

CHAPTER III

THE EXPANSION OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH PROSELYTIZING ROLE TO THAILAND

3.1 Russian-Thai's Relation Background

Thailand is a predominantly Theravada Buddhist nation (about 95% of the population), which influences in all aspect lives of Thai people. Thai constitutions have stipulated that Thai king must be Buddhists, but monarchs are invariably entitles "Upholder of All Religions."¹ Thailand is trying to be complete freedom country of worship by the law provides for freedom of religion after long century of legal reform commenced by King Chulalongkorn designed to create stable government. It rests on the rule of law, on human rights, and on the separation of powers that were needed to protect national sovereignty from accusation as inferior nation. Besides the constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom² along with states that unjust discrimination against a person on the grounds of the difference in origin, race, language, sex, age, physical or health condition, personal status, economic or social standing, religious belief, education or constitutionally political view, is not permitted.³

Thai approved various religions because we always aware the importance of international cultural as interchange terms to mutual benefits of the economic, social and political development. Thai government is officially secular, and the constitution guarantees religious freedom, a guarantee that is generally observed in practice. Other religions have to register with the Ministry of Interior that limited a quota to register by "the Religious Affairs Department."⁴ Although unregistered religious organizations are proselytized freely to operate, many foreign missionaries were able to live and work in the

¹ Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, 2007, Section 8-25.

² Ibid. Section 37.

³ Ibid. Section 30.

⁴ The Religious Affairs Department (RAD) is responsible for registering religious groups. Under provisions of the Regulations on Religious Organizations implemented in 1969 and amended in 1982.

country without government interference. That sequel from the colonial era, the Western nations attempt to use religious ideology gradually dominated thinking. (If it's not work, next step they will force with military superiority.) Christianity is one of the major religions in Thailand (about 0.7%). The main sects of Christianity in Thailand are divided into: Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant⁵ that I would like to focus on Russian Orthodox Church by starting from relation between Thailand and Russia.

The relationship between Thailand and Russia increased because of Western nations building commercial empires up all over the inhabited world by introduction Christianity along with modern innovation and technology (as hidden agenda of Colonization) that contributed to build Western influence and to dominate stronger in South East Asia. Thailand needed to develop the potential of the nation by learning their knowledge to accepted and allowed many Christian churches proselytized in Thailand at that period (even though they did not much succeed). I analyze how Siam's King aimed to let Russian Orthodox proselytized in Thailand to strengthen relationship with Russia to the balance of powers and opened the proselytizing freely to prevent a feud with Western European.

3.2 The Russian Orthodox Church Proselytizing Role to Thailand

3.2.1 First time – Soviet period

The Orthodox Christian community life in Thailand dates back to the seventeenth century from the first relationship with Russia in 1891. While the Western Europeans were expanding Christianity influence everywhere, the Russian Church embarked on a wide-ranging project of establishing the Orthodox Christian faith among the peoples of Far East too. Also Russian Church produced a number of spiritual Christians whose grace-filled influence to reach far and wide. When Czarevitch, the Russian Crown Prince (the future Czar Nicholas II, 1894-1917), had shown his great appreciation from his previous visit to Siam during the reign of King Rama V (King Chulalongkorn of Siam, 1868-1910) and they both made reform and modernization programs for his nation by a

⁵ Christianity in Thailand: Religion Department, Thailand, 2011. Download from: http://www.dra.go.th/module/attach_media/sheet5920110407042818.pdf

visiting to European countries (because Siam's King tried to compromise and seek to balance the power between France and Britain). Since then, the Siam King had Czar Nicholas II as genuine friend and Russia had no interests to colonize Siam,⁶ therefore, non-invasive and assistance. So Russo-Siamese Relations Officially established in 1897⁷ and in 1898, the first Russian Consul appointed in Bangkok to confirm diplomatic relationship between the two nations besides brotherhood (Chakri and Romanov dynasties) and great friendship.⁸ This part enhanced Thailand's status to the international community and also confirmed the status of the Siamese monarch as a sovereign equal to European kings. Even though, no officially of Orthodox Church was established because Russia revolution happened before start, the relations between Thai-Russia had developed smoothly and grow strongly. The Western political allocation thoroughly was a proof of Siam's natural state as an independent kingdom which rich of civilization and independency.

After Bolshevik had overthrown the regime of Czar Nicholas II and founded the Soviet Union which communist regime. Thailand a short pause in the bilateral relations with the Soviet then the diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Thailand were established in 1941. Thai rescued Russian fleeing Soviet discrimination arrived in Thailand from Harbin. This mass exodus, it's the benefit from establishing the Russian Orthodox Church in other parts of the world. During the Cold War the relations between the two countries developed ambivalently but no conflict or any substantial progress. In this period, Thailand was a war zones when Japan tried to occupy Thailand, so religious differences led to disharmony. Most of evangelists evacuated out. When the tension of the Cold War dropped in 1991 the Royal Thai Government recognized the Russian Federation as a sovereign state and reconfirmed its intention to develop friendly and mutually beneficial relations. It was the first substantial positive changes of Russian-Thai Bilateral Relations in updating the legal basis of bilateral cooperation in economic and

⁶ Chalong Soontarawanit, Russo-Siamese Relations: The Reign of Kings Rama Fifth and Sixth, Bangkok, 1973.

⁷ Natanaree Posrithong, "The Russo-Siamese Relations: The Reign of King Chulalongkorn," Silpakorn University International Journal, Vol.9-10 (2009-2010): p. 87-115.

⁸ Committee Historical Documents, 100 Years of RussoSiamese Relationship, Thammasat University, Bangkok, 1997, p. 64-65.

humanitarian spheres, including those aimed at further promoting trade and tourism under influence of the international arena that has a positive effect on the established Russian Orthodox Church in Thailand in latter.

3.2.2 Post Soviet - Present

The ROC in Thailand was initiated after the meeting on December 28, 1999. The Holy Synod of ROC (Moscow Patriarchate) opened the first officially Orthodox Church “St. Nicholas' parish” in Bangkok. But the legislation does not specify that the Russian Orthodox as a sect of Christianity because it is not well known in Thailand yet. So in 2001, Orthodoxy in Thailand is presented by Kirill, the Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad; the Chairman of Department for External Church Relationships of Moscow Patriarchate, including the Representative Office of Russian Orthodox Church had the first official visit to arch-pastoral in Bangkok.

The contacts between Russia and Thailand became more and more frequent, for example:⁹

- Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra, the Prime Minister of Thailand, visited Russia in 2002,
- Mr. Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation visited Thailand and also signed the related Protocol on Cooperation between the Ministries of Culture of Russia and Thailand in 2003,
- And the return official visit of Thailand by Her Majesty Queen Sirikit in 2007 tied a new the historical chain of mutual sympathy of our nations as the case to support the ROC establishment in Thailand.

Moreover during that time, the Archimandrite Oleg Cherepanin was appointed as the rector of the parish. The fund of Russian Orthodox Church is chaired by the first Thai Orthodox priest, a graduate of St. Petersburg Theological Seminary, Father Daniel (Danai Vanna), who operates in Thailand. And Insistent works to promote and convert local citizens in Thailand, Department of the Interior would finally accept the ROC after 9 years.

In July, 2008, The ROC registered as a social organization, which it has accredited by the Department of Interior, and work together with proselytizing according to the regulations of the Foundation by under the operation of the Russian Orthodox Church in Thailand. Government

⁹ The Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Kingdom of Thailand, Russian-Thai Relations: Official Visits, Bangkok, 2009. See: <http://www.thailand.mid.ru>

supports only the activities of the charity. Not associated with politics. Currently, Russian Orthodox Christian in Thailand is about 200-300 people, Thai 20-30 people and still growing which is due to migration.¹⁰

The counting of members such as belief, baptism, confirmation as well as age criteria such as persons over age 12, 15, 18 or adulthood. The Orthodox mission in Thailand is headed and serves the arrival of a few refugee families from Soviet period, Russian tourists or citizens in Thailand and the existing community of faithful in Thailand. (Number of Russian tourists to Thailand in 2005 is 102,783 people and total number in 2007 is 271,433 people that increased 15-20% every year.¹¹) Including to Thai Buddhism convert to Orthodox Christianity are Inter-faith Marriage and conversion by free choice due to a change.

There are several Russian Orthodox communes:¹²

- 1) The main parish of Saint Nicholas' Chapel in Bangkok was created on 29th of December, 1999,
- 2) Parish in the name of Holy Life-Giving Trinity on Phuket Island was created in 2008,
- 3) Parish in the name of All Saints in Pattaya, Chonburi province was created in 2008,
- 4) Parish in the name of Holy Dormition of Mother of God, Rachatburi province was created on February the 17th, 2009,
- 5) The Holy Ascension parish in Samui Island, Surat-Thani province was began the construction in January 2011,
- 6) Construction site of the new St. Nicholas temple in Bangkok (Sukhumvit Soi 101/1, sub-soi 36) on December 19-20, 2012.

Establishing a new parish and construction a new churches in different parts of the country helped more locals to have an understanding of Christianity and that may covers a multitude of disagreements. The Orthodox Christianity in Thailand reception was the 10th

¹⁰ Danai Wanna, Thailand's first Russian Orthodox priest, Interview, August 22, 2012

¹¹ Royal Thai Embassy, Moscow, 2008.

¹² "Parishes information," Orthodox Church in Thailand (Moscow Patriarchate), 2008-2012.

anniversary on December 19, 2009,¹³ on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church. The celebrations were led Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relation. Thai government awarded them an invaluable gift by allowing them to build another Orthodox cathedral on its territory.

Even though, the Russian-Thai relations have grown strongly until the 115th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between the two countries and the Orthodox Church in Thailand has been moving forward in a good way. The Orthodox mission in Thailand is still looking for the help from Moscow Patriarch to assist what is becoming a spiritual movement that has great potential to transform Thailand and beyond. The ROC is also the key to support cooperation between Russian businesses and the business Russians, who living abroad (especially in Thailand). Including it is instruments for creating a positive image of Moscow as an international financial, economic and cultural center.

3.3 Cooperation between Russian – Thai

The increasing number of Russian emigrants in Thailand has resulted to an increase in the number of church structures outside the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate. The Russian Orthodox parishes in Thailand contribute to the development of friendly relations between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Russian Federation. It includes countries with Christian tradition in which Christianity is part of the national culture and identity and in the countries where Christianity comprises a minority. Russian-Thai relations based on mutual respect of national interests, confidence, sincerity and joint belief in good intentions of each other arising from cultural exchanges. Nowadays the bilateral cooperation underpinned by rich cultural heritage and potential of both countries, as well as by mutual interest towards each other of Russian and Thai peoples, which is on the continuous rise being an unique tool to promote mutual understanding.

3.3.1 Russian support

¹³ Ibid. Orthodox Church in Thailand, News: 2009.

For carrying out cooperate with and support to Believer expatriates living in the far-abroad countries are disunity from pressured of various problems and difficulties Russian Orthodox communities abroad of the Russian Diaspora. For example: Assimilation Community of expatriates is serious challenge that result to community become quite heterogeneous, has many faces and it is poly-ethnic. And a lot emigration of specialists and contract workers, students, political asylum because of different interests become serious problem, as result in Russia lacks of a serious resource for own country:

- Therefore the supreme authority of the Russian Orthodox Church has instructed the Department for External Church Relations to carry out cooperation with and support for Believer expatriates living in the far-abroad countries to guide and adjust the work of all the concerned church and state structures engaged in supporting expatriates.

First, for expatriates living in the far-abroad, a consolidated Diaspora helps to acquire quite “a different weight in the local environment and work has been carried out together with the Russkiy Mir Foundation.”¹⁴ Unfortunately, about problems and difficulties Russian Orthodox communities abroad are disunity.

- In 2006, Russia adopted a state program to encourage the voluntary return to Russia of nationals living abroad.¹⁵

A large proportion of citizens that return to Russia choose to reside in Central Federal District. Meanwhile, the economic forum of compatriots is arranged by the government of Moscow promotes mutually beneficial cooperation between Russian businesses and the businesses of citizens who live abroad, with a view to engage their potential and experience and further Russia's national economic interests in other countries by expected a variety groups of Russian nationals abroad could creating a positive image of Moscow as an international financial, economic and cultural center.

¹⁴ The phenomenon of the Russian world has come to the center of attention in both academic circles and the public arena that serious steps need to be taking to both preserve and promote Russian language and culture in today's world.

¹⁵ Russia beyond the headline speaks to Aleksandr Babakov, the special envoy of the Russian president about groups of Russian nationals abroad, Interview, October 1, 2012. See: http://rbth.ru/articles/2012/10/01/russia_interested_in_the_russian_diaspora_living_abroad_18739.html

- The Law on Amendments to the Federal Law on the Policy of the State with Regard to Expatriates signed by President Medvedev in July 2010.

The important results of the joint efforts of the Church and state in supporting expatriates was the new state program offers more opportunities for compatriots to exercise their rights to return to Russia, which will help reduce the breakage problem.

The Russian new generation in abroad begins to refuse speaking in Russian, which ultimately leads to the loss of cultural identity:

- At the meeting in December 2009, Regarding Patriarch Kirill's report on the 3rd Assembly of the Russian World and signing a cooperation agreement between the ROC and the Russian World foundation for participation in agreed that the Assembly was important to take joint efforts for preserve their religious, linguistic and cultural identity and consolidate their relations with the Motherland and support of organizations abroad working to propagate the Russian language and culture in the world.

Frequently, Russian Orthodox communities abroad lost information from Motherland when the Soviet closed country and authorities withheld all authorizations to publish or distribute any document (1926-1956):

- There were talks with the leaders of the State Administration for Religious Affairs which a mutual understanding was reached concerning the development of Russian-Thai communication.

Now, the Russian Church abroad has websites giving prompt information about the latest events in the church life abroad, which are in Russian and also in the languages of the country in which a particular parish is located. At the same time, many of them have sought as much as they can to engage in information work, diocesan and parochial media that role in strengthening the ties of Russian Orthodox emigrant.

The cases of discrimination against Christians and attempts to oust the norms of Christian tradition from public life in some countries, and the violation cases of the Christian rights have become frequent vary from country to country:

- So His Holiness Patriarch Kirill knows that is very important to contact with international organizations to conference on Freedom of Faith: the Problem of Discrimination against Christians was held from November 30 - December 1,

2011, in Moscow to become effective mechanism of the protection of Christians and Christian communities.

- The meeting, titled “Preventing and Responding to Hate Incidents and Crimes against Christians,” was held September 15, 2011 in Rome. The ROC considers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to discuss openly the violation and this is the best guarantee of Christian’s rights.

Russia can support the political and economic aid to countries which give the rights and freedoms of Orthodox Christians. Moreover, the program of cooperation with compatriots making their home abroad is expanded the network of Russian consulates and Russian science, international financial, economic and cultural center as instruments to creating a positive image of Moscow.

3.3.2 Thai Support

For responding to Orthodox Christians and local citizens in Thailand by church services, therefore Russian-Thai government and advocacy groups promote to involve activity as follows:

- Thailand's legislation provides for a certain procedure of land acquisition, which the construction necessity for religious purposes and maintaining the divine-serving life of the parish,¹⁶ which tore so many Diaspora parishes apart a generation ago,
- Translation: “The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom”¹⁷ and “The Law of God by archpriest Seraphim Slobodskoy”¹⁸ in Thai language.

¹⁶ “Chapter 7: Determination of Land Rights for Religious Purpose,” Thailand Land Code, B.E. 2497 (A.D. 1954).

¹⁷ The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is the most celebrated Divine Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite. It reflects the work of the Cappadocian Fathers to both combat heresy and define Trinitarian theology for the Christian Church. It became the norm by the end of the reign of Justinian. Liturgica.com

¹⁸ Protopriest Seraphim Slobodskoy's, “The Law of God” was translated into the Thai language by Priest Danai (Daniel) Vanna, the first Thai Orthodox priest, a graduate of St Petersburg Theological Seminary; Mrs. Naparta Aphichataphong, former official translator of English for the Parliament of Thailand, now studying at SPTS; and Mr. Yingsak Samsen, a specialist in the Russian

These were done in view of the increasing number of Orthodox Thais, the need for their more active involvement in church services and including to the transmission of the Orthodox Tradition to Orthodox Christians and local citizens in Thailand.

For strengthening of religious and cultural understanding between religious leaders and for creating network relations with Christian and non-Christian of Thai's religious organizations with Russia and the world-wide:

-Since August 30-September 5, 2009, a delegation of the Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand has visited Russian Federation under the project to strengthen the relationship between Buddhism and the Russian Orthodox Church which has been successful and also met Protopriest Igor Vyzhanov, Secretary of the Department for external church relations, responsible and emphasized the importance of the *Russian Orthodox, Islam, Buddhism, and Judas Uist* in Russia that were officially accepted 4 religion of state.

This is only one from many project to strengthen of religious and cultural understanding between the Russian-Thai and creating a network between religious leaders for the relations with Christian and non-Christian religious organizations world-wide. In this way, the authentic Tradition can successfully be transmitted from the original immigrant group to the receiving group, as well as for graduate courses in psychology dealing with the relationship between psychological models and religious worldviews.

And the Russian-Thai governments have established the charity cooperation on financial assistance for emergency care to pauper and rescue disaster victims by the ROC as an intermediary:

- The donations for the religious education in Russia for disadvantaged students from local residents (Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia) to the service of the Holy Orthodox Church after successfully completed,¹⁹
- During the flood in Thailand, the Foundation Committee of the Orthodox Church in Thailand provided financial assistance to residents of Thailand affected by the floods and for the needs of the disadvantaged.²⁰

language. News from Православие.Ru, Moscow, January 30, 2012 [Online] Web:
<http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/51312.htm> [03 September 2012]

¹⁹ Ibid.

These are some part the rewarded friendship to Thai people who being good friend to Russian people led to the principles of emergency care for people compatriots who get trouble in Thailand in field of charity cooperation that focus on financial assistance. After people get help, they may conversion to Russian Orthodox Christianity. And this connection with plans to build an Orthodox church in difference faith's local is possible to inter-religious conflict, thus Orthodox church must recognized by local citizen and then introduced to local citizen.

The religious interaction can affect to the political interaction at all coordination levels between the two countries, for diplomatic openings and logistical possibilities, as well as featured to promote transmission of the old tradition to next generation and local citizens who want to know the original of traditions activities. The Russian-Thai cooperation in Orthodox Church field can create new vision of information and situation known to society. The cooperation between church and state can develop religious communities, public organizations, academic and business communities as well as individuals in realizing joint projects because through this we can strengthen and promote Orthodox Christian values in the world.

Conclusion

Over a hundred years of the Russian-Thai diplomatic relations had begun during the colonialism, the most of Siam citizen is Buddhist but they was intervened and oppressed by severely Western civilization to accept Christianity, which regarded as representation of the modern world. Russia has always supported Thailand to protect its sovereignty. Since the nineteenth century, official visits and personal contacts including the exchange of correspondence between the Russian Imperial Family and the Siamese Royal Family became frequent and regular and played an important role in the development of relations between the two countries. Even though Russia did not resolve the Siamese problem due to its many limitations, its alliance was essential to the position

²⁰ “A special meeting of the Committee of the Orthodox Christian Church in Thailand Foundation,” Orthodox Church in Thailand (Moscow Patriarchate), News: 28 October 2010. See: http://orthodox.or.th/index.php?content=news&news_start=181&lang=en

of Siam in the international arena. Until the Russian Revolution of 1917, both Russian-Thai relation was stop, Thai tried to restore but was interrupted by World War II and Cold War. After Soviet Union collapse, Russian-Thai relations restored again in 1999 and then the Orthodox religion in Thailand just official appeared.

Incunabulum, the ROC had minimal influence in Thailand because it had recently received state registration in this country not so long. After Booming of Russians visit Thailand, the church of Orthodox Christian was more built up to serve all believers in Thailand. It is rare in predominantly Thai Buddhist the Russian-Thai bilateral interactions have been developing steadily with a mutual respect being the dominant in relations. Cultural interaction between Russia and Thailand is on the continuous rise being a unique tool to promote mutual understanding. Cultural exchanges between Russia and Thailand are the bilateral cooperation nowadays, which supported by rich cultural heritage and potential of both countries, as well as by mutual interest towards each other of Russian and Thai peoples. The meetings between Russian and Thai Foreign Ministers also became a good tradition in our relations as well as the established practice of exchange of messages on key international and bilateral issues.

The cooperation of diplomatic activity established an effective interaction among regions of both countries in all spheres of a trade turnover, interaction in education, science and technology, energy, infrastructure development. Due to the increasing number of Russian citizens in Thailand, the Russian Foreign Ministry continued to work through the inter-religions establishment and designed to become the main tool for monitoring the safety of complex Russians abroad as well as coordinate the interaction of Russian foreign and agencies in such situations. There seems possibility or legitimate justification for ROC that has any parishes in Thailand, is able to use its political connections and its network of embassies to support its parishes and monasteries, and also ROC is able to use its rootedness in certain parts of Thailand as its the basic projects to deepen cooperation between all parties concerned and to implement together with governmental, public structures and also access to the public education system and the military.