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# The Invisible Language: Unintentional Patronage and Missions Practice in Contemporary Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Patronage-clientelism is a current and important topic of discussion among the anthropological and missiological community. The effects of unintended patronage by Western missionaries in the context of Thai culture, however, are underexplored in academic research. In this study, I analyzed the effects of unintentional patronage among Western missionaries in a Thai cross-cultural ministry context. To do this I utilized a multiple case study method in which I compared four cases and analyzed for examples of how unintentional patronage is generated. I discovered that unintentional patronage was likely a result of insufficient missionary education regarding patronage-clientelism, as well as a lack of educational resources available to missionaries in the field. My study demonstrated that unintentional patronage is a very real concern for Western missionaries working in Thailand. Based on my research, I conclude that missionary training must incorporate patronage-clientelism education into standard practice, and all effort be made to make patronage-clientelism focused resources accessible for missionaries working in the field.

The Invisible Language: Unintentional Patronage and

Missions Practice in Contemporary Thailand



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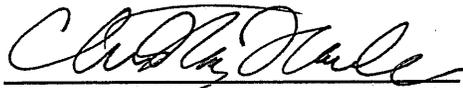
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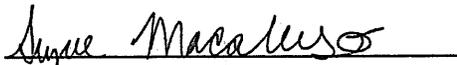
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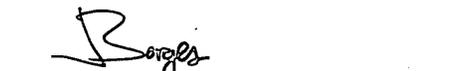
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Jason Borges

To my mom.

Your belief in me showed me that anything is possible.

"If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants."

-Isaac Newton

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

*Patronage* may sound foreign to modern English-speaking ears. It can evoke

notions of Renaissance painters and sculptors supported by wealthy benefactors, a

wealthy banker providing money for a student's education, or a government official

securing a favorable law or ruling for a local farmer. Today many in the West might call

this dynamic outdated and even contrary to the minority world moral ideal of objective

fairness. In Asia, particularly in Thailand, the ideal is often not objective fairness but

involves obligation and debt, which form the currency of the patronage-clientelism

cultural dynamic.[1] Singular, upward mobility based on merit forms a foundational piece

of English-speaking society. In contrast, as Carl H. Landé defines it, patronage-

clientelism involves "a vertical dyadic alliance, [or] an alliance between two persons of

unequal status, power, or resources, each of whom finds it useful to have as an ally

someone superior or inferior to himself."[2] Rather than a single person moving upwards

based on merit alone, patronage-clientelism enables people to form alliances with those

above them with mutually beneficial relationships that bestow benefits to both parties. In

much of Asia, patronage-clientelism is not just an obscure cultural dynamic but a primary

way that relationships function. In *Ministering in Patronage Cultures*, Jayson

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1. Hereafter, I use the abbreviation "PC" to indicate "patronage-clientelism."

2. Carl H. Landé, "Introduction: The Dyadic Basis of Clientelism," in Steffen W. Schmidt et al., eds., *Friends, Followers and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), xx.

Georges argues that such dynamics are at the heart of Asian society, "the *modus operandi* for relationships."[3] A simple way of describing the profound importance and pervasiveness of patronage-clientelism in many parts of the world is to see it as a lens through which view all personal interactions. To take the lens off would be to become blind to an entire world of implicit transactions and interactions crucial to how relationships function, especially in Asian nations like Thailand, where patronage-clientelism dynamics are extremely prevalent.

Patronage-clientelism dynamics are an integral part of Thai cultural dynamics and often are so foreign to English-speakers that these dynamics are invisible to missionaries in Thailand.[4] This project deals with this cultural gap as it seeks to understand how these dynamics function in the experience of Western missionaries as well as how their Western background can influence their perception of and participation in patronage-clientelism. I engaged my research to discover how western missionaries think and react to patronage-clientelism and, after analyzing the data, sought to understand the resulting missiological implications, specifically those regarding the phenomenon that I have termed "unintentional patronage."

My study incorporated a three-step research process:

1. I conducted a literature review on PC dynamics, Thai culture, and cross-cultural ministry to better understand what I was studying.

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3. Jayson Georges, *Ministering in Patronage Cultures* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 20.

4. I will refer to missionaries from non-majority world cultures as "English-speakers." Greg McKinzie analyzed the differences in referencing world cultures as groups in McKinzie, Greg. "Majority World: A Minority Report (Editorial Preface to the Issue)." *Missio Dei* 10.1 (2019).

2. I conducted ten semi-structured interviews from which I received qualitative data on the subject that helped define my third step.

3. I conducted another round of interviews with four missionaries who provided stories regarding patronage that I used as cases that were incorporated into case-study analysis research.

I will explain the phenomenon of "unintentional patronage" and clarify why understanding this phenomenon can be beneficial to Western missionaries working in Thailand, thus making a unique contribution to the missiological community.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

In this study, I sought to understand how Western missionaries working in Thailand interact with and participate in PC dynamics. To do this, I conducted a thorough literature review, administered semi-structured interviews, and followed these initial interviews with a second round of interviews from which I drew the stories I used to create case studies.

**Literature Review**

I listed the sources that I have read in the Bibliography section at the end of this thesis. The literature review informed my understanding of patronage-clientelism and alerted me to the theoretical issues, crucial terms, and important cultural dynamics that I needed to understand in order to write clearly on this topic.

**Exploratory Interviews**

Next, I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten missionaries who previously worked or are currently working in Thailand. The interview questions inquired about their level of understanding regarding patronage, where and how they learned about patronage, their familiarity with patronage-centric Thai vocabulary, and finally, their opinions and experiences regarding patronage in Thailand. These interviews showed me the personal side of missionary experience and provided some representation of the human element in my results. The interview questions were as follows:

1. Introductory Information

    a. Name

    b. Country of Origin

    c. Years working in Thailand

    d. Denominational/theological background

2. General Understanding and Education

    a. What is your understanding of the "Patronage-Clientelism" cultural dynamic?

        i. How do Thai people speak of this dynamic? What kind of words do they use?

    b. Have you witnessed PC dynamics in your experiences with Thai culture?

        i. What about specifically in a Christian context?

    c. What was your understanding of PC dynamics before coming to Thailand?

    d. How were you educated?

        i. University/Formal education?

        ii. Pre-ministry Thai culture study?

        iii. On-the-job education/experience?

        iv. Other?

3. Specific Understanding and Education

    a. Define these specific Thai terms in your own words and give examples from Thai culture and Christian contexts

   i.  *Bunkhun* - บุญคุณ (goodwill indebtedness)[1]

   ii.  *Prakhun* - พระคุณ (grace)

   iii.  *Baramee* - บารมี (prestige)

   iv.  *Luuk phii/luuk nawng* - ลูกพี่ลูกน้อง (cousin)

   v.  *Rabob ubatham* - ระบบอุปถัมภ์ (care system/patronage system)

   vi.  *Rabob nay/phrai* - ระบบนายไพร่ (system of bosses/commoners)

   vii.  *Gan-eng* - กันเอง (friendly)

4.  Open-Ended Examples from the missionaries' own Ministry Experiences

  a. How have you grown or changed your understanding and attitude about Thai PC dynamics?

  b. How do you perceive missionaries engaging, interacting, and reacting to Thai PC dynamics? Have they been successful, or have they rejected the dynamic altogether? Explain.

  c. How do Thai PC dynamics differ from your culture of origin?

## Interview Methodology

My approach to semi-structured interviews follows that of Carol A. Bailey in her *A Guide to Qualitative Field Research*. Bailey stresses the importance of an interview guide, which I supplied above and used for all ten of my interviews. Semi-structured interviewing is an approach where the interview questions are set before the interview,

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1. The romanizations of Thai words follows the Thai Royal Institute's Romanization system. This can be found at https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/thai.pdf

but the researcher may deviate from the question list if they feel that it is appropriate (for example, if an interview subject wanted to tell a story that illustrated a salient point but was not explicitly an answer to a question). Sections one through three were tight for the purpose of measuring answers between missionaries and section four was left open-ended to allow the missionaries to express their own opinions and to generate dialogue beyond their answers to the questions. With the yes or no questions, I would emphasize follow-up questions in order to encourage the subject to explain their answer. These strategies led to each interview following the interview guide, but with plenty of room for tangents and stories. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.[2]

## Grounded Theory

For analyzing the interview data, I utilized a Grounded Theory method, drawing my conclusions from the data themselves and not through presuppositions or hypothesis testing. I grounded myself in the interview data and drew conclusions based on what the data showed, not from a hypothesis I developed before I analyzed the data. My use of grounded theory was based on Kathy Charmaz's book *Constructing Grounded Theory* and her approach influenced how I analyzed the data I collected in both rounds of interviews. A Grounded Theory approach, as Charmaz explains, "consists of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves."[3] These guidelines include: conducting data collection and analysis simultaneously in an iterative process, analyzing actions and processes rather

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2. Carol A. Bailey, *A Guide to Qualitative Field Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2007), 100-104.

3. Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 1.

than themes and structure, developing inductive abstract analytic categories through systematic data analysis, and emphasizing theory construction rather than description or application of current theories.[4] I practiced grounded theory in this study by following these guidelines Charmaz outlines, specifically collecting and analyzing data simultaneously, developing inductive categories, and emphasizing theory construction. Since I had no previous knowledge or experience with PC dynamics before this research, my natural reaction was to rely on inductive reasoning when dealing with the data and seeking to elicit categories from the data rather than testing a previous hypothesis.

## Interview Analysis

I developed theoretical saturation after I had completed and analyzed ten interviews. Strauss and Corbin describe theoretical saturation as "[t]he point in analysis when all categories are well developed in terms of properties, dimensions, and variations. Further data gathering and analysis adds little new to the conceptualization, though variations can always be discovered."[5] A key concept in Grounded Theory studies expects the researcher to continue research until they achieve theoretical saturation. To analyze the data, I utilized the coding analysis software NVivo. NVivo coding software is a qualitative research program that assists researchers in analyzing multiple text files, such as interview transcripts. I would create a search "code," such as all uses of the word "obligation," and then I analyzed each transcript, highlighting each use of the particular word; thus, all the highlighted uses would be "coded" to one menu where I could view them all. The analysis of these codes provided similarities and simultaneously traced

4. Charmaz, *Constructing*, 15.

5. Anselm Leonard Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008), 263.

themes across multiple interviews. Since I analyze the interview data while simultaneously conducting more interviews, I repeatedly returned to the NVivo coding process with every new interview and re-analyzed the data, adding the new interview, and then analyzing all the interviews together. I continued this system of repetition for over two months. I uploaded my interview transcripts to NVivo and coded for phrases and concepts that I determined were significant. The first few categories that I coded were questions in my interview guide. Some examples of these include: "Source of PC Education" and "Perception of Missionaries with PC Dynamics." As the data analysis progressed, I refined the categories and terms that I was coding into more elaborate and theoretical terms, such as "Confessed Ignorance," "Catalyst Event," and "Western Missionary Issues" which were broken down into three subcategories, including "Lack of Education," "Language Issues," and "Misunderstanding PC." From this theorizing process, I eventually developed my theory of "unintentional patronage." This led into the final phase of my research.

### Case Study Interviews

Finally, I conducted a second round of interviews in which I specifically asked for stories from their own ministry experience where the missionaries acted as patrons. The purpose of these interviews was to gather stories from real-world ministry experience, analyze these stories for commonalities, and then use them as case studies, or stories used as examples to demonstrate or reveal a particular phenomenon. I chose a case study method because my interview conclusions showed that the phenomenon of unintentional patronage existed, but I could not go much further with the data that I had at that time. To learn more about unintentional patronage, I needed to find specific, contextual examples

of this phenomenon occurring. If I could do this, I could ascertain the cultural and relational factors that bring about unintentional patronage. Therefore, a case study method would give me contextual examples that could be analyzed.

## Case Study Methodology

A case study consists of a story or stories from real-world experiences that suggest how something works in its context. I measured things that I could not have measured using a quantitative method through this qualitative research method, such as a subject's history, personal characteristics, and other in-depth qualities that a quantitative research method would miss. If a quantitative study asks *what*, then a qualitative study can ask *how* and *why*. The interview data showed that I needed to find out the *how* and the *why* of unintentional patronage. While listing assumptions necessary for qualitative research, Corbin and Strauss write that "[a]ctions are embedded in interactions --past, present, and imagined future. Thus, actions also carry meanings and are locatable within systems of meanings. Actions may generate further meanings, both with regard to further actions and the interactions in which they are embedded."[6] I am exploring the effects of interpersonal interactions within systems of meanings, namely the effects of Western missionary interpersonal interactions within the Thai patronage system of meaning, so a qualitative study was perfect for my study. Within the discipline of qualitative research, a case-study method best suited my research direction. Robert K. Yin, when speaking about case study research, mentions that it is "commonly found in many social science disciplines as well as the practicing professions (e.g., psychology, sociology . . . [and]

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6. Strauss and Corbin, *Basics*, 6.

anthropology).”[7] A case study method fits my research direction of exploring a previously underexplored phenomenon (unintentional patronage) because, as Yin shows in Figure 1.2 of *Research and Applications*, a case study is a relevant method when a researcher is asking the how and why of a situation, does not have control over behavioral events, and focuses on contemporary events.[8] I fit into all of these categories, and so a case study method was perfect for my research.

For this study, I followed the definition of a case-study method that Yin explained later on in his book on case study as a qualitative method. In this work, Yin describes case study as a method that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.”[9] There are two different types of case studies, and I chose to conduct a multiple-case study (a study in which multiple cases are analyzed) so that I could cross-examine between the cases. [10] I also wanted to analyze the demographics as well as different forms that patronage can take when expressed in different situations.[11] I selected four stories from my second round of

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7. Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6 ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018), 5.

8. Yin, *Case Study*, 9.

9. Yin, *Case Study*, 15.

10. Yin describes two different variations of a case study: single-case study and multiple-case study. A single-case study is “analogous to a single experiment” (Yin, 49). Yin offers five rationales for a single-case study: having a critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal case. Multiple, or ‘comparative’ case studies, seek to “either (a)predict similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predict contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (a theoretical replication)” (Yin, 55). Because of an understood willingness to participate from the previous interview subjects, as well as Yin’s recommendation that “the analytic benefits from having two (or more) cases may be substantial (Yin, 61), I chose a multiple-case study as my case study method.

11. For example, I learned from my first round of interviews that patronage is very common between English-speakers and Thais when money is involved, specifically when a Western organization is supporting a Thai church (see Case One), but I also learned that patronage is also significant between

interviews and analyzed each one, breaking down the patronage dynamics in the story and why it happened the way it did, and then I uploaded them to the same NVivo coding software described in my Interview Methodology section and cross-examined them for similarities and differences. I include these conclusions at the end of the Case Study chapter, and using those conclusions, I finish by addressing the implications of my findings and making recommendations.

## Delimitations

The main delimitation that I imposed on my research is that I only surveyed Western missionaries. Since I studied Western perceptions of PC dynamics and not PC dynamics itself, surveying a Thai missionary would not contribute to this research. Therefore, this research is limited to Western missionaries only. My use of the term "Western" specifies English-speaking missionaries from either North American, European, or Global North cultures. I decided to limit the term "Western" to only missionaries from North American and European-originating cultures so that the research scope would stay focused on one topic and not get too broad. I limited my research because I am focusing on how Western missionaries react to PC dynamics. Additionally I am able to draw more conclusions from a narrow data field concerning one cultural group. Another important limitation to note is that, while I have referenced academic literature to use Thai vocabulary and phrases in my research, I do not speak or understand the Thai language. Therefore, all discussions using Thai words must be taken with that consideration in mind and with the knowledge that I leaned on the academic community to make up for this shortcoming.

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teachers and students (see Case Three). A multiple-case study allowed me to explore both of these different situations while still drawing comparisons between the two.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW, DEFINITIONS, AND EXPLANATIONS

**Literature Review**

Significant academic discourse exists regarding Thai anthropology and

missiology. Multiple Thai sources contributed significantly to my research, which helped

base my literature review in a number of diverse sources.[1] Several resources became

critical to my understanding of patronage; among the many excellent sources, three were

especially helpful and salient to this project: *The Organization of Thai Society in the*

*Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1873* by Akin Rabibhadana,[2] *The Way Thais Lead* by Larry

Persons,[3] *Ministering in Patronage* Cultures by Jayson Georges,[4] and *Psychology of the*

*Thai People: Values and Behavioral Patterns* by Suntaree Komin.[5] I have organized the

main resources for this project into the subsections of missiology and anthropology. The

anthropology sources define and explain PC, both in an objective light and in a Thai

context. Next, the missiology sources analyze how PC and evangelism interact, mostly

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1. When referencing Thai authors, I follow standard modern Thai academic convention and will refer to Thai authors by their first name.

2. Akin Rabibhadana, *The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1873* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1968).

3. Larry S. Persons, *The Way Thais Lead: Face as Social Capital* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2016).

4. Jayson Georges, *Ministering in Patronage Cultures* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019).

5. Suntaree Komin, *Psychology of the Thai People: Values and Behavioral Patterns* (Bangkok, Thailand: Research Center, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), 1991).

from the perspective of English-speaking missionaries interacting with PC dynamics in Thailand.

Anthropology

Akin examines Thai culture during the Early Bangkok Period.[6] He uses Thai vocabulary to give names and explanations to different PC dynamics roles and to describe Thai social structure, including *phrai* and *nay* governmental functions (which will be explored further later in this thesis), as well as the way the Thai authorities regulated PC dynamics. Akin goes beyond explanation and provides historical examples of how these dynamics and relationships played out in real-world examples. I am unaware of any resource that analyzes Thai PC dynamics from Thai history as well as Akin's work does, and in that sense, it is truly a genre-defining work on Thai PC dynamics from this period. *The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period* acts as a foundation for Akin's next work, "Clientship and Class Structure" because it defines and explains the different titles and roles at play in Thai society.[7] These two resources work in tandem to illustrate a picture of Thai society that first shows the political and structural dynamics and then explains how the clientship system works within and through those structures. These two works form the basis of the modern understanding of Thai PC dynamics, both in this period in history as well as today since these dynamics still influence contemporary Thai society.

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6. Akin, *Organization*, 77-96.

7. Akin Rabibhadana, "Clientship and Class Structure in the Early Bangkok Period," in *Change and Persistence in Thai Society: Essays in Honor of Lauriston Sharp*, edited by Lauriston Sharp, G. William Skinner, and Anthony Thomas Kirsch, 93-124 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975).

Akin then examines the dynamics and relationships between the different classes in Thai society in the Early Bangkok Period, specifically the relationship between *phrai* and *nay*, who formed the Thai commoner class and upper class, respectively.[8] However, Akin expounds on this further than any other book I have read, explaining how Thai cultural identity, rather than being qualified by being born in a controlled area of land like a Western nation, saw an organized people group as their qualifying identity.[9] With ranking systems and stratifications of *nay* controlling lower-ranking *nay*, who controlled *phrai*, this society was similarly structured to an organized military. This system was previously unknown to me because my perception of Thai society included a mass of *phrai* controlled by various *nay* in a feudal warlord fashion. Akin shows that this is not the case—the PC dynamics of the early Bangkok period were not only implemented by the state, but they were also regulated and systematized to both produce rights for *phrai* as well as ways to avoid *nay* oppression. This source illuminated that many Western perceptions of PC dynamics were, at least in the Early Bangkok Period, rather unfair. The patron class did not exploit the client class; rather, there were several ways a client could find a new patron, and the state punished patrons who mistreated their *phrai*. The idea of PC dynamics as exploiting and oppressing the lower class does not seem to accurately reflect Akin's view of this period. In the same way as the previous work, this book lays a foundation for the modern understanding of PC dynamics, but this book builds on information that *Organization* brings to light.[10]

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8. Akin, "Clientship," 93-124.

9. Akin, "Clientship," 93-124.

10. Akin, *Organization*, 77-96.

Suntaree studies the different cultural values and behaviors of the Thai people.[11] She measures and analyzes nine cultural orientations, and I focused on what she calls "grateful relationship orientation," which explains the psychology of Thai PC dynamics and บุญคุณ (*bunkhun*), specifically focusing on how clients respond with gratitude and obligation towards a client and the psychological motivations therein. Suntaree furthers the work into Thai PC dynamics from a different angle. While Akin looks at PC from a societal perspective (including governmental functions and class structures), Suntaree explores how those PC dynamics, which are deeply rooted in Thai culture, influence the psychology of Thai people today. Thus, while it may not be intended, one can see how Akin's work of exploring Thai PC dynamics in Thailand's past is related to Suntaree's work studying the psychology of PC in contemporary Thai people.

In *The Way Thais Lead*, Persons references both Akin and Suntaree in his exploration of Thai leadership in the context of "face."[12] Persons covers several different categories of Thai face, but his chapters on บารมี (*barami*) and บุญคุณ (*bunkhun*) are especially salient to Thai PC dynamics. Drawing upon Akin and Suntaree's previous work, Persons defines บารมี (*barami*) in the context of leadership with "face" and then explains how this "face" generates บุญคุณ (*bunkhun*) by Thai leaders. Persons' contemporary and salient work brings Thai PC into a modern-day understanding in a way that is easily understood and could be seen as a culmination of Akin and Suntaree's research.

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11. Suntaree, *Psychology*, 139.

12. Persons, *The Way*, Kindle locations 634-636, 1538-1702

Missiology

DeSilva addresses PC dynamics in the context of the first-century Greco-Roman culture of the Early Church.[13] DeSilva examines the Roman world's social structure at the time of the Early Church. He also writes a chapter on PC dynamics in the New Testament, which is critical to a minister sharing the Gospel in a PC culture. The Early Church grew and thrived in a PC dynamic culture, and deSilva shows how understanding PC dynamics helps us unlock a perspective of Scripture that is difficult to understand in the West. DeSilva's discussion of PC dynamics in the early first century provides a foundation that provides a foundation for a missiological analysis of PC dynamics. His work demonstrates that PC dynamics are not only a cultural element of contemporary Thai culture; rather, these dynamics are rooted in ancient culture and were included as parts of Scripture, even to the point of parts of Scripture requiring a PC perspective for the original intention to be understood. A missiological understanding of PC dynamics can be built on the foundation of this understanding.

Paul DeNeui primarily addresses how money and finances impact missions in PC Buddhist countries, which exist primarily Asia.[14] DeNeui defines PC dynamics and explains their function from the perspective of financial obligations. He also examines different financial issues from both a Western missionary perspective and a native Asian perspective, identifying where miscommunication and misunderstanding occur between cultural systems. DeNeui focuses on PC dynamics' financial attitudes and offers a unique

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13. David Arthur DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002).

14. Paul DeNeui, "Speaking of the Unspeakable: Money and Missions in Patron-Client Buddhist Cultures" in *Complexities of Money and Mission in Asia*, edited by Paul DeNeui, 105-20 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2012).

perspective on how money impacts missiology in Asia. No other resource I consulted

covered the intricacies of money in Asia to the extent that DeNeui's chapter does, and

money is usually the primary source of conflict between missionaries and the locals

around them. This conflict can be seen in the ways a patron provides for their client or

what a client seeks from a patron when one of the parties is an English-speaking

missionary. An indigenous Asian believer's request for money from a Western

missionary has the potential for cultural miscommunication. Western missionaries may

misinterpret this interaction, and DeNeui's chapter seeks to bridge this gap and analyze

how money influences missions in PC cultures.

Georges addresses PC dynamics in four stages: cultural issues, Biblical models,

theological concepts, and missional applications.[15] Georges begins by defining PC

dynamics and explaining how they function in a vacuum, then providing Biblical

examples and a Scriptural grounding for PC dynamics, followed by extrapolating these

explanations into theological concepts about God, such as God being a "good patron,"

among other things. Finally, Georges covers how these concepts could be applied in a

missiological sense by affecting relationships in ministry and becoming more culturally

involved in a PC dynamic culture. While deSilva covers the history of PC in ancient

cultures and DeNeui covers money as the first way that PC dynamics interact, Georges

summarizes how PC dynamics function with the Christian faith. This book is a

comprehensive analysis of how PC dynamics and Christianity interact, drawing from

deSilva's historical analysis and supplying Biblical models of PC dynamics, then

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15. Georges, *Ministering*, 9-152.

extrapolating a Biblical understanding of patronage into theological concepts and missiological application.[16]

Flanders describes the implications of PC on conversion, describing Thais' effectiveness in seeing God as a "good patron" or using PC language in the conversion process.[17] Instead of rejecting PC dynamics, Flanders argues that PC dynamics could be an avenue through which evangelism, meaningful in a Thai context, could be conducted. Evangelism and conversion are a primary function of missionaries, so an understanding of how PC dynamics influence conversion is especially relevant to missionaries working in Thailand. Flanders' work contains the history of deSilva, the financial understanding of DeNeui, and the theological and missiological concepts of Georges enacted in conversion and evangelism.

<center>Current Status of Research</center>

The previously mentioned research has brought the academic community's understanding of PC dynamics very far, especially in the areas of anthropology and missiology. However, these sources, especially the missiology sources, seek to educate missionaries on PC dynamics and explain how these dynamics can impact cross-cultural missions, rather than study the missionaries themselves and what happens in their interactions with PC dynamics. It is my understanding that no research exists that studies the impact of missionaries unintentionally participating in PC dynamics, and my research seeks to fill that need. Rather than exploring PC dynamics as an abstract concept, I am

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16. DeSilva, *Honor*, 30, 90.

17. Flanders, *Becoming*, 65-89.

studying the real-world impact of missionaries unintentionally acting as patrons to Thais and the consequences that follow.

### Definitions and Explanations

Patronage-Clientelism

The following definitions and explanations help the reader understand these terms when I use them later. The *patronage-clientelism* dynamic is a system of mutual care in which a patron provides a client with resources and security that would otherwise be unavailable to them. In exchange for these resources that the patron offers, the client offers loyalty and services. For centuries, this type of system has existed across different societies and cultures, with historians as far back as the first century CE mentioning what David deSilva calls "the giving and receiving of favors" in the markets and politics. DeSilva quotes the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca the Younger, who concludes that this system of favors was the "practice that constitutes the chief bond of human society."[18] DeSilva also mentions the way Cicero and Marcus Aurelius used their friendship with a judge to "secure favorable outcomes for their clients, on whose behalf they write."[19] The ancient world operated on a patronage system similar to that seen in modern Thailand, but ancient Roman systems were not as structurally formal as ancient or modern Thailand.[20] The power distance was also not as significant as we would find in Thailand today, with clients in ancient Rome being referred to as "friends" by their patrons to save face for their clients and to minimize the power distance between the

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18. DeSilva, *Honor*, 96.

19. DeSilva, *Honor*, 98.

20. Akin, *Organization,* 79-81.

patron and client.[21] The patronage of the ancient world was an informal, relational type of system, with the wealthy providing for the poor as benefactors in times of need, as opposed to the patronage in Thailand, which is more of a hierarchical system of society.

ระบบอุปถัมภ์ (*rabob ubatham*) is the Thai term for the PC system and roughly translates to "care system" or "patronage system."[22] This system is ubiquitous in Thai culture and is grounded in the history of the ancient Kingdom of Thailand, which operated in a patronage system that had distinct differences from Rome's patronage system. In the Early Bangkok Period, the people of Thailand (then called Siam) were divided up into stratifications of social rank, called the ศักดินา (*sakdina*) system of social organization, which divided the nation into นาย (*nay*) who were the governing and providing bosses, and the ไพร่ (*phrai*) who were the working commoners.[23] This feudal system, which the various kingdoms that would become Thailand operated under starting in the 1500s and existed until it was dismantled (in an official capacity) in the late 1800s, formed the foundation of Thailand's patronage system and is a reason why it is so ingrained in today's Thai culture. This organization system explains, in part, the standardized and regulated nature of the patronage system in Thailand when compared to the Roman patronage system: the ancient *sakdina* system had direct government involvement and sponsorship as opposed to the more informal, relational expression of

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21. DeSilva, *Honor,* 99.

22. I take all definitions for Thai terms from the Thai Royal Institute website. These definitions were checked by Dr. Chris Flanders who is fluent in the Thai language.

23. Rabibhadana's excellent *Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1873* as well as *Clientship and Class Structure in the Early Bangkok Period* were both instrumental to my understanding of the *sakdina* system and the *nay*/*phrai* dynamic.

patronage in the Roman world. Larry Persons writes that "[b]ecause most pockets of society are so thoroughly hierarchical, social exchange usually occurs between people with disparate amounts of social power . . . [and] most social exchange occurs in the context of asymmetry in hierarchies. It takes place between patrons and clients."[24] The *sakdina* system's influence is felt today through the hierarchical nature of the Thai patronage system. Western observers often interpret patronage-clientelism as corruption, nepotism, or patrons exploiting their clients, but this system is, for the most part, regulated by significant social pressures and cultural expectations. Eisenstadt and Roniger write that in past generations when the government officially regulated it, the Thai patronage system still "undertook little personal commitment, or none at all. If reciprocity was not forthcoming, clients quietly ceased to follow their patron's directions. . . . they stopped fulfilling the demands of their partners in the relationship."[25] So, even when the government regulated the patronage system, a client was not only allowed to but expected to leave a patron who did not provide for them when they needed it.

<div align="center">Patron</div>

*Patrons* are people who "use their influence and wealth to ensure other people's security and survival. Their generosity protects and provides for the people under their care."[26] A patron provides for a series of clients, and in return, the clients perform services for the patron. In Georges' words, "[t]he patron provides for the client's material

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24. Persons, *The Way*, Kindle location 1560.

25. Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt and Luis Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (New York, NY: Press of the Univ. of Cambridge, 1999), 136.

26. Georges, *Ministering*, 9.

needs, and the client meets the patron's desires for social status."[27] In Thailand, patrons

are most often the people with the money. Paul DeNeui writes that "[p]ersonal wealth

may be one initial factor determining a potential patron and how she or he is viewed in

the society."[28] These relationships are not strictly material, though—they are often

personal relationships as well, with expectations that the patron takes care of their client

and does not abuse their status over them. Instead of using their clients for their gain,

patronage is, at its core, rooted in generosity. They are the umbrella that provides shelter

for their clients. Georges says that "[p]atrons are the 'haves,' clients are the 'have-nots,'

and patronage is when the 'haves' solve the problems for the 'have-nots.'"[29] The

lingering effects of the *sakdina* system are still present throughout Thai culture in the

power dynamics between patrons and clients. People in positions of power, such as

politicians, public officials (such as law enforcement), teachers and university professors,

and Buddhist priests all hold large amounts of power, since their position enables them to

grant others favors. This level of power and authority, as well as a heightened access to

resources, almost automatically puts them in the role of patron.

Patrons experience strong social pressure to care for their clients properly and for

long periods of time and to be generous with their wealth and status. In an interview with

Jayson Georges, a missionary in Cameroon explained, "You can be a thief, a drunkard, or

a fornicator and society may forgive you, but not if you are ungenerous." Georges

followed the quotation by noting, "[f]ailing to be a patron as the community expects

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27. Georges, *Ministering*, 9.

28. DeNeui, "Speaking," xx.

29. Georges, *Ministering*, 9.

brings tremendous disgrace."[30] Lorraine Dierck also addresses this by saying, "In an

uncertain environment, clients have not hesitated to change their allegiance whenever

their patrons were unwilling or unable to provide resources for them."[31] Therefore

patronage dynamics are concerned with both parties gaining from the relationship, and

they are also concerned with the relationship that the patronage creates. Paul Hiebert

writes:

> The patron, like a parent, is totally responsible for the welfare of his
> clients. . . . Clients in fact can ask a patron for whatever they think he may
> grant, but this is not considered begging—no more than Christians think
> they are begging when they ask God for help. Clients for their part, must
> be totally loyal to their patron. . . . The patron gains power and prestige
> within the society, and the client gains security.[32]

A patron is concerned with both what their client provides as well as with their client as a

person, and vice versa. It is a dynamic of mutual personal concern for both parties

involved.

<div align="center">Client</div>

A *client* is at the other end of this vertical relationship. Clients are people of a

lower status or prestige who want to improve their situation. To achieve this, they enter a

patronage relationship to secure a benefit or benefits from a patron. Benefits could

include, among other things, money, safety, security in a business or industry, or a higher

social status. Just about anything can be exchanged between a patron and a client if they

share a mutual desire for a relationship. They are the "worker" in the relationship; often,

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30. Georges, *Ministering*, 14

31. Lorraine Dierck, "Leadership and Patron-Client Structures in Thailand," in *Devoted to Christ: Missiological Reflections in honor of Sherwood G. Lingenfelter*, edited by Christopher Flanders (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 110.

32. Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2006), 124.

the patron will provide the tools, capital, or resources for the client to perform a task or service, and then the client is indebted to perform the designated task for the patron. Sometimes a client cannot reciprocate their patron's kindness with materials but may fulfill their side of the relationship by other means. DeNeui writes that "the client may never be able to repay the patron in legal tender or even in kind but instead will always remain faithful to the patron, give status and honor to the patron, defer to the patron, and seek to defend the honor and reputation of the patron."[33] A client expresses loyalty and commitment to the patron in exchange for receiving opportunities beyond what they could do independently. Clients can fulfill their end of the relationship by providing a resource or service to their patron. Fulfilling their end of the patronage relationship could be through several different means: through materials, like a farmer giving a portion of their crop to the banker that provided the financial backing to start the farm; through a service, like a taxi driver committing to be at the beck and call of the car dealer that secured them a new car; through favors, like a local official helping secure employment in their department for the child of a prominent donor; and finally, clients can give back to their patron by increasing the social reputation of their patrons, like a schoolteacher telling their coworkers and neighbors about the kindness and benevolence of their principal. Clients receive benefits and resources from their patron, but these gifts are not without social and cultural pressure to reciprocate. Suntaree Komin explains the client's perspective of the concept of gratitude in this way: "By being grateful, it implies two aspects - *roo bunkhun* [รู้บุญคุณ], which means to know, acknowledge, or constantly conscious and bear in heart of the kindness done; and *tob thaen bunkhun*

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33. DeNeui, "Speaking," Kindle location 2311.

[ตอบแทนบุญคุณ], which means to reciprocate the kindness whenever there are opportunities."[34] Therefore clients know and acknowledge the kindness that they receive from their patron and are also obligated to reciprocate this kindness whenever possible. In the same way that the patron is under immense social pressure to provide for their clients and be a good patron, the client is under the same level of pressure to reciprocate the kindness that they receive.

## Obligation

*Obligation* is the underlying currency of patronage relationships. On the surface, the patron and client exchange tangible goods, like money, but a more basic exchange is in relational obligation under the surface. Instead of a calculated exchange of a service or favor for money, patronage relationships operate by a calculus of "I-Owe-You." When a businessperson provides the money for repairs on their taxi-driver client's taxi, the driver is now obligated to be at the businessperson's call if they ever need a taxi ride and would most likely give them the ride for free or a significantly discounted cost. The obligation to provide future help and the (public) thankfulness of the client is the repayment, rather than an immediate reciprocation of equally valued goods or money. While the West might perceive this as exploitation of the client, more often than not, the patron empowers the client to a level that would have been impossible for the client to reach on their own. It is not a system of exploitation of the poor by the rich but instead a system of the higher status empowering the lower status for mutual benefit. The taxi driver gets their taxi repaired, and the businessperson gets a taxi driver with whom they have a deeper relationship and who will go out of their way to help them. Both parties benefit

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34. Suntaree, *Psychology*, *139*.

from this relationship because if the taxi breaks, the businessperson is obligated to pay for the repairs again or risk being known as an unreliable patron. The obligation to help when needed is the currency that patronage relationships spend.

<div align="center">Indebtedness</div>

*Indebtedness* in this context is a bit different from the negative connotation that the West associates with debt. Instead of only being an undesirable financial situation, it also has meaning within patronage relationships. If a client is indebted to a patron, this means that the patron has provided for the client in a positively motivated fashion, and the client is obligated to respond. Clients are not mandated to transactionally repay their indebtedness through material goods; they show their patron great thankfulness through their behavior. This behavior could be telling others about the patron's great deeds, offering their services to the patron for the future, or some other form of grateful acknowledgment of the help they have received from their patron. Indebtedness is the intrinsic motivation behind the system of obligation that I previously described—it is the reason why Thais feel obligation towards their patron or clients, and it is a compelling motivator. In her book, Suntaree Komin measured the perceived importance of nine Thai values systems by surveying a diverse set of the Thai people. She concluded that "Grateful Relationship Orientation" (which is to say, maintaining healthy Patronage-Clientelism relationships and honoring indebtedness) ranked second overall in importance, with rural Thais even ranking it first overall.[35] Indebtedness is a core concept of the Thai cultural structure, and understanding patterns of relational indebtedness that forms an integral element of Thai PC dynamics is essential to understanding Thai culture.

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35. Suntaree, *Psychology*, 133, 139-142.

Indebtedness and obligation are different components of the same patronage dynamic. In short, a person may *have* obligation, but a person *is* indebted. Obligation is the cultural pressure on a person to reciprocate kindness. If one person has provided for another, perhaps with a gift, kindness, or help, then the Thai understanding of obligation dictates that the person receiving the help is obligated to somehow return kindness to the provider. Obligation alone may be comprised of single events or short-term relationships, "flexible" patronage relationships where the patron and client are not committed to one another; in this case the obligation to return the kindness remains but is less likely to be a long-term commitment. Obligation itself does not constitute a long-term patronage relationship; rather, it is the currency that patrons and clients spend and collect in their dealings with one another. Indebtedness represents the status of a relationship between two people. These relationships retain a significant amount of obligation, but this obligation is not in response to a singular act of providence (like obligation by itself is) but instead represents a general desire and motivation to give back to the patron who has shown great kindness. Indebted patronage relationships such as these include a large amount of บารมี (*baramee*), which is a sort of prestige or honor generated from a lifetime of goodwill service and providence to one's clients. So, obligation and indebtedness are similar in that they are both motivations that influence Thai patronage relationships, but obligation is a response to a one-time or short-term providence. In contrast, indebtedness is a long-term, positively oriented relationship full of honorific obligation.

บุญคุณ (*Bunkhun*)

There is no English term or phrase that entirely captures the complex meaning of บุญคุณ (*bunkhun*) but understanding how it functions is essential to understanding how

relationships function in Thailand. Suntaree Komin offers this definition:

> *Bunkhun* (indebted goodness) is a psychological bond between someone who, out of sheer kindness and sincerity, renders another person the needed helps and favors, and the latter's remembering of the goodness done and his ever-readiness to reciprocate the kindness. The *Bunkhun* relationship is thus based on the value of gratitude. . . . It is an exchange of relation that is not bound by time or distance. Although the person who renders help, kindness, and favors, is usually done without expectation of anything in return, the Obligated person must be Grateful. And *Bunkhun* must be returned, often on a continuous basis and in a variety of ways, because *Bunkhun* should not and cannot be measured quantitatively in material terms. It is an ongoing, binding of good reciprocal feelings and lasting relationship.[36]

So, a client does not repay their indebtedness through an equal measure of the resources they have received. They show their patron great thankfulness through their behavior. This behavior in response to a patron's providence can be, as Jayson Georges describes it, "by honoring the patron. A client offers obedience, gratitude, allegiance, and solidarity to the patron."[37]

The behavior of the client is dependent on what kind of *bunkhun* they have with their patron. Persons specifies between two different types of *bunkhun*: instrumental and affectionate. Affectionate *bunkhun* is a relationship-focused and positive expression of *bunkhun*. Persons writes that with this type,

> the act of the patron is sincere. The motive in assisting is other-centered, intends to show kindness, or moral goodness, not to reap some benefit in return. . . . These feelings of client indebtedness are a warm thing because the client experience is genuine kindness as the object of patron generosity, a deep affection towards the patron is generated. This affection is enduring.[38]

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36. Suntaree, *Psychology*, 139.

37. Georges, *Ministering*, 9.

38. Larry S. Persons, "Generosity and Reciprocity in Thai Society," in *Devoted to Christ: Missiological Reflections in Honor of Sherwood G. Lingenfelter*, ed. Christopher Flanders (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), pp. 79-91, 83.

Affectionate *bunkhun* creates positive feelings in both parties, regarding each other and the relationship. Persons notes how affectionate *bunkhun* can "catalyze a cycle of relational warmth that many Thais crave."[39] This sort of relationship can lead to lifelong indebtedness, not out of an unwanted debt to be repaid but instead out of a desire to maintain the relational affection brought about by the generous provision of the patron. The client does this "not because the clients *must* do them, but because clients *want* to do them."[40] Instrumental *bunkhun* is "a calculated act to create indebtedness in the client. The motive in assisting is self-centered with a view to reaping some benefit in return this social investment 'purchases' the loyalty and assistance of the client the patron expects to collect on that investment sometime in the future."[41] There are no warm feelings of gratitude or relational affection; the relationship is utilitarian and, if the client reciprocates purely out of fear, becomes oppressive. Persons writes that the "outside-in pressure on the client is a quintessential characteristic of instrumental bunkhun."[42] Instrumental *bunkhun* is likely the interaction that English-speakers see as manipulation and oppression of lower classes, and they attribute this type of instrumental *bunkhun* to the entirety of the patronage-clientelism system. Doing so, however, would be ignoring affectionate *bunkhun* and all the positives that type of relationship can bring. Instrumental *bunkhun* is not essentially negative; however, it simply lacks the positivity and mutual affection that affectionate *bunkhun* brings about between the patron and client. Neither type represents the more negative associations often perceived by English-speakers,

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39. Persons, "Generosity and Reciprocity," 84.

40. Persons, "Generosity and Reciprocity," 83.

41. Persons, "Generosity and Reciprocity," 84.

42. Persons, "Generosity and Reciprocity," 85.

although instrumental *bunkhun* is likely to suggest the negative characteristics more frequently.

<div align="center">"Rice Christians"</div>

Since the seventeenth century, a phenomenon known as "rice Christians" has been a topic of missiological study.[43] In this phenomenon an indigenous person "converts" to Christianity to secure some form of benefit, such as financial or material goods. A more appropriate academic definition for this concept is the term *proselytize*. One of the first English uses of the term was by William Dampier in 1688 when speaking of locals converting to Catholicism. He was quoted by Diana and Michael Preston who write, "In the first English use of the concept, Dampier believed that many of their converts were rice Christians—'alms of rice have converted more than their preaching.'"[44] The concept has existed for some time but was recently popularized in 1986 by Thomas Hale in his book, *Don't Let the Goats Eat the Loquat Trees*, in which he explains how missionary gifts to local Nepalese created an expectation that they would give the people what they asked for in exchange for baptisms. He writes,

> It is hard for friends back home to appreciate just how rich even the poorest missionaries are compared with those around them. Our light is dimmed by the glitter of our goods. We are asked every day for a shirt, money, a tin can, a pair of old shoes, food. If we give to them who ask, we have 'rice Christians' and a bigger crowd at our door next day *[sic]*. If we say no, we feel uneasy because we know full well there are seven shirts in the closet we don't really need.[45]

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43. Due to the cultural and racial reference, this term is no longer considered appropriate for use. For reference, other than in quoted material, I shall use the term *proselytism*/*proselytize*.

44. Diana Preston and Michael Preston, *A Pirate of Exquisite Mind: The Life of William Dampier* (New York, NY: Walker Publishing Company, 2004) 198.

45. Thomas Hale, *Don't Let the Goats Eat the Loquat Trees: Adventures of an American Surgeon in Nepal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 73.

There has been a significant amount of discourse by non-Christians and Christians alike

regarding the concept of proselytism.[46] Proselytism for material gain is an example of the

way Western missionaries may create dependence, a concept ingrained in new

missionaries as something to avoid. This topic will be introduced in Case 2.

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46. See Julia Charlotte Maitland, *Letters from Madras: During the Years 1836-1839* (Poole, UK: Woodstock, 2003) 70.; Arley Munson, *Jungle Days; Being the Experiences of an American Woman Doctor in India* (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Co., 1913) 116.

CHAPTER IV

INTERVIEWS

Following the literature review, I moved into a series of semi-structured interviews through which I sought to gain a first-person perspective on how missionaries currently understand and engage with PC dynamics. I interviewed ten missionaries of various ages, genders, denominations, and ministry experiences to form a more complete picture regarding how contemporary missionaries engage with patronage dynamics. Because this topic is very subjective to human experience, I wanted to see a first-person perspective of how missionaries felt about patronage and anything specific that I could focus on in the later parts of my research. Here I provide a list of the missionaries and details about each.

1. Missionary One is an American male, fluent in Thai, and has worked in Thailand for thirty years.

2. Missionary Two is an English male, fluent in Thai, and has worked in Thailand for seventeen years.

3. Missionary Three is an American female, fluent in Thai, and has worked in Thailand for twenty-one years.

4. Missionary Four is an American female, fluent in Thai, and has worked in Thailand for nineteen years.

5. Missionary Five is an American male, fluent in Thai, and has worked in Thailand for fourteen years.

6. Missionary Six is an American male, fluent in Thai, and has worked in Thailand for seven years.

7. Missionary Seven is an American male, competent in Thai, and has worked in Thailand for three and a half years.

8. Missionary Eight is an American male, fluent in Thai, and has worked in Thailand for twenty-seven years.

9. Missionary Nine is an American male, fluent in Thai, and has worked in Thailand for ten years.

10. Missionary Ten is a New Zealander female, fluent in Thai, and worked in Thailand for forty-two years.

Their identities will be kept confidential, but these missionaries covered a wide demographic area. Each missionary responded to the same set of questions, and I noticed several trends in the data that influenced my research direction. These interviews were where I first noticed the phenomenon of unintentional patronage and wanted to pursue it further.

## Interview Findings

As my interviews progressed, it became clear that several trends stood out in all of the interviews. As I was waiting to conduct more interviews, I analyzed the interviews that I had already completed through a Grounded Theory approach, which led me to probe deeper and ask better follow-up questions in my later interviews. Even before I completed all of the interviews, I had already coded the common trends I saw in NVivo, and the final few interviews continued the trends I had seen before.

The first question I asked was "What is your understanding of the 'Patronage-

Clientelism' cultural dynamic? How do Thai people speak of this dynamic? What kind of words do they use?" The answers were slightly different, but most were vaguely similar to one another. Missionary Five said that "when you enter into a relationship with someone, specifically if you or either of you have more power, more status than someone else . . . there's often expectations about how that relationship should work."[1] Missionary Seven said that it is "a relationship that's between two people or two, two individuals or two groups of people where one individual or entity I'm going to call the client is financially dependent upon another, uh, individual or entity, which I call the patron. . . . So, it's this 'you scratch my back, I scratch your back' relationship."[2] However, many missionaries did not know the type of words that Thais used to speak about PC dynamics, with one missionary reporting that "with me as a foreigner, they may not talk about it. It's something that, for them, is ingrained in them. So, they may not actually talk about it."[3] Another reported a similar situation, saying, "he's like, this is a really sensitive subject. Be careful who you choose to talk to about this. He said, Thais don't talk about this unless they trust someone. And if they trust someone, they will talk about it, but they'll still be careful when they do."[4] So, it seems as though missionaries know what it is as a concept, but their Thai communities are less open to talking about it or teaching them how it works.

The second question was, "Have you witnessed PC dynamics in your experiences with Thai culture? What about in a Christian context?" All the missionaries agreed on

1. Missionary Five. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 2, 2021.

2. Missionary Seven. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 8, 2021.

3. Missionary Four. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 3, 2021.

4. Missionary Three. Interviewed by Sam Jones. February 2, 2021.

one fact: patronage is everywhere. Phrases such as, "Yes, all the time, all the time," and, "Once you have eyes to see it, you will see it everywhere" stood out to me among all the missionaries confirming that PC dynamics are inherent in Thai relationships.[5] There were some opposing stances on PC dynamics in a Christian context. On the one hand, Missionary Two spoke at length about how patronage dynamics complicated ministry, mentioning how "you're real *[sic]* good at presenting the gospel, come and sit on the, on the floor with all the Thai guys and, and present the gospel into the evening. Now I know he'd like to do it. And he was saying, oh, I have to pray about that or I'd have to think about it. What he's saying to me is 'I will have to contact my patrons [and ask] is that okay for me to do that."[6] He believed that patronage confused loyalties and divided believers in the church. On the other hand, Missionary Six mentioned how patronage that "gets played out in the church is not even an official role, but like when somebody comes to Christ, the person who brought them to Christ, if you will, is there, so they're [the] older one who's brought them along. And that becomes interesting because we really wrestle with how to contextualize the gospel and Thai churches."[7] So one missionary said that it complicates ministry in a negative way, and one missionary said that it needs to be "wrestled with" but could be used to contextualize the Gospel. I was intrigued to see the missionaries having two different opinions about whether PC has a positive or negative effect on the church, but both agreed on the fact that it is a complicated issue that takes some "wrestling."

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5. Missionaries Three and Six. Interviewed by Sam Jones. February 2, 2021, and March 1, 2021, respectively.

6. Missionary Two. Interviewed by Sam Jones. February 5, 2021.

7. Missionary Six. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 1, 2021.

The next question was, "What was your understanding of patronage before coming to Thailand?" The answers were surprisingly similar. Eight out of ten missionaries stated that they had no prior education regarding patronage before coming to Thailand.[8] Even across generations and denominational divides, missionaries were not learning about patronage before working in Thailand, and that gap stood out to me. All ten of the missionaries, when asked about their understanding of patronage when they first arrived to work in Thailand, confessed some level of ignorance regarding patronage. Many said that their pre-ministry training and education regarding patronage was deficient, with Missionary Five stating that they had "talked about it a little bit . . . but wasn't aware of it much," and Missionary Eight saying that his professors told him that patronage was "sinful, it's wrong, avoid it."[9] Either through a lack of education or a deficient education, these missionaries did not learn about patronage before moving to Thailand.

Next, I asked "How were you educated?" with the suggestions of "university/formal education, pre-ministry Thai culture study, on-the-job experience, or other" as possible follow-up questions. Out of the six common responses I received, three of them were mentioned four times apiece: learning from books, a mentor, or mistakes.[10] Four of the ten missionaries mentioned that they had read a book or article mentioning patronage, but several mentioned the struggle of finding and accessing resources such as books, with missionary Ten mentioning how "I knew there was something out there

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8. Missionaries One, Two, Three, Four, Six, Seven, Nine, and Ten. All interviewed by Sam Jones.

9. Missionary Five, and Missionary Eight. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 21, 2021.

10. The most common responses were, from most to least: books (four), mentor (four), mistakes (four), experience (three), and school (three).

(speaking about patronage), but there was nothing really written on it back in those days."[11] There was a lack of awareness and understanding that extends even to today, with several missionaries asking me if I knew of resources concerning patronage that they could read to educate themselves. Four missionaries said that they learned about patronage from an experienced mentor in the field. Missionary One said that he "was blessed to come over and work under some missionaries who helped me see things that I probably wouldn't have picked up on my own."[12] Having an experienced mentor was the main way that some of these missionaries learned about patronage. Finally, four missionaries reported that they learned about patronage through making mistakes. Missionary Two described a situation where he "told somebody off" who was the chairman of an important organization, and his friends told him that he had "made an enemy forever."[13] Mistakes seemed to be a common way of learning about patronage, which was concerning, given how negatively someone who does not fulfill their patronage role is viewed after the transgression. Phrases such as, "learned by our mistakes," or, "we didn't realize," were common, with one missionary saying, "when you have a bad experience, you know, that lasts a long time with you." Missionaries were unaware that they were entering into patronage relationships, and those first experiences regarding patronage were ending poorly, usually with their ignorance ruining a patronage relationship. Missionary Three even stated that her first experience with patronage "nearly took [her] out" of the mission field because of how badly the situation ended and

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11. Missionary Ten. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 2, 2021.

12. Missionary One. Interviewed by Sam Jones. January 28, 2021.

13. Missionary Two. Interviewed by Sam Jones. February 5, 2021.

how much it hurt her. The main ways that missionaries were learning about patronage were through reading books, being taught by mentors, or making mistakes.

The middle section of questions included a Thai vocabulary quiz where I sent them a list of Thai terms through Skype or Zoom chat. The answers to the vocabulary questions varied wildly, with several missionaries confessing that they "do not know what it is" in regard to several terms, most often *rabob nay/phrai*.[14] The most common term that they defined correctly was *prakhun*, which is almost exclusively used in Christian church settings for "God's grace." This was encouraging because if missionaries do not know the term used for God's grace, the loss would reflect a major issue in Thai language study for missionaries.

For the final section, I asked three open-ended questions that the missionaries could respond to with stories or anecdotes from their time as missionaries. The first was "How have you grown or changed your understanding and attitude about Thai PC dynamics?" The answers to this question were split almost perfectly, with four missionaries saying they think positively about PC dynamics, four saying that they think negatively about it, and then two saying that they were ambivalent. However, all of the missionaries who said they thought positively about it said that they used to think negatively about PC dynamics, reflecting a possibility for opinions to change over time and with good experiences, as the missionaries explained what helped improve their opinion.

The second question in the final section was "How do you perceive missionaries engaging, interacting, and reacting to Thai PC dynamics? Have they been successful, or

14. Missionary Four. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 3, 2021.

have they rejected the dynamic altogether? Explain." There was a very wide breadth of answers, from Missionary Five, explaining how his team is very involved in figuring out a way "to do [patronage] that is healthy."[15] Missionary Three said that she has seen people who "have rejected it and been perhaps quite verbal about it."[16] The missionaries I interviewed had seen both sides of the spectrum in terms of missionary response to PC dynamics.

Finally, for the last question, I asked, "How do Thai PC dynamics differ from your culture of origin?" Every missionary said that their culture of origin was very different, with one even going so far as to say that he "wouldn't even know where to begin" to describe the difference.[17] Several mentioned how the West has significantly less power behind their obligations. One missionary said that she believed that the West "operate[s] with elements of patronage" within the culture, but "there's just more controls, especially on the government level."[18] Patronage differs heavily from the home cultures of the missionaries that I interviewed.

I drew two major themes from these interviews. First, missionaries do not understand patronage when they move to Thailand for the first time. Every single missionary confessed some level of ignorance regarding patronage early on in their ministry, and eight out of ten said they knew nothing about patronage when they came to Thailand for the first time. Second, missionaries are having to teach themselves about patronage on the job, and there have been mixed results based on how they were

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15. Missionary Five. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 2, 2021.

16. Missionary Three. Interviewed by Sam Jones. February 11, 2021.

17. Missionary Six. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 1, 2021.

18. Missionary Three. Interviewed by Sam Jones. February 11, 2021.

educated. Experienced mentors were common and seemed to work well, and books were also common, but there were some troubles with accessibility. An equal number of missionaries reported that they learned about patronage through making mistakes; not only did this likely make their jobs more difficult, but some of them ended up in hurtful situations. After I came to these conclusions, I remembered how the literature from my literature review had mentioned that patronage is pervasive and unavoidable in Thai culture. The literature seemed to say that patronage seems unavoidable, and missionaries were saying that they did not understand patronage, lacked the resources to learn, as well as routinely made harmful mistakes in patronage relationships. I recognized a problem: the unavoidability of patronage, coupled with the ignorance of the missionaries, meant that these missionaries were participating unintentionally in patronage dynamics.

## Unintentional Patronage Defined

Unintentional patronage occurs when a person enters a patronage relationship without knowing or being fully aware of what that relationship is or entails. Patronage relationships usually include mutual consent between a patron and client, but if a potential client's requests for patronage are unnoticed, and the potential patron acts in a manner that unintentionally signals patron-client status to the potential client, then the potential client believes that this person is their patron, and their relationship fundamentally changes. Considerable risk of relational role confusion exists in a relationship with unacknowledged roles, and this risk is heightened by cultural differences, such as those between an indigenous Thai and an English-speaking missionary. This situation can have disastrous effects on a relationship: the client has very different expectations for the relationship than the patron who unknowingly

commits grievous social indiscretions. As far as I know, this phenomenon has not been

specifically studied. Thus, I have coined the term *unintentional patronage* to represent

this phenomenon. Once I recognized this phenomenon and developed a name and

definition for it, I wanted to know what sort of circumstances produce unintentional

patronage and the impact that it has on Western missions in Thailand.

CHAPTER V

CASE STUDIES

**Case Study Methodology**

My findings from the first round of interviews led me to focus on specific

situations where this phenomenon of unintentional patronage occurred and analyze the

context, background, and elements of the stories that could explain these occurrences. Per

the approach I noted earlier in Chapter II, I re-interviewed Missionaries Three, Five,

Eight, and Ten in a second round of conversations, explicitly asking for stories from their

ministry experience in which they unknowingly acted as a patron. I selected cases from

each interview, cross-examined the stories to find commonalities, and drew conclusions

about unintentional patronage and how it affects cross-cultural mission work in Thailand.

A case-study method was appropriate for exploring this phenomenon in greater depth

because I could compare the details of the missionary stories to one another and look for

commonalities. The case-study method was best suited to exploring an unexplored and

unanalyzed topic. Therefore, I interviewed four missionaries and specifically asked them

about stories from their ministry experience where they acted as a patron to a Thai person

or people. From the interviews, I selected four remarkable stories that reinforced my

belief that unintentional patronage exists and is a significant phenomenon that needs to be

a part of any dialogue regarding patronage-clientelism.

**Case Study One**

In 2004, Southeast Asia experienced a horrific tsunami in which over two hundred thousand people died. Thailand experienced massive damage, with many people on the coast displaced from their homes following the twenty-meter-high waves. A missionary family moved to southern Thailand just days following the tsunami to aid in the relief efforts, pairing with a pre-existing ministry to provide housing for displaced tsunami victims. Mary was a part of the family that moved south. She had been a missionary in Thailand for about a year and a half with no prior knowledge or understanding of what patronage was or how it functioned. Mary's family began working with the pre-existing ministry, led by Eric, who built fifty new houses in a destroyed neighborhood for tsunami victims. Eric had significant financial backing from a foundation that collected fundraising support from the West, so Eric was deeply involved in that community. The Thai locals, grateful for the new homes, told Eric that if the missionaries built a church building, the neighborhood would become Christian and attend the missionaries' church. So, the ministry financed a three-story church building, and a Thai man named Pricha, who had assisted in the construction process, became the church's pastor. Pricha and his wife lived in the church building and were good friends and neighbors with Mary's family, including helping Mary's family deal with cobras on their property. Mary supplied Pricha with supplemental income as the church pastor that Mary's family worked with, but Eric's ministry supplied both Pricha's salary as pastor and his housing. Everything was going well until Pricha embezzled money from the church's funds. This transgression, according to Mary, was settled between Pricha and Eric, and Pricha remained the pastor of the church. A little while later, Mary's family

planned to partner with another person working in disaster relief in the area, and for more

than a year, they notified Pricha of their transition plans, including his impending loss of

their funding. Pricha was indifferent to Mary's family's choice to transition to another

ministry but was "really, really angry" when Mary's family ended their financial support.

This change negatively affected their relationship, with Pricha refusing to speak to Mary

or continue helping Mary's family. Their few conversations consisted of Pricha telling

Mary how well the ministry was doing despite losing Mary's financial support. Mary

could not understand why Pricha was upset since they had maintained a previously

friendly relationship, and Pricha because was not wholly dependent on Mary's financial

support. What went wrong?

## Interpretation

### Pricha Indebted to the Western Missionaries

Mary's confusion, as someone with no knowledge of how patronage relationships

function, is understandable. Multiple patronage dynamics are at play among Mary, Eric,

and Pricha's relationships. The most apparent PC dynamic is Pricha's indebtedness to the

Western missionaries as one group of outsiders. Since they chose Pricha to be the

church's pastor, his position as pastor and his status in the community are provided by

Eric and Mary. Additionally, Pricha receives his salary, housing, and supplemental

income from the missionaries. This level of dependence made Pricha greatly indebted to

the missionaries; however, the missionaries believed they were simply empowering

Pricha to a leadership position. Pricha is obligated to run the church and serve as the

pastor since the missionaries have provided this position. As we will see, his position

comes with much more responsibility and complications than the missionaries realize.

Pricha as a Power Broker

Another less obvious patronage dynamic present was Pricha's role as a *power broker* between the Western missionaries and the Thai community in his neighborhood. A power broker is a position within patronage-clientelism relationships where a person fulfills the role of both patron and client to two groups that might not otherwise have an effective means of communication. Robert Oh writes that a power broker "functions as both a patron and a client . . . [power brokers] receive resources from the primary patron and, in that sense, they are clients as well. However, they often manage and distribute these resources independently. Thus, practically speaking, as they control these resources, they become patrons for other clients."[1] Simultaneously fulfilling these roles makes the power broker a mediator between two groups who otherwise would have struggled to connect, as in this case between the Western missionaries and the local Thai neighborhood. Pricha became the client to the missionaries, who provided him with his housing, salary, and social status in exchange for his service as pastor. At the same time, Pricha also became a patron to the community by connecting them to the missionaries and distributing their money and support to the community in exchange for community respect for his role as the pastor and leader. Pricha is the mediator between the missionaries and the Thai neighborhood, but this position comes with a unique set of challenges.

The Western perception of the church is that all believers are equal and that their role as missionaries is to serve the Thai people. As a patron in a patronage-heavy Asian culture, the pastor wields quite a bit of influence in the community. Pastors, both Thai

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1. Robert Oh, *Gap and Eul: Korean Patron-Client Dynamics in Church Planting in Cambodia* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2020), 74.

and Western, are usually referred to by the honorific title อาจารย์ (*ajan*), which translates to *professor* or *teacher*. Such a position carries considerable honor and elevates a pastor to the level of a respected teacher. This title marks Pricha as a leader and provider for the community, and when coupled with his direct access to money and resources from the missionaries, Pricha's status makes him the aforementioned "power broker" between the community and the missionaries. The missionaries look to him for ways to help the community, but at the same time, the community also looks to him when they need help. These two opposite positions of a client to the missionaries and a patron to the community put Pricha in a powerful position but also supply him with many more obligations to fulfill.

## Why Did Pricha Embezzle Money?

Missionary Ten told me a story about choosing a pastor for a church plant. The missionaries had prayed about their Thai pastor and had selected a young woman from the group of believers. This woman was a passionate believer, cared about the church, and was an effective teacher, but she refused without giving a reason when asked to become the church pastor. After being asked multiple times, she ashamedly admitted that she came from a low-income family and did not have much money. She believed that she would not fulfill her role as patron and pastor to the church because she could not provide for them by paying for meals, supporting house projects, and other miscellaneous expenses. She "didn't want to be the bank" for the church, a dimension of church life that the missionaries had never considered. The same dynamic is at work here with Pricha and the missionaries. Pricha is not just the pastor of this neighborhood; he is also the financial supporter of the congregation's needs. Because of his elevated status, Pricha is

responsible for helping the people when they need help, and there is no guarantee that the missionaries considered this when determining his salary. In addition, if someone requests money from Pricha as the pastor and he calls for a congregation-wide offering to help that person (which is a common practice in the West), not only would he possibly bring shame onto the person asking for help, but Pricha would be publicly shaming himself by showing that he is a patron that cannot provide for his clients. Thus, if Pricha does not have the funds to care for his clients adequately, he needs to obtain more money from the only source he can depend on: the church. This lack of money likely occurs because the missionaries do not factor the idea of "patron to the community" into his salary recommendations. It is likely they paid Pricha a perfectly reasonable wage for a family man, but Eric and Mary did not realize that Pricha's money would likely be going to the entire community. Therefore, to be a good patron who helped his clients, Pricha needed to secure more funds. In addition to using his own money for his clients, it is very likely that Pricha saw this patronage relationship with the community as a part of his pastoral duties and used the money from the church accordingly. Taking this money would be seen as embezzlement by the English-speakers, who do not view patronage dynamics as a part of pastoral responsibilities, most likely because they do not know that they exist.

<center>Mary and Pricha as Patron and Client</center>

Without realizing it, Mary became Pricha's patron in another dimension: as neighbors. Mary's missionary family supplied Pricha with supplemental income as the pastor of the church they were supporting. They did not provide for any of his basic needs (since Eric took care of his housing, salary, and employment), so their money was

additional income. When Mary had a cobra problem in her home, Pricha and his wife helped clear them out and continued to take care of any cobras in their home. Mary assumed that they took care of the cobra problem because Pricha and his wife were good friends with Mary's family and good neighbors. Mary had unintentionally created a patronage relationship with Pricha as her client. Since Mary provided Pricha with the supplemental income, Pricha was now indebted to Mary and thus was obligated to help Mary with her cobra problem. Mary saw it as a friendly, neighborly relationship, but Pricha saw it as a complex system of obligations that would have significant repercussions for the ministry and the community.

<div align="center">The Underlying Dynamics</div>

### *Mary's Support*

When Mary decided to transition her family's support to a new ministry, she upset the delicate patronage dynamics between the missionaries and Pricha. First, as a patron, she unintentionally abandoned her client by withdrawing her financial support. Pricha, likely feeling abandoned, stopped helping Mary around her house, since in his mind, their obligation to one another as a patron and client had ended. Mary's financial support was not payment for Pricha's help, but Pricha had no reason to help Mary when it stopped. Their patron-client relationship fractured when Mary indicated that she no longer wanted to provide for Pricha, who knew that she had the funds to do so. As a result Pricha assumed that either he had not sufficiently fulfilled his role as client or that Mary was a shameful person who abandoned those who needed her help. Both options garnered social shame and a loss of face, so in his mind, working within PC expectations, Pricha had a right to be upset.

*Western Missionaries as One Patron*

A primary reason for Pricha's anger was likely a fear of rejection. While Mary recognized the differences in her and Eric's methods and ministries, more than likely Pricha viewed the English-speakers as one group that worked together. Thus, when Mary withdrew her support, it was not only seen as a loss of funding and support from one source but as a possible indication that Pricha was going to lose all of his support. Losing this support would not only make him unemployed but would send his social status into freefall, doing his reputation significant harm, so it would only be natural that Pricha responds with anger to any hint that he could lose his Western support. Mary thinks that she is simply transitioning her funding from one ministry to another, but she is sending a signal to Pricha that he is losing support from his patrons. This is likely why Pricha made a point to tell Mary how well the ministry was doing and how they had to support their own ministry. In an attempt to gain back her patronage, he was trying to show Mary that he was a good pastor and could run the ministry effectively, even without her support. Even when Mary explained to Pricha that she was transitioning her funding to someone else, Pricha did not think she would completely abandon her client, but when she did, Pricha reacted with anger and frustration because his patron had abandoned him.

Unintentional Patronage

In this case, Mary unintentionally became Pricha's patron. She fails to recognize the powerful position she holds as a Western missionary with financial connections to her supporting churches. Whoever wants to be powerful in the community can only do so with her support. Her endorsement of Pricha as the pastor has significant implications for him and the community, but ultimately his power and position are determined by Mary.

She is, therefore, Pricha's patron, and she provides his employment and his position as both pastor and power broker to the community. However, these dynamics are invisible because Mary is unaware of her patronage to Pricha and the PC dynamics working in this situation. Without an understanding of how PC dynamics function, Mary is blind to the high stakes of this situation, and thus when she decides to transition her support to another ministry, the delicate situation falls apart. The invisible PC dynamics caused Mary to make a mistake in a situation that she did not know existed.

## Conclusion

In this case, Mary and Eric did not understand how PC dynamics functioned and how many PC relationships were created by their decision to appoint Pricha as the church's pastor. Their ignorance regarding how patronage-clientelism functions was most evident when they did not recognize the Thai cultural assumptions about Pricha's position, nor did they anticipate the significant cultural obligations they created by designating Pricha as the pastor, a position that—unbeknownst to Mary and Eric—also made Pricha a power broker to the community. Thus, when Pricha acted in accordance with Thai expectations for a good patron by securing funds to support the community, Eric and Mary, both egalitarian English-speakers, saw his decisions as an underhanded attempt to acquire more money from the rich English-speakers. When Eric stopped Pricha's attempt to secure more money from the church, Pricha likely was frustrated, but when Mary cut off Pricha's extra funding, this was too much for him and responded with anger. He believed that the English-speakers were abandoning him, even though Mary explained her reasons and warned him months in advance. Her response to this situation included her misunderstanding of Pricha's anger and bewilderment about Pricha's actions

following the fallout of their relationship. Pricha likely felt that his patrons, Eric and

Mary, were not providing for him because he assumed they were aware that he needed

these funds to provide for the community. In this situation, their incognizance of the

patronage dynamics that they had inadvertently created caused the deterioration and

collapse of those same patronage dynamics. I do not blame the missionaries for ignorance

regarding something that they had never had the opportunity to learn. Mary had only

been in Thailand for a few years, so without formal education or mentoring, she could not

have been expected to discover and learn about the patronage system in that amount of

time. Without realizing it, Mary and Eric's actions put Pricha in both a vital and

incredibly precarious position as the power broker between two large groups, and their

actions determining Pricha's funding did not take this position into account. Mary did not

know that she had become Pricha's patron, and her unawareness of this precarious

situation contributed to the problems in this ministry. The patronage relationship

remained invisible to Mary throughout their interactions, and only years later is she able

to recognize how many different dynamics were present.

## Case Study Two

Colin was a new missionary working with tribal groups in Northern Thailand

alongside several Thai ministers who had experience with these local tribes. The first

tribe they visited lived in the mountains and lacked access to running water. Although the

community had access to several water wells, collecting water from the wells was time-

consuming and inefficient for the entire village. As a result, Thai ministers led by Somsak

decided that the best course of action would be to provide running water to the village.

The village elders enthusiastically agreed to this plan and told the missionaries that if

they brought running water, the whole village would become Christians and attend the missionaries' church. Colin was shocked by the suggestion that the elder could order his entire village to be Christians and was extremely hesitant to follow through with this plan; however, Somsak assured him that "this is how things work here." Colin was worried that they would be proselytizing by convincing people to become Christians because they get something out of it, such as running water. Proselytizing does not create authentic belief in Jesus and creates dependence, as Colin had studied before coming to Thailand, so he was wary of Somsak's plan. Since Colin was new to the mission field and much less experienced than the Thai ministers, he held his tongue and went along with Somsak's plan. The ministry built the running water system, and every night as they worked, the entire village turned up to their Bible study. Colin watched the entire village raise their hands during the altar call and believed that their behavior did not represent genuine Christianity. He felt guilty that the entire village raised their hands to accept Christ without ever reading a Bible or engaging in prayer. Eventually, the missionaries completed the running water system; the ministers built a small church building, appointed a young man who was a Christian to be the pastor, and then moved on to another village. Colin was on a team that later returned to the village, and he fully expected the villagers to have returned to their animistic beliefs once the missionaries left. However, as before the entire village enthusiastically turned up to hear the church service. Colin was surprised to learn that the village had remained Christian all this time, and this pattern continued for many years. Every time the ministers returned, the village would greet them enthusiastically as brothers and sisters in Christ. Ten years later, a woman who pastored indigenous people groups in the mountains in Myanmar became the

pastor of the village church. Today, twenty-five years later, the church is not only still in operation, but they have grown beyond their village and planted churches in other villages in their area. Colin grew to appreciate the work the church had done in that village, and their water system outreach model became the prototype for ministries working with indigenous tribes in that region. How did this happen?

## Interpretation

### Egalitarian Christianity Versus Hierarchical Christianity

Colin's adverse reaction to Somsak's plan and the village elder's suggestion that the village would become Christian is likely born out of deeply rooted Western beliefs in egalitarianism and individuality. First, Colin was shocked that the village elder volunteered the people in his village to become Christians without consulting them. Colin's Western background tells him that every villager should be free to choose what they want to do, and nobody should be able to force them. In addition, Colin believes that each villager should make their faith their own and not blindly follow the rest of their village. With the water system, from his Western perspective, he sees the village elder volunteering his entire village to go to the church services just so the ministers will build the water system, which seems both slightly manipulative and also disingenuous. Colin's Western background would be applicable if he were ministering to English-speakers, but things work differently in the Thai patronage-clientelism system. The village elder receives an offer of something that he cannot attain on his own: a running water system. So, as the client of his new patrons, the ministers, he gratefully gives back to them by telling his clients to become Christians out of gratitude. Whereas Colin sees this interaction as transactional (the village chief doing one thing in order to secure another),

in reality, the ministers planned to build the water system with or without the village elder's promises. The village elder is simply responding to their gift with gratitude by joining their cause, along with all his clients.

<div align="center">Individualist Christianity Versus Communal Christianity</div>

In the West, Christianity is tightly bound to the concept of individuality. Christians believe that our salvation is the result of our own "personal relationship" with Jesus rather than our participation in a community. Even the church, the communal expression of Christianity, represents a place to learn more about God and to edify one's faith. This focus on a believer's individual faith differs from the communal cultures typical in Thailand, where personal testimony before the community is much more common than expressions of individual faith. In *Cultures and Organizations*, Geert Hofstede writes that "collectivist" societies are societies in which "the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual," and "individualist" societies are "societies in which the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group."[2] In this situation, Colin's Western perspective assumes the villagers have individualist desires that they do not have. Much like in his assumption that the village elder volunteering the entire village is a manipulative transaction, Colin believes that each villager should decide for themselves if they want to be a Christian because his Western background is concerned with personal salvation and individual faith. Rather than each villager working out their own faith, this village acts as one body regarding significant

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2. Hofstede surveyed the level of individualism in seventy-six nations and determined that the United States was the most individualist country in the world, followed closely by the major Western nations of Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands, all in the top six. Thailand, by comparison, was ranked sixty-one; Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations* (Sage Publications, 2001), 90-91.

decisions about what they believe, led by their patron, the village elder.

## Rethinking Dependence

Colin sees the running water system as a bribe to the elders in exchange for the village's loyalty, and his Western perception of dependence opposes this process because he believes that this proselytizes to the Thais, who convert to Christianity for material gain but never progress in their faith. PC dynamics allow an opportunity to re-evaluate the concept of dependence. PC is in fact a sort of dependence when someone of lower status depends on someone of a higher status. Among practitioners, patronage dependence does not carry the same negative baggage as the Western understanding of dependence. Rather than one group's dependence on an outside source of money, the group is in a symbiotic relationship with their provider, and both parties have mutually understood expectations about loyalty. Thai patronage relationships provide security and greater mutual support from both parties that helping each other succeed. The West believes that maturity is tied to self-sufficiency and independence; however, Thai patronage recognizes maturity as a mutual understanding of loyalty and interdependency from both patrons and clients. Viewed in this light, most Thai patronage represents a positive dependence since people are dependent on each other for mutual benefit. In this system powerful cultural safeguards against abandonment and extortion exist to prevent mistreatment. Certainly, there will always be examples of oppressive or harmful Thai patronage, but for the most part it is a positive system. Indigenous believers who are entirely dependent on Western money create a host of issues, and those issues have been

covered extensively in contemporary missionary training and academic literature.[3] In the interview, Colin mentioned that during his missionary education, "the big guard against [patronage], especially in the era when I was in school, was because of rice Christians. . . There was a lot of teaching on that for a long time too, that [patronage] is bad, it's sinful, it's wrong, avoid it."[4] Thus, Colin's Western missionary training led him to misunderstand the patronage relationship the ministers created with this village and to misidentify it as the negative dependence he had been taught to avoid. If he had understood the full expectations of this patronage relationship, he would have recognized that the negative qualities that English-speakers ascribe to dependence are not as significant in Thai patronage relationships.

<div align="center">Unintentional Patronage</div>

Colin became the patron to this village by providing them with a running water system. He was treated as a patron by the village, but he mistook this patronage as harmful dependency, and in doing so, he missed a core element of patronage: reciprocity. When the entire village came to church, he assumed that the village elder forced them to go, or that they came in order to secure the running water system. Because of his previous missiological education, he understandably jumped to these conclusions, and he therefore missed patronage as a possible reason for the village's actions. His misplaced reasoning could have ended poorly for the ministry if he had chosen to take control of the situation and enforce his own beliefs. Because he took a step back and let the Thais, who were

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3. See, for example, Mark R. Elliott, "Dependency Versus Sustainability in Missions in the Russian and African Contexts," in *Missiology: An International Review* 48, no. 1 (February 13, 2020), 83–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091829619897434.

4. Second Interview with Missionary Eight. Interviewed by Sam Jones. May 5, 2021.

aware of their patronage, take the lead in the situation, the ministry to the mountain tribes ended in success. Colin's unintentional patronage was masked by what he thought was the correct answer: his own education and reasoning. These "blinders" kept him from considering other possibilities, which was almost disastrous, but his willingness to take a secondary role kept him from damaging this interaction.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

The conflict between Colin's previous Western missionary training and his recognition that he did not fully understand the situation represents a dilemma that most missionaries likely encounter. The missionaries have been taught the Western way of ministry, and now that they are in Thailand, they see behavior that their training has taught them to avoid, yet they recognize that this situation is not as clear-cut as their Western training taught them. In this situation, Colin steps back once he understands that he is not fully aware of what is happening. Even then, he still unintentionally becomes one of the patrons of this village. Instead of just one person filling the patron role, the group of ministers, both Thai and Western, become the patrons of this village with their "gift" of the running water system. This patronage is why the village easily fulfills obligations that Colin misreads as exploitation; their patronage obligations to their patron are much stronger than Colin realizes and much more agreeable to the village because patronage is the standard system in their culture. So, if Colin had acted on his concerns of creating negative dependence, as his Western education had taught him, he would have demanded that the village act as bad clients rather than fulfill the indebtedness that they had to the ministers. His Western ministry education caused him to misidentify a positive form of reciprocity (patronage-clientelism) as negative dependence. The Thai ministers

were not seeking to exploit the village, as it might seem to a English-speakers, but instead provided long-term support to the village in a way that ensured continued support and commitment, rather than exploitation and abandonment. Colin was unaware that he would become a patron of this village and interpreted the situation through his Western worldview and ministry education. Colin's ignorance rendered the PC dynamics invisible, and his unintentional patronage to the village could have resulted in disastrous cultural miscommunication. In this case, Colin had the wisdom to recognize that he was not fully aware of the dynamics at play, and he chose to allow the Thai ministers with more experience and understanding to take the lead, which led to success. Colin's wisdom to take a secondary role and allow the Thai ministers to make the decisions was a primary reason why this situation ended well.

## Case Study Three

Malee was a remarkable Thai teenager. She was the daughter of a colonel in the Thai military and had a very prosperous and affluent childhood, including inheriting immense social status from her father's rank. Malee became a Christian at around twelve years of age and had been summarily cut off from her family, yet she still sent a little money to her younger siblings. She now attended the Bible college where Allison, a Western missionary, was teaching. Allison had been living in Thailand for a year and five months when Malee approached her with an offer: Malee wanted to come live with Allison. In exchange, after graduation Malee would work with Allison. This proposal seemed odd to Allison, who considered Malee her equal and was not even ten years her senior, but she agreed. Malee lived with Allison and began passionately working with the children's ministry that Allison ran. She would work late hours into the night, even when

Allison told her that she did not have to work so hard. Allison was surprised at the level of commitment and work ethic Malee demonstrated. At the same time, Malee began to call Allison "mother" and became very dependent on her. She refused a salary, hinting that she wanted Allison to take care of her. Malee would also say things like, "My shoes are in bad shape, I don't think they will last much longer," or "My friend's mother just bought her this new dress, isn't it so pretty?" These comments confused Allison, who knew that Malee had enough money to purchase new clothing herself. Their relationship became tense, to the point where Malee cried and asked Allison, "Why don't you want to take care of me?" Allison could not understand what the problem was. She had offered to give Malee money to buy the things she wanted, and Malee had enough money herself to get them, but Malee would always say no to Allison's suggestion to buy the gifts herself. Malee continued to mention gifts, and Allison eventually avoided shopping with Malee out of fear that Malee would make these insinuating comments on different items in the store. Malee lived with Allison for ten years until she was diagnosed with leukemia and passed away. Why did Malee act this way?

## Interpretation

### What Does Malee Want?

To English-speakers, Malee might come across as very needy. She does not want a salary but instead wants Allison to take care of her needs, including needs that she should be perfectly capable of fulfilling. Malee does not necessarily want the items that she is pointing out. In *Becoming God's Clients*, Chris Flanders explains that "terms that are characteristic of PC relationships and responsibilities . . . include: *duu lae-* (to care for, look after); *faak tua-* (technical terms for placing oneself under the care and

protection of a patron); *maawb* (to entrust into the care of a patron); and *luuk phra jaaw* (children-underling of God/Sacred Lord)."[5] The language of "caring for" someone is integral to PC relationships. In asking for new shoes or a new dress, Malee speaks the invisible patron-client language and asks Allison to "care for" her or show her support. This support is markedly different from paying her a salary; paying Malee a salary represents a "transactional" method of thanks, whereas Malee wants Allison to "show" her support. The gifts themselves do not matter—rather Malee desires an affirmation of their relationship and Allison's intention to care for her. Malee does not explicitly ask Allison for the shoes or the dress because she wants Allison to go out of her way to show her support for Malee. We can see this by noticing the way Malee treats her siblings. She sends them money and buys them clothing, knowing full well that her extremely well-off parents can provide for them perfectly well. The point of the money and clothing is to affirm their relationship; the older Malee is the superior and provider, and the young siblings are the recipients of the blessings. Malee desires that same relationship with Allison, but Allison appears to not understand the invisible language of PC, so she does not "take care" of Malee in the way that Malee would hope. Malee is working hard for Allison, and in place of a salary she expects Allison to provide for her in a patronage type of care. Allison does not understand Malee's desires because she does not understand the indebted relationship that Malee expects. Considering the high level of work Malee does for Allison, Malee likely feels that Allison should be happy to provide for her as her patron. Nevertheless, because Allison does not understand the patronage dynamics at work, she does not know what Malee wants or needs.

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5. Flanders, *Becoming, 85*.

Many Material Meanings

In the West, Malee's repeated mentions of certain clothes and other gifts might seem greedy, as if she was trying to imply that she expected Allison to give her those gifts for free rather than purchasing them for herself. I believe that is what Malee meant in asking, rather than selfishness or greed. I believe Malee likely felt like she was completely justified in asking for those things, which were appropriate in the context of a patronage relationship. Allison, however, seems unaware of Malee's expectations because she does not understand how patronage relationships function. In a patronage-clientelism relationship, gifts are often markers of support for a client, and such provide the endorsement of support from Allison that Malee is likely seeking. Material gifts take on a more profound significance in a patronage relationship than in a Western relationship. Persons writes that "leaders are patrons. They are givers. This is an essential characteristic of the Thai way to lead. Leaders must continually reify their social capital by being charitable with their followers. They generously take care of family, relatives, friends, subordinates, and allies."[6] In the West, a gift represents kindness or thoughtfulness, but in a patronage framework, a gift may indicate that a patron is pleased with their client's actions and will continue to support them further. This is the indication that Malee seeks from Allison because she most likely desires security from her patron rather than the resources common in other patronage relationships. Malee has the tools she needs to succeed, but she wants someone to give her a secure foundation. The dress signifies the secure foundation that Malee is desires because it endorses both Malee's position as a client and the quality of the work she has done for Allison at the Bible

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6. Persons, *The Way,* Kindle location 1538-1549.

college. Allison does not attribute this level of significance to what she sees as a simple gift, and thus the invisible language of PC leads to miscommunication.

<center>Power Distance and Matronage in Patronage</center>

Malee's desired patronage relationship with Allison differs from the previous two cases because Malee needs a decidedly familial relationship with her patron, whom she sees as a sort of mother figure. According to one missionary, many young Thais do not see the PC system as an obvious, established system; it is understood as "just the way things are" rather than something a person intentionally learns and operates within. The Thai PC system is an invisible cultural dynamic, and it is likely that Malee participates in these dynamics without thinking, more as a second nature. She is likely seeking a maternal figure because of the absence of her own family while subconsciously acting through the patronage dynamic in which she has lived for her whole life, and which manifests itself in gravitating towards a possible provider and place of security. At first glance, it might be easy to assume that Malee is simply looking for a mother figure when she calls Allison "mother" and when she acts like Allison's child (when she eats Allison's food and asks for gifts). There are, however, more social and cultural dynamics at play here. Since Allison is less than ten years older than Malee, it is unlikely that Malee sees Allison as a true "mother" figure to the degree that Malee's later actions might suggest. Instead, the dynamic of Allison as the teacher and Malee as the student might be more basic, a dynamic that is significantly stronger in Thailand than in the West. In Thailand, the term อาจารย์ (*ajan*) is understood as professor or teacher; however, the title connotes a high level of respect and honor. The power distance

between a teacher and a student is significantly higher in Thailand than in the West.[7] This power distance puts the teacher in a position of high honor and authority, rather than the almost coworker-type attitude that many Western educators not only possess but strive for as an "ideal" for their classroom. So, not only does Thailand have a higher power distance gap than the West, but Allison's home culture of New Zealand is the fourth lowest among major countries surveyed. Therefore, Malee is much more likely to see her teacher, Allison, as a patron and a motherly figure than Allison, who is more likely to see Malee as a coworker and teammate based on her New Zealand background, which emphasizes a low power distance among teachers and students. This power distance makes it possible for Malee to see Allison as a mother figure; without the cultural power separation, Malee would less likely look to someone so near to her own age as a patron figure. Here there appears a familial dynamic between the two, with Malee seeing Allison as occupying a maternal role, a dynamic brought about by the power distance between them. Additionally, this power distance coupled with a desire to be provided for manifests itself in patron expectations. Patronage relationships may be an interconnected web of different cultural dynamics and take the shape of other dynamics, such as power distance and familial relationships, but patronage still permeates relationships in Thailand.

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7. Geert Hofstede defines *power distance* as "the emotional distance that separates subordinates from their bosses." It is one of the dimensions of culture that Hofstede measured in his book *Cultures and Organizations* and is an important dynamic to consider when discussing social dynamics in Asia. Thailand ranked thirty-six out of seventy-six countries measured while the typical Western countries of the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands all ranked under sixty-one. New Zealand, Allison's home culture, ranked seventy-two, which is the fourth-lowest power distance score measured in the study. This twenty-five-country gap represents a significant difference in their cultural power distance (all table figures are on pages 57-59).

Unintentional Patronage

Allison believed that she was getting a new roommate, but the invisible PC dynamics provided a client instead. Allison and Malee assumed different understandings of the power distance between them, which led to a significant amount of tension in their relationship. Coming from a New Zealand power distance culture, Allison treated Malee as a coworker, but Malee recognized Allison as her patron and acted as such. Allison's home culture conditioned her to see things differently than a Thai person would and thus blinded her to Malee's offer of clientship, which she did not recognize as PC. Allison continues to interpret their relationship through her New Zealand cultural framework, causing her to misunderstand Malee's questions about the clothing. Allison believes that Malee is asking for clothes when Malee is actually asking for a show of support from her patron. These requests unfortunately were never met because Allison did not understand how PC dynamics influenced their relationship.

Conclusion

This story demonstrates how important small gifts can be in a patronage relationship and how differences in power distance can cause significant misunderstandings in cross-cultural relationships. In non-PC relationships, gift giving does not carry the underlying significance of gifts in a patronage relationship. Simple gifts that would be considered a trivial favor in Western culture may have potentially massive implications in patronage relationships. Allison's ignorance of this fact creates conflict in her relationship with Malee. When Allison accepts Malee's request to live with her, she unintentionally accepted an invitation to become Malee's patron. Their relationship becomes tense when Allison fails to live up to the standards of a good patron.

The miscommunication is exacerbated by the disconnect in the way Allison and Malee

understand the "power distance" between them. Malee sees Allison as a mentor and

patron figure, based on high power distance culture, which places Allison as her อาจารย์

(*ajan*), while Allison relates to Malee through New Zealand's lower power distance

culture. Thus, while Allison does not think twice about giving Malee a gift as her

coworker, the same gift means the world to Malee because she understands it as an

endorsement of her hard work from her patron as well as a message that Allison intends

to continue to provide for her, thus extending the PC relationship. Allison does not

recognize the patronage relationship with Malee, however; since Malee interprets

Allison's actions as the opposite of what she wants, Allison seems like an uncaring and

unwilling patron who does not appropriately recognize Malee's extraordinary work.

Because the PC dynamics system is based in morality (i.e., being a "good patron"),

Allison's failure to fulfill patronage obligations is not just a failure to fulfill her role; in

Malee's eyes, it becomes a critique of Allison's moral character and even her spirituality.

The invisible patronage dynamics in their relationship lead to a misunderstanding of

Allison and Malee's actions, which is only worsened by the differences in power distance

that fundamentally change their roles in the relationship.

## Case Study Four

Matthew was a missionary working in northern Thailand with his family. In the

community, they met a woman named Nan who was looking for extra work. She was the

wife of a police officer that Matthew's family knew but was not a Christian. Matthew

hired her for part-time housekeeping during the week, and she was a hard worker. For

several weeks, Nan never expressed interest in becoming a Christian, but one day she

arrived for housekeeping wearing a Christian cross necklace. When Matthew asked her

about the necklace, Nan replied, "I am a Christian now." She had never previously

expressed any open interest in becoming a Christian but had attended Matthew's church

service after Matthew invited her. Matthew was surprised but happy that his ministry

efforts had resulted in a potential new believer. Their relationship deepened to the point

that Nan saw Matthew's family as her second family. Nan saw them as a family that took

care of her and was there for her when she needed help. Her fourteen-year-old son was

even baptized as by Matthew. About three years later, Matthew's family decided to move

to Chiang Mai to join another mission team working in a much more populated area.

Because there would be no missionaries left to shepherd the Thai believers, Matthew

wanted to get Nan involved in another church so that she could continue to be discipled

by other believers. Nan was very hesitant to join any other believers, and when Matthew

introduced her to other Thai Christians, Nan did not seem to connect with them.

Eventually, Matthew and his family moved to Chiang Mai without ever securing Nan a

place in a new congregation, and Nan stopped attending church. After Matthew and his

family moved, they found that Nan's son was living near Chiang Mai, and he began

attending their church from time to time. He had gone to school in Shanghai, had just

returned to Thailand, and lived in Chiang Mai. Nan did not find a new church in her town

to attend, and as far as Matthew knows, she is not a part of any Christian community

today.

## Interpretation

### Patronage Convert

On the surface, Matthew and Nan's relationship seems like typical employer and

employee, but the added dynamic of religious faith shows that there is more going on

here than meets the eye. Nan's surprising declaration that "I am a Christian now" comes

as a surprise, considering that she showed no prior interest in becoming a Christian.

However, this interaction makes sense when viewed in a patronage context. Nan's

request for a housekeeping job may be a clever offer of clientship to Matthew's patron-

like position. Clearly Matthew and Nan enter into a boss-employee relationship, since

Nan works for Matthew, and in Thailand's high power distance culture the respect and

deference from an employee to a boss has more significance than in Western employment

interactions, even for a casual employee such as a housekeeper. Employer-employee

relationships are a type of PC relationships; employment to a boss carries some patronage

baggage, harking back to the feudalist ศักดินา (*sakdina*) system of social organization

from the Early Bangkok Period.[8] An employee wants to please their boss/patron who is

providing their employment and wages. Drawing from the discussion of communal faith

vs. individualist faith in Case Two, it seems very likely that Nan sees Christianity as a

way to become a part of this community as well as please and honor her patron. Because

she was close to Matthew's family, Nan likely felt that becoming a Christian was either a

qualification or a way to become a part of the community of Matthew's family and their

church. So, without minimizing Matthew's attempts to evangelize to Nan and her

possibly authentic inward desire to become a Christian, it seems as though her surprise

declaration of Christianity may have been motivated by a desire to please her patron-boss

and be a part of Matthew's community.[9] This motivation may explain why Nan did not

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8. Akin, *Organization*, 77.

9. Interpreting Nan's motivations for becoming a Christian and her actions in doing so is tricky, since we were not present in the situation and do not have access to Nan's own account. Perhaps she was

show any interest in learning more or indicate that she was considering it; Nan decided

that it would be more beneficial if she were a Christian now. Matthew did not recognize

the extent to which an employee-boss dynamic would fundamentally change their

relationship. He appeared to not perceive the underlying patronage dynamics attached to

their roles as employee and employer. When Matthew employed Nan as his housekeeper,

he also unknowingly agreed to become her patron, and Nan acted in this patronage

dynamic by, in her eyes, becoming a Christian because any good client would want to

associate themself with their patron more closely.

## The Preferred Tribe

The hesitance Nan demonstrates toward joining a different group of Christians

reveals the patronage undertones of a potentially complex relationship. If Nan had

become a Christian and attended church without any PC dynamics involved, she should

likely not have a problem joining a new church, and if anything, would likely be excited

to commune with fellow Thai Christians. Putting aside any possible bashfulness and

dealing with the present information, however, it seems as though Nan does not want to

be transferred to what would be a new patron since she considers Matthew to be her

patron. She could see this as abandonment, but since her reaction seems more

disinterested than angry, it may be that their patronage relationship is significantly less

intense than that of Mary and Pricha in Case One, most likely due to less money and less

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motivated by both Matthew's example, the work of the Christian community there, as well as being closer
to Matthew as her patron. Saying this, however, might come across as an accusation of "converting," a
decision as involving ulterior motives. Though possible, another interpretation represented in Case Two,
suggests that "conversion" of an individual person singularly for their own personal spirituality would be
rare in a patron-client, communal culture such as Thailand. And, as we also saw in Case Two, these
Christians who English-speakers might say are "inauthentic" become incredibly committed believers, just
like the villages from that story. This is not a critique of Nan's actions, but instead an attempt to ascertain
her patronage obligations in this situation and to understand how they influenced the outcome.

perilous social situations. There does appear to be important markers of a patronage dynamic, and Nan likely feels loyalty towards Matthew as a patron. This loyalty could possibly explain her hesitancy to connect with other Christians; Nan likely feels as though she should stay loyal to Matthew, even when he says that she should join a different church. Through working for Matthew and growing closer to his family, Nan has become Matthew's client and a part of this family's web of relationships and interpersonal dynamics. If Nan became a Christian to secure the benefit of Matthew as her patron and a place in Matthew's "tribe" of people (his family and the members of his church), and she now realizes she is going to lose this benefit once Matthew leaves, then her reluctance to join another Christian group is not surprising. Nan is about to lose her benefits from this relationship, and her patron is actively telling her to (what she understands as) find a new patron in the Christian community, which may be something that does not interest her, so her patronage relationship to Matthew ends once Matthew's family moves away, and she separates herself from the Christian community.

## Inherited Loyalty

At the end of this case, Nan's son, whom Matthew baptized, reconnects with Matthew and his family after they move to Chiang Mai. This is not surprising when considering the patronage dynamics in this situation. Nan's son shares in her patronage relationships because obligation and indebtedness pass on from parent to child. When describing the prevalence of *bunkhun* in a relationship, Persons notes how *bunkhun* can be built up by "consistently showing generosity to a person's children and grandchildren. When this happens, that patron commands great respect, gratitude, and loyalty."[10]

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10. Persons, *The Way*, *Kindle* location 1677.

Matthew's support of Nan by employment and commitment to her son through discipleship and baptism, even if Nan and her son were Christians in name only, brought a level of indebtedness that either inspired or obligated Nan's son to reconnect to Matthew's family once he knew they were in the same city. Persons also described the familial aspect of *bunkhun* by quoting a Thai religious leader who claimed, "We must engrave this in our hearts for our lifetime, and we must tell it to our children and grandchildren."[11] The influence of *bunkhun* and patronage dynamics are not limited only to the patron and client; these dynamics potentially impact the families of those people as well. Matthew did not realize the significance of his kindness and support for Nan's son. Nonetheless, when Nan's son had a chance to return Matthew's *bunkhun* by reconnecting and joining Matthew's church in some capacity, he likely responded to this new opportunity because in their culture, it is imperative for clients or client's family members to respond to patronage kindness. Even though his mother received most of Matthew's kindness as the direct client, Nan's son still had *bunkhun* obligation toward Matthew.

## Unintentional Patronage

From Matthew's perspective, Nan was hired as a housekeeper, became close friends with Matthew's family, and a few weeks later, decided that she wanted to be a Christian. She began attending Matthew's church, but when Matthew let her know he would be leaving, Nan did not show interest in finding a new church likely because she was Matthew's client. Matthew did not recognize that their relationship had evolved into a patronage relationship. The strong connection between Thai employer-employee

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11. Persons, "Generosity and Reciprocity," 84.

relationships and patron-client relationships introduced a new dynamic into their relationship that only Nan recognized. Nan was hesitant to join a new church group because it would require her to change patrons, and she was not interested. The indebtedness that Matthew and Nan had built up, however, remained even after Matthew moved, which is why Nan's son began attending Matthew's church. The goodwill that Matthew had with Nan extended to her children, but the reason behind this goodwill was invisible to Matthew because he was not aware of the PC indebtedness that he had with Nan.

## Conclusion

From Matthew's perspective, his relationship with Nan was an employee-employer relationship influenced by his vocation as a missionary. He did not recognize the patronage dynamics inherent in being a Nan's employer. Her varying patronage motivations and obligations were invisible to him and impacted how this interaction ended. Because he did not realize that Nan viewed him as a patron, her surprise embrace of the Christian faith represented a win for their ministry and the work that they were doing. Nan was potentially motivated by a desire to please her patron and "give back" for Matthew's employment. This "patronage conversion" could be a common way Western missionaries experience patronage without fully grasping the dynamics influencing the convert. One way to interpret Nan's hesitance to join another Christian community in her town is that she was hesitant to disrupt Matthew's role as her patron. If Nan indeed became a Christian because of her patronage to Matthew, it is unsurprising that when Matthew left, she did not want to continue her participation in the Christian community since she was losing the patron who brought her in and kept her there. To outright refuse

other Christians might cause her to lose face with Matthew and Matthew to lose face with the other Christians. She likely did not want to dishonor her patron or seem ungrateful, so she was simply noncommittal about attending a new church. Belonging to her preferred tribe of people, which in this case was Matthew's family and church group, was most important to Nan. Finally, Matthew was also pleased to see Nan's son reconnect with them in Chiang Mai. Nan's son may have only been fulfilling Nan's obligation to Matthew's family in the small way that he could, by attending Matthew's new church family, even though his involvement was inconsistent. Even though he did not owe Matthew anything directly, the obligation to show honor and give back was still present because of the *bunkhun* indebtedness based on what Matthew had done for his mother, however small that favor of part-time employment. Matthew's inexperience with patronage kept him from adequately identifying Nan's motivations for becoming a Christian, her unwillingness to join another church, and finally, the reason why Nan's son reconnected with them in Chiang Mai.

## Conclusions of Case Studies

As I analyzed these four case studies together, I noticed how the phenomenon of unintentional patronage that I had identified in the previous interviews became more apparent. All four of these cases contain examples of unintentional patronage, how it is generated, and why it occurs. I was able to identify several key factors in how this phenomenon comes about and influences cross-cultural ministry. First, unintentional patronage is especially common among people from outside of a patronage culture because when they enter a culture that operates with a PC cultural dynamic, they are likely not aware or educated on what is happening. Second, this is especially true for

English-speakers, whose individualist, egalitarian cultures could be seen as "opposites" to the communal, hierarchical cultures of the Global South. Finally, this phenomenon is even more prevalent for missionaries because the nature of their work includes giving money to community development, reaching out to the marginalized in society, offering help towards finding "salvation" through religious practice, and other occupations designed to help and lift up locals in their community. As a result, they are extremely likely to be seen as patrons; their altruistic desire to lift up and "provide for" their community is a prime patron candidate in the eyes of the people the missionary is trying to reach.  These three conditions form a perfect storm for Western missionaries working in Thailand because they are from outside of Thai culture and because their Western upbringing predisposes them against patronage culture. However, they are almost immediately identified as potential patrons by the very people that they are trying to reach through their missionary work. Each case study encountered these factors in their various situations and the missionaries experienced unintentional patronage, which contributed to how each situation was resolved. All the missionaries were from Western backgrounds and had not spent any significant time immersed in or learning Thai culture when these events occurred. For example, Mary was identified as a patron due to her financial support of Pricha and did not recognize her patron status because of her ignorance of Thai patronage. Colin's Western background, coupled with his negative bias towards patronage stemming from his cultural education, caused him to misidentify his role as a patron as harmful dependence. Allison's egalitarian background and ignorance of patronage contributed to her misunderstanding of Malee's subliminal patronage communication as a strange form of selfishness. Finally, Matthew's status as an English-

speaker with access to money, as well as his providence towards the people in his church family, indicated to Nan that he was ready and willing to be a patron, which was not the message he intended to communicate. In one way or another, each missionary unintentionally became a patron to the Thais they ministered to, and it happened through everyday ministry situations, not through unique occurrences. A missionary acting as an intermediary between Western money and an indigenous community is not an uncommon practice; missionaries worldwide are engaged in the same sort of activities as the missionaries in these cases. Therefore, I believe that the unintentional patronage experienced by these missionaries with were not isolated incidents; these situations can extrapolate to the majority of Western missionaries' experiences in Thailand, and even any English-speakers working in Thailand, missionary or not, would feel the effects of unintentional patronage.

There appear to be several important elements throughout these stories that I believe impacted the ways unintentional patronage became a factor in each of these situations. Although unintentional patronage itself is not an objectively "bad" phenomenon, it complicates relationships for cross-cultural missionaries and can cause a significant amount of cultural miscommunication. These recurring factors contributed to the unintentional patronage found in these situations. I identify these factors as mission work that is inseparable from patronage caused by Thai loyalty to uncommitted western missionaries, as well as changing ministry locations that causing new relationships.

### Mission Work Means Patronage Work

When a Thai person sees a Western missionary move to Thailand and provide services and gifts to the community, their PC expectations look entirely different from

those seen from the Western missionary's point of view. When viewing patronage dynamics and the significant role these dynamics play in Thai society, coupled with the stereotype of "rich English-speakers" who are now serving the community with access to money, it is easy to see why a Thai person would view them as a likely patron. This cultural expectation would impact almost every relationship and interaction the missionary has with the Thai population. The egalitarian background of many Western missionaries is not only different, but in many cases opposite from the cultural PC roles of Thailand. This invisible language can lead to cultural miscommunications. In Case One, Pricha was just a local builder in the community, but when Western missionaries came to their town, rebuilt an entire neighborhood, and then began searching for someone to be the pastor of their church, he had an opportunity to elevate his social status far beyond what it could have been on his own. The missionaries did not do this as a favor to him; rather by starting a church and wanting to involve the Thai believers, they entered a patronage relationship. Because their ministry involves things like money, employment, leadership, and membership in groups (such as Christians or church members), their ministry will have patronage dynamics involved to some extent, just like with any other ministry working in Thailand. If a missionary were to remove themself from Thai culture to the extent that they avoid patronage dynamics, then they would have to virtually cut themselves off from Thai culture and people to the extent that I believe it would be incapacitating to their ministry. To practice mission work in Thailand, missionaries need to understand patronage because in doing missionary work, they are doing patronage work.

## Profound Loyalty

Thais honor their patronage obligations to English-speakers who are their unintentional patrons even when they are unaware that they are patrons. This "broken" patronage relationship can have repercussions that damage ministries and badly hurt the missionaries involved. As I explained in the definition of *client* in Chapter III and in Cases One and Three, clients in patronage relationships have a cultural obligation to remain loyal to their patron as long as their patron acts in an appropriate fashion. This loyalty is healthy in a patronage relationship between Thais, where both parties are acutely aware of the relationship's expectations, but English speakers likely face a definite risk that a Thai person will become obligated to a patron who will not provide for them in the way that they need or expect. For example, if a missionary pays for a new roof on their neighbor's house, the neighbor is obligated to respond to their kindness. Even when the missionary does not continue providing for their client, the neighbor will continue to remain loyal to their patron, even if the missionary leaves the country. Missionary Seven said, "I can help these people grow in their relationship with Jesus, but they cannot have a relationship with me because they have a foreign patron who comes over . . . once or twice a year and speaks through a translator; their loyalty is to him. These people are starving to death spiritually because they don't have anybody to teach them, but they are financially tied to this person."[12] Unintentional patronage is a problem that extends beyond relationships; it can stunt other ministries working in that community and "starve" the local population if their client is not present. A client's loyalty to an unknowing Western patron can destroy their relationship, badly hurt the church's

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12. Missionary Seven. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 8, 2021.

reputation in that community, and even keep the client from being helped by other ministries.

New Kid in Town

In each of these cases, the missionary who became the unwitting patron was a newcomer to the community, ministry, town, or even Thailand itself. Being new to their community, they formed new relationships and met new people, which increased the likelihood that one of these people would decide to enter into a patronage relationship. Mary had moved mere days after the tsunami to provide aid; Colin was in his first term as a missionary; Allison had been teaching for just a year and five months at the Bible college; and Matthew had just moved to Thailand. Each were newcomers to their community and were creating new relationships. Mary started a relationship with Pricha; Colin started a relationship with the village elder; Allison became a teacher and started an *ajan* power distance dynamic with Malee; and, finally, Matthew started an employer/employee relationship with Nan. Since they were the new English-speakers looking to form new relationships, whatever service or favor they provided to the community (such as building a church, constructing a running water system, providing lodging and support, or offering part-time employment) was very likely be interpreted as offers of patronage, regardless of the missionary's intention. When a missionary moves to a new location, there is a chance that they are moving to Thailand for the first time. These inexperienced missionaries might have previously learned about patronage, but my interview data shows that this is not the case for most missionaries. Only Missionary 5 and Missionary 6 had ever heard of patronage before coming to Thailand, and Missionary 8 had been educated regarding patronage dynamics before arriving in Thailand but was

merely told "how bad patronage was." Thus, seven out of ten missionaries came to Thailand knowing nothing about patronage dynamics, and of the three that knew something, two had merely heard the term used before, and the last was advised to avoid it as an evil practice. When I view the interview data and the case studies together, it is clear to me that missionaries who have deficient education and experience with patronage and move to a new location, either entering Thailand for the first time or moving in-country, are likely to find that first relationships they make are being interpreted as offers of patronage. This interpretation happens partly because the locals do not know the missionaries personally and thus judge the English-speakers' intentions by their own Thai cultural context. Just like with Pricha in Case One, the village in Case Two, and Nan in Case 4, when the Thais see the missionaries' connections to Western money and then the missionaries start channeling that money into the community or ministry (as missionaries do), the Thais interpret this as a clear sign that this missionary would make a good patron.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications of unintentional patronage are significant, starting with minority

world missionaries working in Thailand and extending to any English speakers visiting or

working in Thailand in any capacity. Any person who is in Thailand and forms

relationships with Thais will be influenced by the prevalence and cultural power of PC

dynamics. That English-speakers become unintentional patrons while not understanding

or recognizing patronage encounters when they occur is a manifestation of that influence.

Unintentional patronage can have an especially powerful effect on Western missionaries

themselves, and these have far-reaching implications for how English-speakers practice

evangelism in Thailand.

**Implications**

Relationships

Unintentional patronage can upset relationships between people if both parties do

not understand the cultural obligations inherent in their relationship. After noting the

pervasiveness of patronage in Thai culture, as well as the significant social pressures and

cultural expectations that accompany participation in a patronage relationship, it is not

surprising that if the expectations of a relationship are not met, the ensuing cultural

fallout can be devastating to the patronage relationship as well as the offender's other

relationships. A patron who does not provide for their client is a both a bad patron and a

bad person in the eyes of the community, thus bringing their commitment to other

relationships in question. A patron who does not adequately provide for their client has transgressed a significant cultural norm, and this transgression is seen as something only a morally bad person would do. For a missionary working to be accepted into a community and trying to make a positive impact, this is close to a worst-case scenario. The fallout from broken relationships can be devastating not only to a ministry but to a missionary as well. Missionary Three noted that after a particularly bad situation involving a broken patronage relationship, "I was destroyed because I loved them so much, you know, I was so blindsided by it all. And so hurt and just devastated. Yeah, so that almost took me out . . . that was almost the one-two punch that knocked me out [of ministry]."[1] The heartache and discouragement that a missionary feels after a relationship fracture can be seriously discouraging, and as Missionary Three noted, the fallout of these broken patronage relationships have the potential to lead a missionary to quit their ministry and return to their home country. Considering how devastating these incidents can be, it is not surprising that unintentional patronage has the potential to knock missionaries out of ministry. When the missionary is rejected by their community and is labeled as a "bad person" due to an invisible PC transgression, discouragement that leads to abandoning their ministry would be an unsurprising result.

<div align="center">Ministry</div>

Patronage relationships have major implications for the way a ministry works in Thailand. On one hand, patronage provides an opportunity for culturally appropriate ministry that could be very significant to a Thai Christian, and even possibly be a

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1. Missionary Three. Interviewed by Sam Jones. February 11, 2021.

breakthrough for Thai ministry efforts. On the other hand, however, fracturing ministries through ruined relationships is a distinct possibility. As I explained in Cases Two and Four, "conversion" in a patronage culture can look very different from the way English-speakers understand conversion. An individual's conversion could be a form of reciprocity in a patronage relationship. The involved missionary would misinterpret this conversion the result of their teaching, when faith is not actually the motivation behind the conversion. This creates the possibility that a missionary unintentionally creates a patronage relationship to which their client shows reciprocity by "converting" to Christianity. The missionary then repeats this action because they believe that they are spreading the Gospel. This missionary creates obligations that they can never fulfill, which ultimately can lead to broken or damaged relationships. When the cultural pressure on patrons and clients to maintain healthy relationships intersects with an English-speaker who is an unintentional patron, the ensuing fallout can be devastating to a ministry, both for the parties involved and for the other members of the ministry. A patron's failure to take care of their client is a grievous transgression; everybody in the community will hear about it, and the missionary will be remembered as someone who is not faithful to the people who rely on them. Unintentional patronage has the potential to ruin a missionary's reputation in the community and drive Thais away from their ministry, as well as ruining a friendship, like with Missionary Three. A ministry predicated on lifting a community and bringing a positive message to the Thai people cannot accomplish this goal if the missionaries bringing the good news are seen as morally bad people. The methods of communication in PC dynamics can also be easily misunderstood. An exchange that a Thai sees as a PC relationship is viewed by the

missionary and their Western supporters as an opportunity to give money into a community. When the Thai tries to reciprocate according to their PC obligations, the missionary refuses, thus creating a host of cultural and relational issues. The inverse can also be true; a Thai person may propose a PC relationship to a missionary, but the missionary could misidentify this proposal as a request for a handout or of someone trying to take advantage of their goodwill and will avoid the relationship entirely. They then advertently lose the opportunity for a deeper relationship with this person by trying to avoid a problem that did not actually exist from a PC dynamics perspective. Unintentional patronage misinterpreted as a missionary being a bad patron poses a serious threat to Western ministries in Thailand.

## Missiology

PC dynamics require a re-examination of the ways English-speaking cultures conduct missions in Thailand. The dominant missiological idea behind cross-cultural missions is the idea of the three-self church, in which missionaries starting churches that, as Paul G. Hiebert writes, "gain their independence on the basis of three principles: self-propagation, self-support, and self-governance."[2] Hiebert goes on to say that "the three 'self' principles continue to guide much of contemporary mission planning" at the time of his writing in 1985.[3] Hiebert and David J. Bosch both argue for a fourth self, self-theologizing, marking four ideal categories in which indigenous churches founded by cross-cultural missionaries can become autonomous.[4] The missionary's main goal is to

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2. Hiebert, *Anthropological*, *194*.

3. Hiebert, *Anthropological*, 195.

4. Hiebert, *Anthropological*, 195-226; David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 465-466.

"work themselves out of a job" by encouraging the church to take over these roles, thereby eliminating the need for an English-speaking missionary and freeing the missionary to move on to a new church plant. This concept of the four selves, while being foundational to the English-speaking world's missiological understanding of cross-cultural missions, require re-examination that includes considering unintentional patronage. I believe that the four-self model of church ministry can cause significant cultural miscommunication and is at odds with how an authentically Thai church would want to interact with an English-speaking missionary. While an English-speaking culture's understanding of an "ideal outcome" for an indigenous church might be autonomy through a four-self church, in a Thai PC environment, a church being ushered into independence would be understood by the church being abandoned by their patron. To a Thai Christian, independence is not the positive outcome that English-speaking missiology believes it to be. Thai Christians would likely want to rely on their missionary as their patron, giving the missionary status in the community and authority among the believers in exchange for the resource of theological and liturgical knowledge. If the missionary's main desire is to select Thai believers for leadership and encourage them to use their own money and resources to support the church, this could be interpreted as selfishness or cold-heartedness by the church's patron. This can be seen in Case One, when Pricha continues to run the ministry after Mary's exit and repeatedly remarks to her how they must pay for everything themselves, indicating at their broken PC relationship. It is very likely that if a Thai church recognizes their English-speaking pastor as their patron, they would not want to be self-propagating, self-supporting, self-governing, or self-theologizing; to desire those things would upset the PC dynamics between the church

and pastor. While the four-self church model has found success through the twentieth century, I believe that it is an inadequate model for operating in a Thai PC context. A missionary must be first and foremost focused on a long-term relationships between themselves and their Thai believers in order to foster a positive PC relationship, mutually supporting one another in ways that extend past a strict pastor/laity relationship. Also, missionaries cannot work in Thailand on a short-term basis. When a missionary ministers in Thailand for a short term and then leaves, they are abandoning the PC relationships that they have built, intentionally or unintentionally, during their time there. In order to effectively minister in Thailand, English-speaking missionaries must be committed to long-term or possibly even lifelong ministry in Thailand. I recognize the prevalence of the four-self model of cross-cultural church ministry, but I believe that it is not only ineffective in a Thai PC context, but that it can directly bring about unintentional patronage.

### Recommendations

#### Intentional Patronage

As previously explained, Thai PC dynamics cannot be avoided. Ignoring and abandoning PC dynamics cannot be the antidote for unintentional patronage because these dynamics are so prevalent in Thai culture that they will be present no matter what steps are taken to fight against them. Practicing "non-patronage ministry" is not possible because PC dynamics are embedded into Thai culture and these cultural implications are placed on English-speaking missionaries. Therefore, the question cannot be whether to engage with PC dynamics; the true issue is whether missionaries will be aware and conscious of their participation in PC dynamics. I believe missionaries practicing

intentional patronage is the solution. In order to conduct ministry in a Thai PC context,

missionaries must be prepared to act as a patron to the believers in their churches because

the believers will be viewing and treating them as a patron. If unintentional patronage can

harm relationships, then I believe that intentional patronage can also foster relationships

and help avoid the cultural miscommunication stemming from unintentional patronage.

In order to accomplish this, however, several changes need to happen regarding

missionary training and missiological direction for ministry in Thailand.

Missiology

I recommend training institutions and missionary educators place more emphasis

on PC education in order to more fully understand PC dynamics. Further education on the

subject could make intentional patronage possible. My research demonstrates the

significance of understanding patronage and the extent to which it can impact a ministry.

It is incredibly important for missionaries to be properly educated regarding patronage

dynamics in Thailand so they can act as intentional patrons to their churches.

### Missiological Theory

The missiological theory for ministries working in Thailand needs to be revised in

order to function in harmony with Thai PC dynamics. I have established that the

dominant missiological theory of the four-self church is incompatible with Thai PC

dynamics, as the focus on autonomy runs concurrent to the Thai PC notions of loyalty

and long-term relationships. Therefore, a new missiological theory is needed for

missionaries working in Thailand. This new theory must include deep cultural education

regarding Thai culture and Thai PC dynamics, missionaries intentionally acting as

patrons to their Thai churches. and providing long-term commitment to one location or

church community, to name a few key tenets. The main concept behind this new missiological theory must be that missionaries cannot escape PC dynamics and will be seen as patrons to their communities, so active and intentional participation in the Thai PC system is required in order to effectively conduct ministry in Thailand.

*Pre-Ministry Training*

Several of the missionaries that I interviewed had some form of pre-ministry cultural study, which were described as "missions classes" or "missions training" and which is a critically important practice.[5] My analysis of the data suggests, however, that even with pre-ministry cultural study, the topic of patronage is not addressed to the extent that it should be for English-speakers to operate effectively in Thailand. Even though missionaries are receiving missions training, that training is not addressing PC dynamics in proportion to prevalent PC dynamics in Thailand. Missionary Seven even went so far as to remark that their "training beforehand was deficient," regarding just understanding what PC dynamics are, not to mention understanding to the point of acting as an intentional patron.[6] Missionary training needs to not only educate missionaries on what Thai PC dynamics are, but also to educate missionaries on how to act as an intentional patron. Knowing that PC dynamics exist is not enough; missionaries need to learn how they can act as patrons to the Thai churches in a manner that is loyal to the Gospel. PC dynamics need to be a topic of study and discussion for the pre-ministry cultural study of missionaries going to Thailand.

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5. Missionary One and Missionary Seven. Interviewed by Sam Jones. January 28, 2021, and March 8, 2021, respectively.

6. Missionary Seven. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 8, 2021.

*Experience and Mentoring*

When missionaries arrive in Thailand, the first few years of their ministry can be a critical time for them to either see patronage dynamics firsthand and learn how to thrive within them, or to unintentionally ruin a relationship and have their heart hardened against patronage dynamics. This first experience with patronage should be in a semi-controlled environment with a mentor available to debrief the missionary on their experiences, help them process through what they are thinking, and recommend a change in behavior or encourage them to continue acting as a patron for the church. Being mentored by a missionary who has experience acting as an intentional patron is invaluable to understanding how ministry in Thailand functions. Mentoring experience is an opportunity for missionaries to practice their pre-ministry patronage education and to see how intentional patronage works in practice, rather than just conceptually. Pairing these two forms of patronage education together would contribute significantly towards preparing missionaries to act as intentional patrons in Thailand.

Access to Resources

I recommend that resources be made readily available to missionaries working in Thailand. When asked about patronage education, the missionaries I interviewed repeatedly said variations of the same thing: "There was no way to learn about it." Books covering patronage were in short supply and could not be accessed in Thailand due to a small Christian presence and no online or e-book resources until recent years, which kept missionaries from learning and pursuing further education. Even today, missionaries are looking for ways to learn about PC dynamics, but do not have the support that can help them. Access to more resources such as books and education can help shape the future of

Western missions in Thailand and create a generation of missionaries who are prepared to intentionally act as patrons to Thai believers.

### *Books*

In today's globalized, digital world, e-books and online reading is becoming more and more popular. A number of the resources for this very study were found online or in an e-book. Cited at the end of this study are many books and articles that cover how patronage functions and the implications of English-speakers practicing patronage, but these resources took a significant amount of time to collect and assemble. I highly recommend that these resources be made available, in some form or another, to missionaries working in Thailand so they may improve their ministry practices. Missionary 7, when speaking about other missionaries he had worked with, remarked that "They don't read the stuff that's out there. . . . These books are only being read by very few people, and people are not thinking through these issues. . . . They don't think through what they're doing. They don't understand their role . . . a good percentage of them are not aware. They're not reading the books."[7] An online database or e-book collection could be accessed by anyone with a computer and could be a lifeline of education to many missionaries who both need help and desire to learn more.

### *Formal Education*

Missionary Ten said that she recognized that "something was going on" regarding how Thais treated her, but at that time she did not know what patronage was or that she was participating in it.[8] It was only after she was given the opportunity to take a

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7. Missionary Seven. Interviewed by Sam Jones. March 8, 2021.

8. Missionary Ten. Interviewed by Sam Jones. May 24, 2021.

university course on cultural study that she learned of patronage for the first time, and this was a rare opportunity that few receive. Her access to higher education's wealth of knowledge and resources helped her learn how patronage worked. There are missionaries working in Thailand today who do not understand patronage dynamics and are unintentionally acting as patrons. If they were given access to education in the form of online courses or seminars covering PC dynamics and how to act as an intentional patron, I believe that it would be a significant help to missionaries across Thailand.

## Further Research

Unintentional patronage should be researched in greater detail. I believe there is more to be found, especially through a larger data set. I also believe that more research is needed regarding the words used in PC dynamics and how the use of these words interacts with Western missionaries. Ultimately, I was limited by my lack of experience, but I believe that further research would make remarkable contributions to the field of missiology. For example, it is highly likely that missionaries are participating in "unintentional clientship" as well as unintentional patronage. This study has not explored the implications of an English-speaking missionary unintentionally acting as a client to a knowing patron, and further research on this topic would expound on the conclusions of my study. When looking at how difficult PC dynamics are to engage with as an uneducated English-speaking missionary, as well as how significant the fallout can be from unintentional patronage, one must ask the question of whether English-speaking missionaries should be conducting cross-cultural ministry in Thailand at all. Is an English-speaking missionary acting as an intentional patron an effective ministry? Should all Christian ministry in Thailand be conducted by Thai evangelists or missionaries from

cultures with prevalent PC dynamics? For the sake of the Christian church in Thailand,

these questions should be answered by further research.

CONCLUSION

The significance of PC dynamics cannot be overstated. They are integral to maintaining healthy relationships and effectively communicating across cultures. As important as these dynamics are, they often go unnoticed by Western missionaries working in Thailand. For those cultures in the Global South that exhibit similar PC dynamics to Thai culture, the difference between English-speaking culture and PC dynamics is a significant cultural barrier to overcome, and this results in cultural miscommunication. One example of this miscommunication is the phenomenon of unintentional patronage. These case studies made a few things very clear to me: English-speaking missionaries are very vulnerable to unintentional patronage through a difference in their cultural beliefs, coupled with a lack of education and experience, which often leads them directly into unintentional patronage. I recommend that critical examination of missiological theory in Thailand is needed regarding PC dynamics and that more support and opportunities for education about patronage would go a long way towards reducing the unknown and unintentional patronage that missionaries face in Thailand. Education and training would increase the number of missionaries adopting a PC dynamic friendly model of intentional patronage. The phenomenon of unintentional patronage has been under-studied in Thai missiology studies, and my hope is that this study prompts more studies and books that take the concept of unintentional patronage even further than I have taken it in this thesis. More research would contribute to resources that missionaries can use to educate themselves on PC dynamics, so that unintentional patronage can

be avoided, and intentional patronage can be adopted as the primary missiological theory for cross-cultural ministries in Thailand. This study makes the phenomenon of unintentional patronage clear and establishes it as a legitimate area of research and focus for the missiological community.

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# APPENDIX

## Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

**ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**
*Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World*

**Office of Research and Sponsored Programs**
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

March 1, 2021

Samuel Jones
Department of Theology/Missions
Abilene Christian University

Dear Sam,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled
"The Invisible Language: Western Missionary Attitudes toward Patronage Clientelism in Thailand",

was approved by expedited review (Category 6 & 7 ) on 3/1/2021 (IRB # 21-015 ). Upon completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Request Form within 30 days of study completion.

If you wish to make any changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel, number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall methodology, please complete the Study Amendment Request Form.

If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Unanticipated Events/Noncompliance Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

*Megan Roth*

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

*Our Promise: ACU is a vibrant, innovative, Christ-centered community that engages students in authentic spiritual and intellectual growth, equipping them to make a real difference in the world.*

98