, suggests that he shared some of Wilson's feelings about the city church.

[McG to Irving, 19 January 1884, v. 4, BFM. #231]

HeRD #74 - Carpenters & Missions

A mission, such as the Laos Mission, was a complex business enterprise. It involved itself in banking, in trade, in investment, and in the employment of workers. It also had to build numerous buildings. In January 1884, the construction end of the mission had become so pressing that the mission felt compelled to release Wilson from his other duties so he could oversee the construction of the girls' school building and a missionary home. One of his colleagues, Rev. S. C. Peoples, MD., observed, "The building interests of the Mission have assumed such a formidable prospect that we have suggested to the Board at New York the propriety of sending out a carpenter. Skillful workmen can not be found here." Peoples' observation reveals how time-consuming the so-called "secular" work of the mission could be. It also brings us back yet again to the ever-present modernizing role of the mission. It was a major importer of technologies, "modern" skills, and ideas into the North. The Board never did send the carpenter, but as it happened several of the clergy and medical members of the mission had such skills.

[SCP to Irving, January 1884, v. 4, BFM. #232.]

HeRD #75 - Capitalism & Missions

In HeRD #74 we made the point that the Laos Mission was a business enterprise. At times this was not just a by-product of mission work. The mission engaged in business purposely. Dr. Peoples explained why in the same Jan. 1884 letter quoted in #74. He wrote that the mission had a made new departure that year concerning goods shipped up from Bangkok. The mission's boat

captains bought goods in Bangkok and then shipped them back to Chiang Mai for sale by the mission. Peoples claimed that the mission benefited in two ways. First, it made some money to defray its own shipping expenses. Second, it was intended to teach the converts "...industry and demonstrate to them that honorable enter-prise is not incompatible with the Christian religion. Such a lesson is very important to this people, for the priest tribe of this land are, as a class, nothing but a perfect hoard of vagabonds." The missionaries, in sum, consciously identified Christian faith with the whole of their Western/American heritage, including the ways of business.

[SCP to Irving, January 1884, v. 4, BFM. #232.]

HeRD #76 - Student Papers: Second Church, Bangkok

Last Semester my colleagues & I taught the MDiv Seminar in Thai Church History at the McGilvary Faculty of Theology, Payap U. We had 12 students. For the next four HeRDs I'd like to share some points from their papers with you.

Second Church, Bangkok, is one of the CCT's oldest and most prestigious congregations. It has a fine location in the city. It has a long history of pastoral care, and some of the CCT's best-known pastors have filled its pulpit. It's membership is well-to-do and highly educated. In the 1950s and the 1960s it showed marked growth in numbers and in program. The student paper on Second Church documents all of this quite well. That paper, in its concluding chapter, then wrestles with the question of why this congregation has failed to grow numerically and spiritually in the last 30 years. The paper puts forward a number of ideas, the most important of which is that the rapidly changing urban environment of Bangkok frustrates that growth. The papers observes that most of the church's pastors have given much of their time to activities outside of the church. The church hasn't received the consistent pastoral care it needs. The paper implies other possible factors. The lay leadership, for example, is very active but often seems at odds with the pastor in directions for the church. The student, unfortunately, provides no concrete evidence to show whether these factors are important or even relevant. We are left with a question. Why is it that a church with so many advantages and so much potential is declining in numbers and seems to be declining in program and spiritual life?

HeRD #77 - Student Papers: Kru Suk I

Kru ["Teacher"] Suk Khunasawat, pastor of Wiang Pa Pao Church, north of C'Mai, was one of the CCT's most capable pastors prior to World War II. Another student paper presents a brief biography of Kru Suk and devotes considerable attention to a central event in his life. At the beginning of Thailand 's involvement in World War II, Kru Suk publicly declared himself a Buddhist. The author of the paper, a descendant of Kru Suk, is trying to make sense of that event.

Thailand entered the War as a reluctant ally of Japan, and government policy encouraged the persecution of Christians. In line with this policy, local government officials in April or May of 1942 ordered Kru Suk and other Christians to appear at the government offices. They didn't know why. The person responsible for their appearance was Kru Suk's own son-in-law, a policeman who was not a Christian. About 70 Christians, including women & children, appeared. They were seized, forced onto an army truck, and taken off to a local temple. There they were intimidated into making obeisance to a Buddha image and publicly declaring themselves Buddhists. They were threatened with death if they refused. Having done as ordered they were transported home. Relatives report that Kru Suk cried openly during that return trip and after his return he and his wife engaged in long private prayer. He later confessed his sense of failure on

several occasions and for a time declined to continue in pastoral ministry. He was later severely criticized in some quarters for publicly renouncing his Christian faith.

In HeRD #78, we'll look at the analysis of this event.

HeRD #78 - Student Papers: Kru Suk II

In HeRD #77, we looked at Kru Suk's public denial of his Christian faith. The paper explains that denial as follows: 1] Kru Suk was confronted with the situation suddenly and unexpectedly. He had no time to think it through. 2] There were Christian women and children involved and all were under a clear, immediate threat of danger. Kru Suk himself was a loving pastor, and these events put him in fear for his parishioners. 3] His policeman son-in-law threatened to desert his daughter if she remained a Christian. Kru Suk feared that if he refused to follow orders that day: first, his daughter might be subjected to immediate physical retribution; second, she would become husbandless; and, third, he would cause his son-in-law trouble and maybe even cause others to think the son-in-law was a party to a Christian rebellion. 4] Kru Suk was too fearful. Other Christians, faced with the same crisis, refused to give in, and came to no harm. The paper goes on to imply that Kru Suk didn't really deny his faith, in spite of this event. Throughout the war years he continued to carry out evangelism, to lead worship, and to pastor his parishioners informally. His tears after the event prove that he repented of the act.

These events tell us a great deal about the ordeal Thai Christians faced during World War II, esp. in its early phase. There is no question but that Kru Suk was a committed Christian. He served his church faithfully and sacrificially for many years. There is also no question that at this one critical moment he denied all of that out of fear -- for the safety of those with him, for his daughter's safety, for his son-in-law, and probably for himself. Since its inception, the Church has had to deal with Christians who denied their faith under threat and then later sought re-admittance. There has long been divided opinion about how severe or lenient to be. Cases like Kru Suk's indicate that the issues involved are difficult.

HeRD #79 - Student Papers: Church Split

One of the best papers from the course wrestles with the causes and consequences of a church split. The Christian Thai Namphai Church is located in Uttaradit Province and is part of District Four, Phrae, of the CCT. It was established in 1958, and from its inception it had a strong congregational life and a number of capable elders. In the early 1980s, however, a substantial minority of the church became interested in Pentecostalism through exposure to the Romkloa Church, a Bangkok Pentecostal church with daughter churches in several places in Thailand. They formed a prayer group which began to conduct lively, informal Pentecostal worship services. Other members found the emotional, loud, hand-clapping, prayer-shouting worship unacceptable. Things came to a head in June 1985 when the Pentecostal group asked permission to worship in the church building on Sunday afternoons. The congregational meeting held to "discuss" the matter revealed a deep split that existed in the church. Those in opposition stated, loudly, that Pentecostal worship demeaned God and that it was not the worship of their forbearers or of the CCT. It must not be held in the church building. Supporters of the request believed that their worship was Spirit-filled and offered the church the possibility of reform. The pastor sided openly with the Pentecostal group.

Hot tempers prevailed. Ugly words were exchanged. The Pentecostals' opponents made threats and one elder actually struck a Pentecostal on the head with his Bible. Several anti-Pentecostals walked out in rage. In the face of this, the Pentecostal group decided to withdraw from the church. Of 156 members, 68 left and 88 remained. The Namphai Church all but died as

a result. It could no longer pay a pastor. It couldn't maintain its women's or youth groups. Worship attendance declined drastically and several of the remaining members stopped going to church. Some left Christianity entirely. The community mocked the Christians for their lack of unity and love for each other. As I read this paper, I was struck by the profound lack of humility on BOTH sides. For both, particular forms of worship were more precious than Paul's injunctions to preserve the unity of the church.

HeRD #80 - Fornication

The following appeared in the minutes of the North Laos Presbytery under the date of 27 February 1887: "The following Reference from the Church of Cheung Mai was laid before Presbytery.

"The Session of the 1st Church of Cheung Mai submit the following case to Presbytery for advice and direction:- A young man a member of the church, after a short acquaintance of less than two months married a girl not then a member of the church, but belonging to a Christian family. The ceremony was performed after the Christian manner. They lived happily together for about six months when the young wife became the mother of a child. The husband was so indignant at the deception passed on him by his wife when he had looked on her as a pure virgin that he left her and utterly refused ever to live with her again. "Is the husband released by the exception made by our Lord in case of adultery. And if the husband have the wife is the wife released by the exception made in I Cor. 7:15 in the case of voluntary disertion [sic].

"The Session have done all in their power to prevent the separation. What is its duty now." The presbytery appointed a special committee to consider this case and answer the questions of the Session of C'Mai First Church. More in HeRD #81!

HeRD #81 - Fornication Again

On Feb. 27th 1887, the Session of First Church C'Mai asked the advice of the North Laos Presbytery in a difficult marital case, the details of which were presented in HeRD #80. The presbytery's special committee replied:

"Your Com. would report on the case of Reference submitted for their investigation as follows:- "As to the first question i.e. Is the husband released by the exception made by our Lord in Case of Fornication. Your Com. would recommend an affirmative answer. See Mat. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9.

"As to the second question i.e. And if the husband have the wife is the wife released by the exception in I Cor. 7:15. Your Com. would decide that she is not released by the exception referred to. But that she is freed from the law of the husband by virtue of his being released from her.

"Third:- The Session asked directions as to their present duty. It is the judgment of your Com. that no judicial action is demanded in the case. And if the Session have already used all proper exhortation and admonition there is no remaining duty resting upon the Session.

"Respectfully submitted, S. C. Peoples, W. C. Dodd, Elder Loong Dooung"

HeRD #82 - Who Were the Converts?

In my previous work on earlier northern Thai church history, I've worked under the assumption that most of those who converted to Christianity were "socially marginal" people. They were the poor, the ill, lepers, and those accused of causing demon possession. There is no question but what such people were found in substantial numbers among the converts. But quotations like the one that follows are causing me to rethink the matter of who converted and why. The Rev. William C. Dodd prepared the 1886 annual "Narrative of the State of Religion " for the North Laos Presbytery. In that narrative he noted that C'Mai Church had received 72 new members during the previous year. He wrote, "The character of the applicants is cause for gratitude because of the prestige it gives our work among the people. During the year there have been four Government officers received and a large number of men of good families and in good circumstances - men who are not presumably prompted by such low motives as hope of pecuniary help from the missionaries or of social advancement. The character of the converts has been such that a Government official was heard to say that the missionaries, being shrewd men, picked the best material out of which to make Christians."

HeRD #83 - Padroado

Thai Protestant history represents less than half of the total of Thai Church history. Thai Catholic history, unfortunately, remains a largely unexplored field. It is a rich one, one that I suspect is full of lessons for us Protestant johnny-come-latelies. Here's a bit of background, taken from the doctoral thesis of Fr. Surachai Chumsriphan, a church historian.

Catholic history in Siam begins with the "Padroado." All of the missionaries who came to Siam in the 16th & 17th centuries came from Malacca, Goa, Macao, or Manila, all of which were under the jurisdiction of the Padroado. Padroado is a Portuguese word meaning patronage. It was an agreement made between a Catholic country's government and the Catholic Church that gave those governments control of Catholic overseas missions in their colonial territories. In return the governments provided the Catholic church support of its missionaries and missions. Both the Spanish and the Portuguese made extensive use of Padroado in their colonial empires. Evidently, these rights of patronage were first granted in the 15th century to Prince Henry the Navigator. Spain later obtained the same rights in its colonies. Eventually the Kings of Spain and Portugal obtained the right to nominate candidates for the office of bishop and other church offices and wielded considerable power over the Church. This aided these empires in legitimating and sustaining their power. The Catholic church benefited from governmental support for its overseas missions. Fr. Surachai notes that this system was actually a Medieval one that emerged out of Europe's struggle with Islam. The first Catholic missionaries in Siam, Dominicans who arrived in 1567, were representatives of the Portuguese Padroado.

HeRD #84 - Propaganda Fide

The Padroado [HeRD #83] form of Catholic missions proved itself successful as an instrument of Portuguese imperial policy in East Asia. It was much less useful to the Catholic Church as a means for creating a viable church in Siam and elsewhere. In 1622 Pope Gregory XV took steps to bring foreign missions back under church control. He established the Propaganda Fide as a mission agency directly under papal control. That same year he sent an Apostolic Vicar to Ayudhya in Southeast Asia, who decided to make Ayudhya, the capital of Siam, his center. The Padroado missionaries in Ayudhya claimed the Vicar was an intruder and usurper. They refused to accept his authority. In 1664 a second Vicar arrived. They called for a Synod, known as the Synod of 1664, to respond to the situation in Ayudhya. The Synod deplored ecclesiastical conditions there and called for reform measures, among them the founding of a seminary to give

proper training to priests. A Fr. Lambert was the key voice at the Synod. He founded the seminary, the first in all of East Asia, in 1665. He later started a woman's seminary and founded a hospital in Ayudhya. In 1669 the Pope gave the two Vicars full power over all Catholic work in Ayudhya and established that work as a separate papal mission. The Pope appointed Fr. Laneau, one of the two Apostolic Vicars, as the first Bishop and Apostolic Vicar of Siam in 1674. The Padroado missionaries continued to resist Laneau until 1682 when the Pope finally ordered them directly to submit to him.

HeRD #85 -Catholic Evangelism

In HeRDs #83 & 84 we looked at the foundations of Catholic mission work in Siam. That work failed to establish a strong church, even though it began in 1567 and continued (with interruptions) on into the 19th century. Fr. Surachai in his doctoral thesis offers this analysis of the failure of Catholic evangelism. The Catholic missionaries of the 16th thru the 18th centuries themselves attributed their lack of evangelistic success to the supposed natural apathy, idolatry, lack of intelligence, lack of courage, and lack of conscience of the Siamese. Fr. Surachai observes, however, that the Siamese officials and people distrusted foreigners, including missionaries, and feared they aimed to take over Siam. All of the disputes and divisions we described earlier also took their toll. Catholic missions couldn't focus their resources effectively. Those divisions also created a bad impression of Christianity. Finally, French Catholic missionary participation in politics for the purpose of Christianizing Siam led to an anti-French and anti-Catholic attitude--which in turn led to the suppression of Christianity. Periodic governmental repression led to legal strictures on missionary work. They were eventually forbidden from using Thai or Pali in teaching Christianity. They were not allowed to evangelize the Thai, Mon, or northern Thai people. The government prohibited them from criticizing Buddhism. When the Protestants arrived, beginning in 1828, there were only a handful of Catholics in Siam. Catholic work had to begin over anew.

HeRD #86 - Medical Compromise

In previous HeRDs we've talked about the problem of Christian medical care. The missionaries insisted that the converts not use "native" doctors and treatments because they involved animistic practices. But most converts lived at a distance from missionary medicine. In times of distress they frequently went to the spirit doctors anyway. Not a few were excommunicated as a result. Over time, however, it appears that the converts and the missionaries worked out a compromise. The Rev. Marion Palmer told the following tale in the April 1907 issue of the LAOS NEWS

"Chan...is the daughter of an elder and for several weeks she had been quite sick with something like epilepsy. She was a pitiful sight to behold, so thin and emaciated. It was surprising to me that a Christian family should have a heathen doctor when a missionary physician was available. It seems hard for them to give up some of their old beliefs and customs and when they have no religious significance they are not urged to do so. This native doctor seemed unable to help this poor girl. He only made her look worse forbidding her parents to bathe her and by anointing her with some black mixture called medicine. He told the parents the child might be cured more quickly if they would go and worship a certain evil spirit that lived in a certain whirlpool where two small streams unite. He assured them that this spirit often attacked children in this way. The elder smiled and told us that he was willing to trust Christ and knew the child was not possessed with a demon."

One of the central themes of northern Thai church history is that the converts were a people who lived between worlds - the "heathen" northern Thai and the "civilized" Western

worlds. In creating a third world of their own, they had to steer a course between those worlds. Chan's care is one example of how they made choices that allowed them to be both Christian and northern Thai.

HeRD #87 - Easter & Songkran

We have been identifying recurring themes in the history of the northern Thai church. One of these is "indigenization," that is efforts to adapt the church to its cultural setting. While the Laos Mission was not notably sensitive to this issue, northern Thai Christians sometimes were. The 1910 meeting of the North Laos Presbytery--chaired by an northern Thai elder and with only a handful of missionaries present--debated the "problem" of the northern Thai New Year's festivities (Songkran). Those festivities take place for several days in mid-April. The minutes for that year report, "A discussion regarding the native New Year festival followed. It was suggested to make our Easter celebration coincide with it, and keep Christian people away from doubtful amusements at that time. Postponed to next year, for further discussion." While it is inconceivable that the mission would agree to rearranging the date of Easter, the suggestion here is an interesting, startling one. Northern Thai Christianity, by this suggestion, could deal with the moral issue of keeping Christians from carousing at Songkran by bringing Easter into the northern Thai calendar and providing Christians with a Christian reason for celebrating the most important festival in the Thai year.

HeRD #88 - Reviving Ordained Ministry

For reasons that require pages of explanation, the northern Thai church stopped ordaining ministers in 1895 and from then on until 1914 ordained only a small handful of men to the ministry. After 1900 northern Thais had little role in the pastoral care of churches, excepting only the C'Mai Church and one or two rural congregations. Most of the missionaries believed that northern Thais were not suited for ordination and/or pastoral ministry. The minutes of the North Laos Presbytery for 1914 mark an important turning point. First, the presbytery "Moved & carried that the old committee on the Examination of Candidates for the Ministry be discharged and that the teachers in the Theological Training School be a permanent committee on Examination of Candidates for the Ministry." The TTS had been founded in 1912 and was now beginning to have an impact. Second, the presbytery took six individuals "under care" for preparation for ordained ministry. Third, it ordained two men to the Gospel Ministry. This was the most action taken toward establishing the ordained ministry in the North since 1893-94. It marks an important step towards the creation of a northern Thai pastoral ministry. To put things in perspective, however, we should remember that a viable, wide-spread pastoral system did not appear in the North until after 1980 - yes, 1980. Anyone who would understand the Protestant church's experience in the North needs to remember that it went for a century without consistent, viable, & indigenous pastoral care.

HeRD #89 - Huh?

After having spent a great deal of time on a particular historical period or subject, historians generally develop a fine appreciation for the relevant historical issues of that period or subject. Every once in awhile, however, something comes along that "does not compute." The following motion appears in the minutes of the North Laos Presbytery for 1916: "Moved & Seconded that Christians on trading trips be given Christian passports." The motion was tabled. Now, what is that all about? Were non-Christian traders passing themselves off as Christians and imposing on the hospitality of Christians? Would having a passport solve some problem or facilitate some aspect of trading for Christian traders? Wish I knew.

HeRD #90 - Complaints Committee

Early in the second day of its deliberations in March 1917, the North Laos Presbytery passed the following motion: "A committee consisting of Rev. See Mo, Rev. Pannya, Rev. Kam Ai, Elder Kam Pan of Chieng Mai and Rev. L. J. Beebe, was appointed to receive and report on any complaints that may arise." A Complaints Committee! No church, presbytery, district, diocese, or other ecclesiastical body should be without one!

HeRD #90S(pecial) - from [HK]

[HK] sent me the following note to pass along to you. he is responding to my statement in HeRD #88, "To put things in perspective, however, we should remember that a viable, wide-spread pastoral system did not appear in the North until after 1980 - yes, 1980. Anyone who would understand the Protestant church's experience in the North needs to remember that it went for a century without consistent, viable, & indigenous pastoral care."

Dear Herb,

I think this statement is too short and is misleading for someone who does not know the background of pastoral care in the Church of Christ in Thailand.

I would say that we have had a good pastoral system for many years now. It is backed by clear definitions in the Constitution of the CCT. The constitution I have, both versions in Thai and English, dates back to 1974. However the financial matters of that system were left to the Districts and Churches to decide. So what you were talking about was the central financial backing of that constitutional system which started with the Church Self-Support Project of 1979. That project was further strengthened with the creation of the CCT's Pastoral Care Unit. Perhaps you have some data at hand to share with us concerning when the system I am talking about was set up first and how it improved over the years. Maybe you also have an example how it improved in both urban and rural churches, such as the churches in Nan province. Would that be a good paper for students to do?

I only know from talking with pastors and elders that a person like Rev. Tongkam, former Moderator of the CCT, received only a few hundred Baht back in the sixties in Nan. Of course at that time value was different from today's value.

In Christian fellowship

Yours, [H]

Thank you, [H]. The problem with keeping the HeRDs brief is always that in doing so I have to sometimes over-simplify complex issues. I trust that all the HeRD recipients will bear this in mind. While I'm mulling over a reply to your comments, I wonder if any other HeRDers out there have other comments? Herb

HeRD #91 - reply to [H]

[HK]'s responded to HeRD #88 with the concern that its conclusion about pastoral care in northern Thailand was too short and, therefore, misleading. I would add the following data for our consideration: The "century without consistent, viable, & indigenous pastoral care" that I had in mind was from the 1870s through to the 1970s. While it is true that the CCT, officially, presupposed from its beginning in 1934 that its churches would have pastors, the reality in the

North was quite different. From the 1870s to about 1920, the missionaries oversaw the churches. Only the city churches had pastors and they were either missionaries or worked under missionary supervision. The missionary pastors had many other duties and could give only limited time to their churches. Pastoral oversight of the rural groups was haphazard at best. In the 1920s and 1930s, the urban churches began to have northern Thai pastors. Few of them were theologically trained. Almost no rural churches had pastors except in Chiang Rai province. There the pastors were poorly paid and seldom stayed in pastoral ministry for more than a year or two. This total situation did not improve after World II. In 1959, for example, the whole CCT had about 120 churches and only 12 pastors. In the North, the typical pattern was for each of the districts to have "district workers" who sometimes resided in local churches, sometimes did not. These workers had many duties including pastoral oversight of churches. One worker usually had to care for several congregations. Few of these workers had any pastoral training and most were evangelists.

A significant number of northern churches began to have their own pastors only after the inception of the Church Self-Support Project '79 in 1980. That project provides funds for paying pastors on a sliding scale that increases the local church's portion of the salary each year--until the church pays the pastor's full salary. Now, many northern churches do have pastors. Relatively few rural churches, however, have completed Project '79 successfully.

The century-long absence of viable, consistent, and effective pastoral care remains, in sum, a central fact of northern Thai church history.

HeRD #92 - Religious Toleration for Christian Soldiers

We've been plodding thru the minutes of the North Laos Presbytery for some time now. Tho inevitably dull, they are important because they contain a record of the many problems the churches faced in creating a distinctive place for themselves in northern Thai society. Take the following minute from March 1917 as an example: "Rev. W. Clifton Dodd, D.D. presented the report of Elder C. W. Mason, M.D., who was appointed last year to interview H. S. H. Prince Bovoradej, the Vice Roy regarding religious toleration for soldiers. The report had appended to it a communication from H. S. H. the Prince, in which the desired toleration was assured."

The Laos Mission long struggled to gain civil rights for the Christian community. In traditional northern Thai society legal rights were closely tied to Buddhist and animistic practices and rituals--which the missionaries would not allow Christians to take part in. Keeping the Christian Sabbath rather than the Buddhist sacred day is one example. The above quotation adds to our understanding of that struggle. It extended to include Christian soldiers. This was 1917 after all, and Siam was one of the Allies. Undoubtedly Christian soldiers were faced with having to participate in Buddhist ceremonies and with the problem of keeping the Christian Sabbath in the army of a Buddhist nation.

Two thoughts: first, if the missionaries had not insisted on a rigid exclusivism, this problem would not have arisen. Christian soldiers would have been able to participate in Buddhist rituals and practices, when necessary. Second, in 1917 the church still had to depend on the mission to act as an intermediary for it.

HeRD #93 - Karen Evangelists

Dr. Mike Leming has been doing research among Karen Christians. In a draft of a paper he is preparing, he provides us with a glimpse into Karen evangelism in northern Thailand in the

1930s. We should note that this evangelism was carried out without any input from Western missionaries.

"When Baw Ney, Kaw Peh, and Thra Pho Too first came to the Musikee area they had to carry all of their supplies on foot and since Thra Pho Too was getting older, this first trip took eight days to complete. The men knew that when they arrived in the Musikee area the Karen people would feed them and provide accommodations for them as this is the Karen custom to give food to guests even when the family does not enough food for themselves. This first trip did not produce any converts but it prepared the people to become more open to the gospel in subsequent missionary visits.

"When Baw Ney and Kaw Peh returned to Musikee without Thra Pho Too, they worked with the people in the fields and helped them carry water and cut firewood. As a consequence the people were happy to have them come and offered them a place to stay. At the same time they earned the people's friendship, respect, hospitality, and the people listened to what they had to say about Jesus being a better way than the spirit si kho miu xa--the object of traditional Karen animism.

"When coming to a new village Kaw Peh and Baw Ney would gather the children and sing for them. After they had the children's attention they would teach them to sing songs and to read Karen. Soon the adults of the village would gather to see what was happening. It was at this time that Baw Ney recited Karen poems and stories. One of the stories he told was about Y'wa [God] leaving earth and giving the three brothers books of wisdom and how the white missionaries had come to Burma and given the Karen the Bible that told about Jesus Christ coming and dying as a sacrifice for the sins of every person, and that once they believed in Jesus, Y'wa no longer required the Karen to sacrifice. For the Karen who suffered under the burden of making costly sacrifices of chickens and pigs to si kho miu xa, this was good news. While the people in the villages did not come to faith on the first hearing of the gospel message, during the first year there were four families who came to faith in Christ--the families of Su Na Hae, Da Mer Ler, Bu Kar, and 'Hu Hae."

HeRD #94 - A Historian's Pitfall

Any time a historian claims that such and such an event is a "first" she or he is in danger of a fall. A cute little example is found in the Laos Mission minutes for January 1872. That monthly meeting of the mission's male members appointed the Rev. Jonathan Wilson as "Superintendent of the Press," even though the mission didn't have a working press. If you had asked me I would have fervently avowed that the Rev. D. G. Collins was the first press superintendent or manager. He started up the Mission Press in 1892. Today's moral of the story: beware of historians, experienced or newly minted, claiming firsts.

HeRD #95 - Charter of the Laos Mission

The American historian Daniel Boorstin claims that Americans characteristically write compacts & constitutions at the drop of a hat. He cites not only the Mayflower Compact, but also the Frontier Era articles of agreement written up by most wagon trains heading West. The Laos Mission was no exception. In January 1872, when it finally had more than just two mission families, the mission held the foundational meeting of its "Business Committee" and immediately appointed a special committee to draw up a plan for regular meetings. The committee brought back what amounted to a mini-constitution including the following preamble: "Called in the Providence of God to labor together as missionaries of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America for the spread of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, And desiring to work in harmony

with each other- We, the members of the North Laos Mission, agree to form ourselves into a standing committee, for the purpose of consulting in regard to the best interests of our ministerial work in all its various branches, and for the transaction of such mission business bearing upon our work and our relations with the Mission Board of our church, as may from time to time be required..."

The mission organized itself for three purposes: 1) maintain mission harmony; 2) consult on mission work; and 3) transact mission business. It described the reason for its own existence, viz. the call of God. It stated its purpose, namely the spread of the Kingdom. Remember the concept of webs of meaning? Here's another one.

HeRD #96 - Picky or Meticulous?

The October 7th, 1879, minutes of the Laos Mission opens by stating, "North Laos Mission held its Annual Meeting on the call of the Chairman." This brief sentence poses a problem. From 1872 to 1876 these meetings were styled the annual meetings of the "Business Committee" of the mission. From 1879 on there is no further mention of that committee. So, is this October 7th meeting the mission's FIRST annual meeting? Or were the earlier Business Committee annual meetings "really" Mission annual meetings too? Both had the same membership. Why, you ask yourself, bother over a minor detail like this? First, to achieve as correct a description of past events as possible even at the risk of being pedantic. Second, because dropping the term "Business Committee" may point to a change in consciousness on the part of the missionaries--such as a sense of the mission growing in size. And when you think about it, in northern Thai church history, it does make a difference whether we claim that the Mission 's first annual meeting was held in 1872 or in 1879. Using one date or the other says something about the growth and development of the mission itself. My "reasoned and informed" opinion at the moment? 1879.

HeRD #97 - A Complication Arises

In HeRD #96 I argued that the first annual meeting of the Laos Mission was in 1879 rather than in 1872 because in 1879 the meeting was called just the "mission meeting" for the first time. It wasn't the annual meeting of the mission's "Business Committee." A complication arises in the minutes of 4 October 1880. On that day the missionaries decided to revert to the procedures outlined in the 1872 minutes for electing mission officers. The minutes for 1879 quote those procedures including the term "the Business Committee" as if there was a continuity between 1872 and 1879. That is, the missionaries in 1879, sitting as the mission annual meeting, seemed to think they were the same body as the one that met in 1872. The dropping of the term "Business Committee" didn't seem significant. This complicates the situation, and I feel less certain about making ANY definitive statement. The mission began holding annual meetings in 1872 but did not call them MISSION annual meetings until 1879. So, we get two answers for the price of one. When did the Laos Mission begin holding annual meetings? 1872. When did it hold the first mission annual meeting? 1879. This just goes to show that human institutions aren't like people. People are "founded" (born) on a certain day and at a certain time. Dating the founding of an institution is frequently much less certain and more difficult, as in this case.

HeRD #98 - Fetters

Hans Conzelmann, in his book HISTORY OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY, makes the following observation about the early church: "If one assembles the elements of liturgy and compares them with the worship of later times, the forms appear very simple. But the primitive community not only had other concerns than the construction of a liturgy. It concealed within

itself tremendous energies which could not be fettered in fixed forms." [p. 54] One of the central issues in the study of Thai church history is that of fetters. In what ways and to what extent has the Thai church's heritage, as mediated through the Western missionary movement, fettered it with imposed, fixed forms?

HeRD #99 - Expansion & Christianity

Conzelmann's HISTORY OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY describes the liveliness of the first century church by stating, "Its vitality is documented outwardly in the expansion of the church." That expansion was geographical and statistical. In commenting on the fact that first-century Christianity quickly spread to Samaria, Conzelmann writes, "...that is to say, the church early overcame the barriers which existed between Jewish orthodoxy and Samaritan heresy." [p. 54] The early church, in other words, expanded across social/religious prejudices and divisions as well as geographically. While the church grew only slowly in northern Thailand, there is some evidence to suggest that it retained the early church's ability to expand across prejudices. Many accused of causing demon possession and many lepers converted. Both groups were social outcasts. The place of women in the church, while still secondary, was vastly improved over their place in traditional northern Thai religion. What does this say about the vitality of northern Thai Christianity--and of missionary Christianity?

HeRD #100 - Reflections

Next year my colleagues and I at the CCT's Office of History will begin teaching the church history courses in the McGilvary Faculty of Theology's new curriculum. One of those courses surveys church history from Jerusalem to Bangkok. The usual way of preparing such a history is to proceed as if the class stands outside of the stream of events and surveys it in a long, single glance. This approach begins with information that the instructor assumes the students "need" to know. We're seeking a different approach. Remember the web idea? Imagine the church's past as a vast web of events, ideas, values, and cultures that stretches back over time as well as in space. Students and instructor are together at a (moving) point on this vast web. From it, the class traces the main strands back and back to the very earliest church and to Jesus of Nazareth himself. It's as if the web is colored with an infinite variety of shades. We stand here looking back for "our" shades as they stretch back and back and still further back. This means that we will end up telling the story of the so-called "universal church" with different emphases and shades of meaning than it is told in Australia or North America or Europe--or Burma for that matter. Our hope is that the students will see how the strands of Christian web most important to them have been woven through time.

HeRD #101 - Holy Mud

Recently, I had the opportunity to share some reflections on the history of Presbyterian missions in Thailand with a small group of missionaries who wanted "lessons" from the Presbyterian past. In a paper I gave them in advance, I argued that history doesn't usually offer specific, direct lessons. Things change too much from one situation to another. I went on to write: "Study of the past, however, does offer some general lessons. It reminds us that human behavior grows out of complex forces. Things seldom are entirely what they seem to be and actions have unexpected, all too often unwanted, consequences. Viewed from within the heritage and consciousness of the Christian church, the study of history has a prophetic element to it. When done critically, professionally, and humbly, it tends to reveal our greatest visions and deepest hopes as idolatries. It throws holy mud on our human pretensions." Clyde L. Manschreck, A HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE WORLD, p. 3, puts the matter this way, "The achievements of Christianity have all proved imperfect. They may have served well in their

time, and still have a relevance that should not be arrogantly dismissed, but they have almost always become so ossified and institutionalized that they work more like idols than fruits of the living Spirit. The church in Thailand has been quick to label the religious activities of others "idolatrous". Perhaps one of its greatest weaknesses is its failure to come to grips with its own idolatries.

HeRD #102 - Reactive rather than Proactive?

Sam Moffett, in the first volume of his *A HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN ASIA*, makes the following observation: "The history of the church is often written as much by events outside it as within." (p. 151). We can take this aphorism in a number of ways. At one level, it simply reflects the fact that the church always exists in a world of complex political, social, economic, and cultural forces. It can hardly escape being influenced by them. At another level, however, it seems that the church is itself a lesser factor--more acted upon than acting. And at yet another level, Moffett might be taken to imply that in point of fact it is the "world" that sets the church's agenda rather than the other way around. The church is a reactive rather than creative factor on the world historical stage. This very much seems to be the case in Thailand. Is it not also the case in Australia, the USA, Germany, Singapore, and Sweden? Any thoughts?

HeRD #103 - The Past's Own Past

In September 1869 the "Prince" of Chiang Mai, Chao Kawilorot, took violent steps to quash the infant northern Thai church. Among other acts, he had two of the converts executed on patently false charges. In the aftermath of this persecution, the Revs. McGilvary and Wilson expressed the hope that it would work to the good of the church. They recalled Tertullian's dictum that, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." My own reading is that Kawilorot succeeded. He prevented the relatively rapid expansion of the Christian religion. The martyrs in northern Thailand were NOT the seed of the church.

What is interesting here is the influence of the missionaries' interpretation of early church history on their understanding of their own situation. The two situations were very different. Manschreck in his *A HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE WORLD* (p. 25) describes the early church's response to persecution in this way: "People dared to be heroic; many wanted to be martyred. ...The belief was strong that Christ would crown those who suffered in this life. Concomitant with this attitude was the belief that, although God created this world good, human sin had rendered it so corrupt that it was hardly a fit place in which to lived. Mix with biblical notions about seeking the kingdom of heaven first and letting nothing in this world come before one's allegiance to Christ, and with Greek notions about the unreality of material things, this attitude produced an ethos of asceticism--a rejection of this world and its evils in favor of spiritual reality and an otherworldly hope." While brave in their willingness to risk the anger of Kawilorot, there is no indication that the first generation of northern Thai Christians shared these attitudes about martyrdom, asceticism, and the world. The missionaries, however, treated the early church martyrs as if they were a model for the present. That model, in turn, shaped their understanding of their own present. They communicated that model, yet again, to the church. Thai Protestantism today continues to celebrate the martyrdom of the "two heroes of the faith" in 1869 is that event was a key, positive factor in the establishment of the Thai church. Key? Yes. Positive? No.

HeRD #104 - Changing Women's Roles

Perhaps nowhere did the Laos Mission have a greater social impact than on the lives and roles of women. Traditional northern Thai culture shut women off from formal learning. It

restricted their role in religion. The mission opened the educational door and greatly widened the leadership role of women in religion. The results were striking. Florence Crooks described the impact one northern Thai Christian woman made on a tour to one rural area of Chiang Rai province. She wrote of the women, "She was the greatest curiosity that ever entered that section of the country--a Laos woman who could read and write, and teach. This latter she does in the most winning manner; the words seem to flow from her lips and she has a very clear understanding of Bible truth. She made a great many visits in the homes and there would plead earnestly with the women to lay aside their spirit worship and take the Lord Jesus as their refuge." [from the LAOS NEWS, April 1907, p. 61].

HeRD #105 - Poundin' Pepper in Heaven

Here's one to close out the old year. The LAOS NEWS for October 1907 tells about the Chiang Mai elder who went on a trip over the mountains to Kengtung in the Shan States of Burma. As the elder recounted the tale, "Well we climbed and climbed, and at last got up so high that we could hear the angels pounding pepper." The article goes on to explain, "To appreciate the force of this last remark, you must know that, 'pounding pepper,' is in Laos an essential preliminary to each meal. Pass through a Laos village morning, noon or night, you hear a hundred pestles pound, pound, into mortars, as the pepper for the next meal is being prepared." (pp. 109-110).

Rather than ruin the happy image of angels poundin' pepper in heaven with sage commentary on the indigenization of Christian themes, let me bid you all a HAPPY NEW YEAR. See you in '96. Herb

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