

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THAILAND

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The first Catholic missionaries who came to Siam were probably the chaplains of the Portuguese ships in the 16th century sent to Ayutthaya bringing the officers of Portugal to enter into relations with Siam. There are no documents to confirm this hypothesis.

There is a written history prepared by foreigners stating that in 1544, Antonio de Paiva, a Portuguese, had travelled to Ayutthaya in the time of Phra Jiraja and had been given an audience and conversation about religion with the King. The King was converted and baptized, being given the Portuguese name Dom João.¹ There is no evidence to confirm this claim. The first missionary who mentioned Siam in writings about his missionary task was St. Francis Xavier himself. He mentioned Siam in his four letters written from Sancian, although his real purpose was to go to China.² However, St. Francis Xavier did not go either to China or to Siam because he died on December 3, 1552.

We do not know of any resident missionary in Siam before the year 1567. Having examined the documents, the first two missionaries who came to Siam were Friar Jeronimo da Cruz and Sebastião da Canto, both Dominicans. They arrived at Ayutthaya in 1567.³ They were given a residence befitting to them in one of the best locations in the city. Friar Jeronimo da Cruz together with the two new missionaries were killed by the Burmese in 1569.⁴ Next arrive were Franciscans from 1582 to 1767. Their missionary work in Siam is unknown to us.

The first Jesuit who came to Siam was Father Balthasar Segueira. He arrived at Ayutthaya or Odia during Holy Week of the year 1607, which means between the 16 and 26 of March 1607.⁵ The Jesuits had their own residence, school, College and church. Their missionary works were recorded by the missionaries.

All the missionaries mentioned above were sent to Siam under the Padroado system. The setting up of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide on January 6, 1622 was certainly an event of major importance in the history of the Church and especially in the history of the mission. Propaganda Fide sent

¹Documenta Indica I, p.138; Documenta Indica II, p.421; B. TAMTAI, **Portuguese, the First Farang contacting with Thai: 470 years of Friendship between Siam and Portugal** (in Thai), in **Silapa Watanatham** (Art and Culture monthly magazine), Vol V, 9 (July 1984) 88.

²P.F. ZUBILLAGA, S.J., **Cartas Y Escritos de San Francisco Javier**, Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos (B.A.C.), 1953, pp.534-546.

³Ct. Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica, Tomo X Acta Capitulum Generalium, Vol V, Romae, 1901, pp.149-153; A. Walz, O.P., **Compendium Historiae Ordinis Praedicatorum**, Romae, 1948², p.497

⁴A. Da Silva, **Documentacao para a Historia das Missoes do Padroado Portugues do Oriente**, Lisboa 1952, pp.460-461.

⁵Cf. J. BURNAY, S.J., **Notes Chronologiques sur les Missions Jesuites du Siam au XVII Siècle**, in **Archivum Historicum Societatis Jesu**, XXII (1953) 171.

three Apostolic Vicars, Msgr. François Pallu, Msgr. Pierre Lambert de la Motte and Msgr. Ignatius Cotelendi, to carry on missionary work in China and Indochina. However, they could not avoid the conflicts resulting from the Portuguese patronage in these regions.

On August 22, 1662, Msgr. Lambert de la Motte, M. Jean De Bourges, M. Dedier arrived in Ayutthaya. They were the first missionaries of the newly established Missions Etrangères de Paris (M.E.P.). On January 27, 1664 the other Apostolic Vicar, François Pallu and M. Laneau, M. Haingues, M. Brindeau and a lay assistant De Chameson-Foissy arrived in Siam. Msgr. Lambert and Msgr. Pallu had the same opinion that Siam with its policy of religious tolerance was the most convenient base for their persecuted Missions of Cochinchina, Tonkin and China. They asked Rome for jurisdiction over Siam. It was very difficult for the missionaries of Padroado to accept the rights to superiority of these Apostolic Vicars. Conflict and controversy between the Padroado and Apostolic Vicars were inevitable. After long consideration of the request of the Apostolic Vicars, Rome approved in 1669 by the Bull **Speculatores** On September 13, 1674 M. Laneau was nominated the Apostolic Vicar of Siam and was consecrated by Msgr. Lambert and Msgr. Pallu.⁶

When the French missionaries arrived in Ayutthaya in 1662, they were welcomed by ten Portuguese priests and one Spanish priest whom they found serving a Christian community estimated at 2,000 souls.⁷

With the arrival of Msgr. Pallu, two bishops, five priests and one lay assistant organized an assembly, the so-called the Synod of 1664 in Ayutthaya. The sessions can be summarized as follows:

⁶A. LAUNAY, **Documents Historiques**, Paris, 1920, pp.38-42. The mission which has been cultivated for 300 years without interruption celebrated its third centenary in 1969. Cf. **I 300 Anni della Chiesa Catholica in Thailandia**, in L'Osservatore Romano, 5 Luglio 1969.

⁷A. LAUNAY, **Histoire de La Mission de Siam**, Paris, 1920, p.3

1. They planned to institute an apostolic congregation composed of three orders and this congregation would be named the Congregation of Amantes de la Croix de Jesus Christ.
2. They decided to publish the instructions to the Apostolic Vicars given by Propaganda Fide. They also issued "Instructions to the Missionaries".
3. They agreed to the erection of a seminary.⁸

Undoubtedly, the growth of the Mission of Siam was evident during the long and prosperous period of King Narai the Great (1657-1688) who opened the country to foreigners and gave liberty to the missionaries to preach the Gospel. King Narai desired to base his reliance on France and to withdraw from the influence of the Dutch powers. At the same time the French influence in this part of the world strengthened the role of the missionaries and the progress of evangelization.

By 1665, Msgr. Lambert had made the program of the Synod come true when he founded the "College General" in Ayutthaya.⁹

In 1669, the first hospital was founded by Msgr. Lambert and was supervised by Msgr. Laneau. Besides Ayutthaya, the missionaries preached the Gospel in other places such as Phitsanulok, Lopburi, Samkhok and Bangkok. In the year 1674, there were about 600 Siamese Catholics. It was in this year that the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Samsen district of Bangkok was built. The Christians of other nationalities such as Portuguese, Annamite, Japanese were more numerous. In fact, the missionaries had been working from this period until the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, but the fruit of their evangelization was indeed very small.

King Narai's attitude towards Christianity made M. Constantine Phalkon, Fr. Guy Tachard, a Jesuit priest and even King Louis XIV misunderstand that there was hope of converting both the King and the whole country to Christianity. This led the missionary activities to disaster when the famous revolution of 1688 occurred.¹⁰ With an anti-French attitude, Phra Phetraja, the new King, persecuted all the Christians. The situation of the Mission became better in 1691 when the King gave the seminary back to Msgr. Laneau. Another persecution occurred during the reign of King Taisra (1709-1733). The missionaries were forbidden to leave the capital. They were forbidden to use the Thai and Pali language in their teaching of religion. Moreover, the end of 1743

and the beginning of 1744 saw further persecution continuing. Besides these difficulties, Christianity was affected by the invasion of Burma and the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767.

With the advent of the present dynasty in 1782, the situation of the Mission improved gradually. The situation of the Catholic Mission at the end of the 18th century was not so favorable, since an expulsion of the missionaries took place by the order of King Taksin (1768-1782). King Rama I (1782-1809) sent for the missionaries because he wished to begin negotiations for an alliance with foreign countries and to promote trade with these countries as had been done before. In 1785, there were 413 Siamese Catholic of Portuguese origin at the Santa Cruz Church in Thonburi, 379 Cambodian Catholics at the Immaculate Conception Church in Samsen district as well as 580 Annamite Catholics. M. A. Launay described the general situation of the Mission of Siam in the beginning of the 19th century stating that in 1802 the total number of Christians of the Vicariate was estimated to be about 2,500 and in 1811

⁸See also J. GUENNOU, **Missions Etrangeres de Paris**, Paris, 1986, pp.122-126.

⁹The college continued to exist until the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. It was founded again at Hondat in Cambodia, then at Virampatnam in India until 1808, and then at Penang in 1809.

¹⁰E.W. HUTCHINSON, **1688 Revolution in Siam: The Memoir of Father de Beze, S.J.**, Hong Kong, 1968, pp. 29-35.

about 3,000.¹¹

It may be noted that during the time of Msgr. Garnault (1786-1811), the restoration of the Mission was begun. In 1827, the decree of the Pope Leo XII gave the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Singapore to the Apostolic Vicar of Siam. Propaganda Fide confirmed this jurisdiction over Singapore to the Apostolic Vicar of Siam on May 12, 1834.¹² In 1835, about 1,500 Annamite Christians, fleeing from persecution, settled in Samsen and asked asylum from Bangkok. This was the origin of the St. Francis Xavier Church in Samsen.

Because of the increasing number of Catholics and missionaries, Msgr. Courvezy (1834-1841) asked Rome to nominate a Coadjutor Bishop and in 1838 M. Pallegoix was nominated and consecrated Bishop on July 3, 1838. By the Brief **Universi Dominici** of September 10, 1841, Rome separated the ecclesiastical region of Malaysia from the Mission of Siam, establishing the Mission of Oriental Siam comprising the Kingdom of Siam and Laos, and the Mission of Occidental Siam which consisted of the Malayan Peninsula, the island of Sumatra and southern Burma. Msgr. Pallegoix was the Apostolic Vicar of Oriental Siam and Msgr. Courvezy, Apostolic Vicar of Occidental Siam.¹³

¹¹A. LAUNAY, **Histoire de la Mission de Siam**, p. 180.

¹²ASCPF, Acta SCPF de Anno 1834, Vol. 197, pp. 96-106.

¹³Cf. Jus. Pon. de PF, V, p. 282 cited by A. LAUNAY, **Memorial de la Societe des Missions Etrangères**, Deuxième Partie 1658-1913, Paris, 1916, p. 159.

A very famous and outstanding person during the 19th century in the Mission of Siam was Msgr. Pallegoix (1841-1862), whose fame spread far beyond the borders of Siam. He had a brilliant mind and deep knowledge of science, mathematics and languages. He acquired a very deep knowledge of Siamese and Pali languages. He was the author of the well-known Thai-Latin-French-English dictionary, the first such fundamental work for the Thai language. While he was at the Immaculate Conception Church, he learned Pali from Prince Mongkut who had entered the monkhood at Wat Rajathivas near his church. Prince Mongkut, in turn, took Latin lessons from him.

The annual report of 1867 of Msgr. Dupond (1865-1872) gives us the general view of the situation of the Mission as follows: the number of the Christians was 8,000, baptism of the Siamese 667, baptism of the children 257.¹⁴ Since Msgr. Dupond was full of zeal and could speak Siamese as well as two Chinese dialects, he gave great exposure to the Mission among the Chinese and the Siamese. He built eight new churches for these new Christian communities and the older places were also quickly developed. When he died on December 15, 1872, he left the Mission of Siam composed of 10,000 Christians, 20 European missionaries and 8 native priests.¹⁵

During the period of Msgr. Jean-Louis Vey (1875-1909), a period of expansion began seriously. The masterpiece of his works was the evangelization carried out in Laos where he had initiated the spreading of the Good News by sending P. Prodhomme and P. Xavier Gu—go to begin the new Mission on January 2, 1881.¹⁶ Finally Pope Leo XIII erected the Apostolic Vicariate of Laos on May 4, 1899 and P. Cuaz was nominated Apostolic Vicar of Laos on May 24, 1899.¹⁷ Under the direction of Msgr. Vey, who had governed the Mission for 34 years, the Mission of Siam progressed greatly in various ways. In 1909, the last year of Msgr. Vey's episcopacy, the Mission of Siam included 23,600 Christians, 57 churches and chapels with 79 Christian communities, 59 seminarians, 44 missionaries, 21 native priests, 17 religious men, 123 religious women, 21 catechists, 3 colleges with 861 pupils, 62 schools with 2,692 pupils and one hospital.¹⁸

¹⁴ Archives des Missions Etrangères de Paris, Siam, Vol. 894, 1867, p. 369.

¹⁵ Ibid., Siam, Vol. 894, 1872, p. 622.

¹⁶ Archives of the Archdiocese of Bangkok, Vey, Records, Vol. II, No. 057.

¹⁷ Bulls of erection, AME, Siam, Vol. 896, 1899, p. 157; AAB, Vey, Letters from Abroad, No. 105.

¹⁸ AME, Siam, Vol. 894, p. 702; AME, Siam, Vol. 896, p. 257.

The Mission had envisioned the needs of modern times and cooperation in the country-reformation initiated by King Rama IV and King Rama V, A printing press had been set up quite early. In 1885 P. Colombet founded the first modern Catholic school in Bangkok-Assumption College. It was placed under the care of the Brothers of St. Gabriel when they arrived in 1901 following Msgr. Vey's invitation. The Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres came to Siam even before the Brothers of St. Gabriel, that is, in 1898 to take care of and direct St. Louis Hospital which Msgr. Vey had just founded and also to take responsibility for formation of the native religious women which had been revived at Samsen, the so-called Amantes de la Croix community.

From time to time, Msgr. Vey always mentioned the project of evangelization in the Northwest of Siam, close to Burma, since the central West already possessed several stations. However, the circumstances, the necessary resources, the required personal for this enterprises had never been at his disposal to undertake the evangelization. During the time of Msgr. Perros (1909-1947), his successor, the spread of the Catholic Mission prospered more than previously. Missionaries were sent to fulfill his projects in the Northwest in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Lampang. And in the North. They advanced also to Nakorn Ratchasima. As a result, it can be said that the Catholic religion had spread to all parts of Siam. During the 20th century, the Mission of Siam followed the slow but uninterrupted progress of the other Missions. The Southwest part of the country became an independent Mission in 1930. This was the Apostolic Vicariate of Ratchaburi under the care of the Salesian priests. It became an Apostolic Prefecture in May 28, 1934 (AAB, Perros, annual report, 1940). Then it was erected an Apostolic Vicariate on April 3, 1941 (AAB, Documents of Diocese, Ratchaburi Diocese). Ratchaburi was finally erected a Diocese on December 18, 1965. The Chanthabun Apostolic Vicariate was established on October 18, 1944 (AAB, Documents of Diocese, Chanthaburi Diocese) and was also erected a Diocese on December 18, 1965. The Apostolic Prefecture of Chiang Mai was established in 1960 and was also erected a Diocese on December 18, 1965.

During the 20th century, many other religious congregations, both men and women, came to work in Siam, now known as "THAILAND", the land of the free people. They include among others, Ursulines of the Roman Union, Carmelites, Salesians, Sisters of Mary Help of the Christians, Capucin Sisters, Redemptorists, Camillian Fathers, Fathers of Betharam, De La Salle Brothers, Stigmatines, Jesuits, Sisters of Holy Infant Jesus, S.A.M. Fathers, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, without counting the various Thai congregations of Sisters in the diocese.

Since the Catholic Church in Thailand had increased through the zealous labor of Bishops and Missionaries, and indications had shown greater growth in the future, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda fide judged that the time was ripe to establish the Sacred Hierarchy in Thailand. Strong support was also given by two former Apostolic Delegates to Thailand; namely, from the Right Reverend Msgr. John Gordon and Right Reverend Msgr. Angelo Pedroni. Therefore, on December 18, 1965 two ecclesiastical Provinces of Bangkok and Thare Nongseng were created, giving to Thailand its first Archbishops for the country.

The Ecclesiastical Province of Bangkok is made up of:

- **The Metropolitan Church of Bangkok**

(formerly an Apostolic Vicariate) with its Cathedral dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

- Suffragan dioceses:

Ratchaburi, created on December 18, 1965. Previously it was erected an Apostolic Vicariate on April 3, 1941.¹⁹ Its Cathedral is at Bang Nokkuek, consecrated to the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

¹⁹AAB, Documents of Dioceses, Annual Report of Ratchaburi Diocese.

Chanthaburi, created on December 18, 1965; previously erected an Apostolic Vicariate on October 18, 1944 and assigned to native clergy.²⁰ Its Cathedral is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Chiang Mai, created on December 18, 1965; previously established as an Apostolic Prefecture in 1960 . Its Cathedral is dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

The Ecclesiastical Province of Thare-Nongseng includes:

- **Archdiocese of Thare-nongseng**

which was created by the Bull "**Qui in fastigio** " of December 18, 1965; was erected as an apostolic Vicariate on December 21, 1950.²¹ The cathedral is consecrated to St. Michael the Archangel.

- suffragan dioceses:

Ubon Ratchathani, created on December 22, 1965 by the decision of The Holy See. It had been erected Apostolic Vicariate on May 7, 1953.²² The Cathedral is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Nakhon Ratchasima, created on December 18, 1965. Formerly erected an Apostolic Vicariate on March 22, 1965.²³ Its Cathedral is dedicated to the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Lourdes.

²⁰ AAB, Documents of Dioceses, Annual Report of Chanthaburi Diocese.

²¹ AAB, Documents of Dioceses, Annual Report of Thare-Nongseng Archdiocese.

²² AAB, Documents of Dioceses, Annual Report of Ubon Ratchathani Diocese.

²³ AAB, Documents of Dioceses, Annual Report of Nakhon Ratchasima Diocese.

Udon Thani, created on december 18, 1965; previously erected an Apostolic Prefecture on May 7, 1953.²⁴ The Cathedral is dedicated to Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

- Later two other dioceses were erected:

Nakhon Sawan was erected and became the suffragan diocese of Bangkok Metropolitan on February 25, 1967.²⁵ Its Cathedral is dedicated to St. Anna.

Surat Thani was created on June 26, 1969 by the Bull "**Qui Regno Christi**" and was assigned to the Salesian priests.²⁶ Its Cathedral is dedicated to St. Raphael. The Diocese also became a suffragan diocese of Bangkok.

In 1973, Archbishop Joseph Khiamsun Nittayo of Bangkok resigned for reasons of health and old age. His successor was Archbishop Michael Michai Kitbunchu, who later, on February 2, 1983, was nominated by His Holiness Pope John Paul the Second to become a Cardinal, the first Cardinal of Thailand.

At that time, there was a great amount of political and social changes, especially in the capital city of Bangkok. In consequences, the Church felt an increase in its responsibilities and a need for expansion of its numerous and varied activities, especially in the fields of welfare and social developments. The Church also took on the responsibility of the refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Burma. The Church in Thailand assisted the government in helping these refugees by establishing the organization of COERR (Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees) in 1975. These many efforts were aimed to protect the moral values of life and to face the urgent problems created by the influx of refugees from Indochina.

In 1984 on the 10th and 11th of May, His Holiness Pope John Paul the Second came for a short visit to Thailand. This gave to all the faithful a wonderful opportunity to welcome him and to see and closely feel his solicitude and his presence.

In the remote village areas, Thailand is faces great poverty, lack of education and lack of public health facilities, with the consequence of an increase in the problems of a migrating work population, This goes hand-in-hand with a rise in prostitution. Furthermore, the rapid spread of materialistic progress and modern technology have not given much chance for the population to adapt itself properly to these new changes. Hence, the population is often unable to make reasonable choices. Everyone wants everything as soon as possible.

Thai – Vatican Relations

Formal relations between Siam and Vatican go back to 1669 with the sending of the first papal brief to King Narai. These relations are absolutely significant to the Church History in Thailand (Siam) since they play a very important role in the Church History as a whole. Archbishop Luigi Bressan, the Archbishop of Trento, the former Apostolic Nuncio to Thailand together with Professor Michael Smithis issued two successive volumes about Thai – Vatican Relations, namely : Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century published in 2001 and Thai – Vatican Relations in the Twentieth Century published in 2006 to celebrate the auspicious occasion of the 60th Anniversary of His Majesty's Coronation (9-06-1946 – 9-06-2006). These two books are, without doubt, valuable and worthy to be of interest to all. Chronology of the Thai – Vatican Relations will be presented here.

Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century.

²⁴AAB, Documents of Dioceses, Annual Report of Udon Thani Diocese.

²⁵AAB, Documents of Dioceses, First Annual Report of Nakhon Sawan Diocese.

²⁶AAB, Documents of Dioceses, Annual Report of Surat Thani Diocese.

1656	27 Oct	Accession of King Narai.
1658	Summer	Creation of bishoprics in partibus of Heliopolis (Mgr. Pallu), Berythus (Mgr. Lambert de La Motte), and Metellopolis (Mgr. Cotelendi).
1659		Creation of the Société des Missions Etrangères in Paris.
1660	27 Nov	Mgr. Lambert leaves for Siam.
1662	2 Jan	Mgr. Pallu, Mgr. Cotelendi, and Louis Laneau leave France for Siam.
	16 Aug	Death of Mgr. Cotelendi at Palacol.
	22 Aug	Mgr. Lambert and his companions arrive in Ayutthaya.
1663	14 Oct	Jacques de Bourges returns to Europe.
1664	27 Jan	Mgr. Pallu and his companions arrive in Ayutthaya.
1665	17 Jan	Mgr. Pallu leaves Siam for Europe.
1666	Jan	Publication of Relation du voyage de Mgr. de Bérythe ... by Jacques de Bourges.
1667	20 June	Election of Pope Clement IX.
1669	Feb	Arrival of Jacques de Bourges and other missionaries in Siam.
	4 July	Clement IX extends the authority of the apostolic vicars to Siam.
	24 Aug	First papal letter to Narai signed by Clement IX. Pope Clement IX, informed by travellers and French missionaries on the good dispositions of King of Siam towards the Christians, wrote a letter to its King Narai the Great, which was officially presented on October 18, 1673. The King expressed his appreciation orally to the two French Bishops L. de la Motte and Pallu present at the Audience.
	17 Sep	Mgr. Pallu leaves Rome for France and Siam.
1670	31 Jan	Louis XIV signs a letter for Mgr. Pallu to take to King Narai.
1673	27 May	Pallu returns to Siam.
	Sep	Louis Laneau elected Bishop of Metellopolis and apostolic vicar in Siam.
	18 Oct	King Narai receives in solemn audience the letters of Clement IX and Louis XIV brought by Mgr. Pallu.
	Nov	The three bishops are invited to Lopburi.
1674	25 Mar	Mgr. Louis Laneau consecrated Bishop of Metellopolis in Ayutthaya.
	20 Aug	Mgr. Pallu leaves Siam for Tonkin.
1675	1 June	Mgr. Pallu, driven by a storm and arrested in Manila, leaves the Philippines for Madrid.
1676	21 Sep	Election of Pope Innocent XI.
1677	11 Mar	Mgr. Pallu exonerated by the Council of the Indies in Madrid.
	5 June	Mgr. Pallu arrives in Rome for a stay of three years.
1678	1 Sep	King Narai orders his mandarins to select ambassadors for Rome and France.
	Sep?	Arrival in Siam of Constantine Phaulkon.
1679	15 Jun	Death in Ayutthaya of Mgr. Lambert de La Motte.
	4 Oct	Second papal letter to King Narai signed by Innocent XI.

- 1680 s.d. King Narai answered, but his letter never reached Rome, as the vessel carrying the delegation for Europe was wrecked near the Cape of Good Hope on its way to France. The text has been preserved.
- 24 Dec The Vautour leaves Siam for Bantam with the embassy to Rome and Paris.
- 1681 end Aug The Siamese embassy leaves Bantam on the Soleil d'Orient.
Dec? Shipwreck of the Soleil d'Orient with the loss of all on board.
- 1682 2 May Phaulkon abjures Anglicanism in the Jesuit church in Ayutthaya, and soon after marries.
4 July Mgr. Pallu arrives in Ayutthaya with presents from the pope and Louis XIV.
- 1683 end June Mgr. Pallu leaves Siam for China.
July Kosathibodi, phra khlang, dies after having been removed from office by the revelations of Phaulkon, then in his service, who replaces him in all but name.
mid Sep Mgr. Laneau informs King Narai of the probable loss of his embassy.
Nov Narai decides to send two envoys to France.
- 1684 25 Jan The two envoys leaves Siam escorted by Bénigne Vachet and Antoine Pascot.
mid Oct The envoys arrive in Paris.
29 Oct Death of Mgr. Pallu in China.
20 Nov Vachet received by Louis XIV in private audience.
- 1685 3 Mar The first French embassy to Siam, led by Chaumont, leaves Brest, with Tachard on board.
18 Oct Solemn audience of Chaumont in Ayutthaya.
- 1686 18 June Arrival in France of Chaumont and the Siamese embassy led by Kosa Pan.
- 1687 15 Feb Third papal letter to King Narai. Pope Innocent XI sent his second letter to King Narai.
26 Sep Arrival in Siam of the second French embassy, led by La Loubère and Céberet, with Tachard.
25 Dec King Narai grants a farewell audience to Tachard, his personal envoy to the pope and Louis XIV.
- 1688 s.d. King Narai sent a Delegation to Rome with a letter (on gold 12×67 cm.), which was presented to the Pope on 23rd December 1688 by a special delegation. This delegation was received by the Pope again on January 5, 1689.
- 18 May The Lopburi coup d'état carried out by Petracha; Phaulkon arrested, King Narai stripped of his power.
5 June Execution of Phaulkon.
10/11 July Death of King Narai.
1 Aug Petracha crowned king in Ayutthaya.

- 23 Dec In Rome, Innocent XI grants audience to Tachard and his attendant mandarins; letters and gifts from King Narai and Phaulkon presented.
- 1689 5 Jan Farewell audience of Tachard and mandarins in Rome and their departure for Paris; the pope gives Tachard letters and presents for King Narai and Paulkon (both dead).
- 7 Jan Pope Innocent XI sent a letter of appreciation to King Narai (who in the meantime was already dead). The letter was entrusted to his successor on 29th January 1699.
- 12 Aug Death of Innocent XI.
- 1690 2 Mar Tachard and the three mandarins leave Brest for Siam.
- Dec The two surviving mandarins leave Balassor for Mergui.
- 1691 Apr Mgr. Laneau and his missionaries released from prison after incarceration since mid – 1688.
- 1694 Oct Tachard returns to France via Pondichéry, Batavia, and Holland.
- 1695 Mar Tachard leaves France for the Indies once more.
- 1699 29 Jan Petracha receives Tachard in audience in Ayutthaya.
- 1712 21 Oct Death of Tachard in Chandernagor.
- 1852 15 May King Mongkut (Rama IV) wrote a letter in English to Pope Pius IX, to establish and improve his relations with the Holy See.
- 20 Dec Pope Pius IX answered with a letter, with appreciation and best wishes for the King.
- 1861 21 Mar King Mongkut sent a second longer letter to the Pope, in Thai and English, through a delegation composed by Phaia–Siphiphot, Chaoman–Vai–Voranath and Phra–Narong–Viait, which was received by the Pope at the beginning of October.
- 1861 17 Oct Pope Pius IX promptly thanked the King for his kindness in assuring religious freedom and sending the delegation. The Pope sent back some engravings to thank the King for his gifts.
- 1884 5 July Prince Phra Ong Chao Prisdang, Ambassador of the King of Siam, has a special Audience by the Pope Leo XIII.
- 1897 5 June King Rama V was received in audience by Pope Leo XIII and visited the Vatican on this occasion. With the King were Their Royal Highnesses Princes Svasti Sobhon, Sommatiwongse and Chirapravati Voradej. On the occasion also an exchange of gifts took place. The picture of Leo XIII with his signature given by the Pope on that occasion is in the “Blue Apartment” of the Vimanmek Mansion Museum (Bangkok).

- 1903 20 July Death of Pope Leo XIII Pecci, who in 1897 had received in audience King Chulalongkorn.
4 Aug Election of Pope Pius X Sarto.
9 Oct The King Paramindr Maha Chulalongkorn felicitated the Pope and expressed appreciation for the friendship extended to him.
This tradition was followed also on the occasion of the election of other Popes.
- 1910 23 Oct Death of King Chulalongkorn.
Accession of King Vajiravudh.
11 Nov King Vajiravudh informed the Pope of the death of his Father and his own accession to the throne.
- 1911 10 June Pope Pius X sent his sincere condolences on the death of King Chulalongkorn and best wishes for the new king.
- 1914 20 Aug Death of Pope Pius X; King Vajiravudh informed
3 Sep Election of Pope Benedict XV della Chiesa, who sent a letter to King Vajiravudh informing him of his election.
- 1915 17 Jan Presentation to Pope Benedict XV of HM King Vajiravudh's letter of congratulation on his election.
- 1922 22 Jan Death of Pope Benedict XV.
6 Feb Election of Pope Pius XI Ratti, who wrote to King Vajiravudh informing him of his election.
21 Apr King Vajiravudh wrote to the Supreme Pontiff, thanking him for his blessing and assuring him that he would "cherish the friendly relations" established by the Pope.
October HRH Prince Mahidol visited the Vatican unofficially.
- 1925 26 Nov Death of King Vajiravudh.
Accession of King Prajadhipok.
- 1930 29 Aug Visit and audience of HRH Prince Damrong in Rome.
- 1934 21 Mar King Rama VII visited Rome and was received in private audience by Pope Pius XI. He was accompanied by H.M. the Queen Rambai and HRH Prince Devawongs. Two days before the King had visited the Catacombs.
On 1st April of the same year the King was again present in the Basilica of St. Peter (Vatican) for the canonization of St. John Bosco, Founder of the Salesians.
2 Apr Their Majesties left Rome for Turin.
- 1935 2 Mar Abdication of King Prajadhipok from England HRH Prince Ananda Mahidol invited by the National Assembly to ascend the throne.
- 1939 10 Feb Death of Pope Pius XI.
2 Mar Election of Pope Pius XII Pacelli.

	12 Mar	Pope Pius XII sent a personal letter to King Ananda Mahidol to inform him of his election.
1946	9 June	Death of King Ananda Mahidol. Accession of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Whom God Preserve.
1955	1 June	Marshal Phibul Songkram, Prime Minister, received in audience by Pope Pius XII.
1957	24 Aug	Papal Bull separating Thailand from the Apostolic Delegation of Indo – China.
	27 Nov	Papal Bull establishing the Apostolic Delegation for Thailand and the Malay Peninsula in Bangkok.
1958	9 Oct	Death of Pope Pius XII.
	28 Oct	Election of Pope John XXIII Roncalli.
1960	1 Oct	State visit and audience of HM King Bhumibol and HM Queen Sirikit to the Vatican.
1963	3 June	Death of Pope John XXIII.
	21 June	Election of Pope Paul VI Montini.
1969	25 Apr	Papal Bull establishing the Apostolic Nunciature in Bangkok.
	28 Apr	Exchange of Notes between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Holy See to establish Diplomatic Relations.
1971	5 June	Pope Paul VI received in private audience Phra Thep Sophon, the vice-abbot of Wat Pho, Bangkok, and members of the “Buddhis Delegation of Messengers of Peace”
	30 Oct	Pope Paul VI received HE Dr. Thanat Khoman, Minister of Foreign Affairs.
1972	5 June	Pope Paul VI received in special audience a delegation of Thai Buddhist monks, headed by Ven. Phra Vanarat, on an official visit to the Vatican, accompanied by Bishop Carretto of Surat Thani.
1978	6 Aug	Death of Pope Paul VI.
	26 Aug	Election of Pope John Paul I Luciani.
	28 Sep	Death of Pope John Paul I.
	16 Oct	Election of Pope John Paul II Wojtyla.
1983	2 Feb	Elevation to the College of Cardinals of Archbishop Michael Michai Kitbunchu.
1984	10-11 May	State Visit of Pope John Paul II to the Kingdom of Thailand and to Their Majesties the King and Queen.
1985	14 Sep	Private audience of HRH the Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn with Pope John Paul II
1988	14 Apr	Private audience of HRH the Crown Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn with Pope John Paul II

2005	2 Apr	Death of Pope John Paul II.
	19 Apr	Election of Pope Benedict XVI Ratzinger.

Metropolitan of Bangkok Archdiocese of Bangkok

Past and Present Ordinaries

- [Louis Laneau](#), M.E.P. † (4 Jul [1669](#) Appointed - 16 Mar [1696](#) Died)
- [Louis Champion de Cicé](#) † (19 Jan [1700](#) Appointed - 1 Apr [1727](#) Died)
- [Jean-Jacques Tessier de Quéralay](#) † (1 Apr [1727](#) Succeeded - 27 Sep [1736](#) Died)
- [Jean de Lolière-Puycontat](#), M.E.P. † (28 Aug [1738](#) Appointed - 8 Dec [1755](#) Died)
- [Pierre Brigot](#), M.E.P. † (8 Dec [1755](#) Succeeded - 30 Sep [1776](#) Appointed, Vicar Apostolic of [Verapoly](#))
- [Olivier-Simon Le Bon](#), M.E.P. † (30 Sep [1776](#) Succeeded - 27 Oct [1780](#) Died)
- [Arnaud-Antoine Garnault](#), M.E.P. † (10 Mar [1786](#) Appointed - 4 Mar [1811](#) Died)
- [Esprit-Marie-Joseph Florens](#), M.E.P. † (4 Mar [1811](#) Succeeded - 30 Mar [1834](#) Died)
- [Jean-Paul-Hilaire-Michel Courvezy](#), M.E.P. † (30 Mar [1834](#) Succeeded - 10 Sep [1841](#) Appointed, Vicar Apostolic of [Malacca-Singapore](#))
- [Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix](#), M.E.P. † (10 Sep [1841](#) Appointed - 18 Jun [1862](#) Died)
- [Ferdinand-Aimé-Augustin-Joseph Dupond](#), M.E.P. † (9 Sep [1864](#) Appointed - 11 Dec [1872](#) Died)
- [Jean-Louis Vey](#), M.E.P. † (30 Jul [1875](#) Appointed - 21 Feb [1909](#) Died)
- [René-Marie-Joseph Perros](#), M.E.P. † (17 Sep [1909](#) Appointed - 12 Jul [1947](#) Retired)
- [Louis-August Chorin](#), M.E.P. † (10 Jul [1947](#) Appointed - 29 Apr [1965](#) Died)
- [Joseph Khiamsun Nittayo](#) † (29 Apr [1965](#) Succeeded - 18 Dec [1972](#) Resigned)
- [Michael Michai Kitbunchu](#) ([18 Dec 1972](#) Appointed -)

Historical Summary

Date	Event	From	To
Vicariate Apostolic of Siam			
1662	Erected		Vicariate Apostolic of Siam (erected)
Vicariate Apostolic of Eastern Siam (Siam Orientale)			
10 September 1841	Name Changed	Vicariate Apostolic of Siam	Vicariate Apostolic of Eastern Siam (Siam Orientale)
4 May 1899	Territory Lost	Vicariate Apostolic of Eastern Siam (Siam Orientale)	Vicariate Apostolic of Laos (erected)
Vicariate Apostolic of Bangkok			
3 December 1924	Name Changed	Vicariate Apostolic of Eastern Siam (Siam Orientale) Vicariate Apostolic of Thibet	Vicariate Apostolic of Bangkok
30 June 1930	Territory Lost	Vicariate Apostolic of Bangkok	Mission "Sui Iuris" of Rajaburi (erected)
11 May 1944	Territory Lost	Vicariate Apostolic of Bangkok	Vicariate Apostolic of Chantaburi (erected)
17 November 1959	Territory Lost	Vicariate Apostolic of Bangkok	Prefecture Apostolic of Chieng-Mai (erected)
Archdiocese of Bangkok			
18 December 1965	Elevated	Vicariate Apostolic of Bangkok	Archdiocese of Bangkok
9 February 1967	Territory Lost	Archdiocese of Bangkok	Diocese of Nakhorn-Sawan (erected)

Statistics

Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests	Total Priests	Catholics Per Priest	Permanent Deacons	Male Religious	Female Religious	Parishes	Source
Vicariate Apostolic of Bangkok												
1949	28,783	9,000,000	.3%	55		55	523		42	198		ap1951
Archdiocese of Bangkok												
1969	45,550	6,656,577	.7%	52	29	81	562		84	439	29	ap1971
1980	60,000	7,816,000	.8%	46	75	121	495		176	463	39	ap1981
1990	66,963	11,387,000	.6%	87	77	164	408		195	445	45	ap1991
1999	78,825	12,001,721	.7%	102	81	183	430		212	541	47	ap2000
2000	76,391	13,065,565	.6%	113	81	194	393		230	500	49	ap2001
2001	79,015	12,000,000	.7%	119	88	207	381		234	520	51	ap2002
2002	81,646	12,398,000	.7%	121	87	208	392		220	516	51	ap2003
2003	84,160	12,241,377	.7%	120	86	206	408		217	470	51	ap2004
2004	86,493	12,471,646	.7%	123	86	209	413		222	504	51	ap2005
2006	111,514	12,759,000	.9%	128	84	212	526		252	489	51	ap2007

Note: Any changes in boundaries over time are not indicated in the above table.

Past and Present Ordinaries

- [Giacomo Luigi Cheng](#) † (11 May [1944](#) Appointed - 14 Apr [1952](#) Died)
- [Francis Xavier Sanguon Souvannasri](#) † (8 Jan [1953](#) Appointed - 3 Apr [1970](#) Resigned)
- [Lawrence Thienchai Samanchit](#) (3 Jul [1971](#) Appointed -)

Historical Summary

Date	Event	From	To
Vicariate Apostolic of Chantaburi			

11 May 1944	Erected	Vicariate Apostolic of Bangkok	Vicariate Apostolic of Chantaburi (erected)
Diocese of Chantaburi			
18 December 1965	Elevated	Vicariate Apostolic of Chantaburi	Diocese of Chantaburi
Diocese of Chanthaburi			
2 July 1969	Name Changed	Diocese of Chantaburi	Diocese of Chanthaburi

Statistics

Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests	Total Priests	Catholics Per Priest	Permanent Deacons	Male Religious	Female Religious	Parishes	Source
Vicariate Apostolic of Chantaburi												
1950	12,380	3,200,734	.4%	20		20	619			67	16	ap1951
Diocese of Chantaburi												
Diocese of Chanthaburi												
1969	21,079	1,464,629	1.4%	37	6	43	490		34	172	17	ap1971
1980	25,588	2,987,000	.9%	40	5	45	568		34	196	26	ap1981
1990	28,251	3,190,000	.9%	49	13	62	455		36	177	38	ap1991
1999	30,856	4,064,872	.8%	61	13	74	416		36	189	50	ap2000
2000	31,155	4,128,389	.8%	63	12	75	415		39	196	41	ap2001
2001	31,384	4,165,818	.8%	71	14	85	369		38	191	41	ap2002
2002	31,178	4,228,388	.7%	73	15	88	354		43	194	41	ap2003
2003	37,914	4,286,475	.9%	74	15	89	426		33	196	41	ap2004
2004	38,880	4,333,797	.9%	74	14	88	441		30	200	41	ap2005
2006	37,149	4,445,881	.8%	78	17	95	391		57	207	42	ap2007

Diocese of Chiang Mai
Past and Present Ordinaries

- [Robert Ratna Bamrungtrakul](#) † (28 Apr 1975 Appointed - 17 Oct 1986 Resigned)
- [Joseph Sangval Surasarang](#) (17 Oct 1986 Appointed -)

Historical Summary

Date	Event	From	To
Prefecture Apostolic of Chieng-Mai			
17 November 1959	Erected	Vicariate Apostolic of Bangkok	Prefecture Apostolic of Chieng-Mai (erected)
Diocese of Chieng-Mai			
18 December 1965	Elevated	Prefecture Apostolic of Chieng-Mai	Diocese of Chieng-Mai
Diocese of Chiang Mai			
2 July 1969	Name Changed	Diocese of Chieng-Mai	Diocese of Chiang Mai

Statistics

Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests	Total Priests	Catholics Per Priest	Permanent Deacons	Male Religious	Female Religious	Parishes	Source
Diocese of Chiang Mai												
1970	5,807	2,920,297	.2%	2	23	25	232		33	31		ap1971
1980	9,942	4,468,274	.2%	3	23	26	382		33	35	18	ap1981
1990	19,144	5,118,000	.4%	8	24	32	598		35	50	20	ap1991
1999	31,765	5,694,679	.6%	17	28	45	705		42	72	24	ap2000
2000	34,848	5,796,126	.6%	19	30	49	711		60	79	25	ap2001
2001	36,518	5,796,126	.6%	21	32	53	689		60	100	26	ap2002

2002	38,894	5,824,935	.7%	22	38	60	648		62	97	26	ap2003
2003	40,598	5,824,935	.7%	22	36	58	699		64	101	26	ap2004
2004	41,944	5,824,935	.7%	22	38	60	699		61	110	27	ap2005

Diocese of Nakhorn-Sawan

Past and Present Ordinaries

- [Michel-Auguste-Marie Langer](#), M.E.P. † (9 Feb 1967 Appointed - 24 May 1976 Resigned)
- [Joseph Banchong Aribarg](#) (24 May 1976 Appointed - 5 Nov 1998 Resigned)
- [Louis Chamniern Santisukniram](#) (5 Nov 1998 Appointed - 1 Jul 2005 Appointed, Archbishop of [Thare and Nonseng](#))
- [Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovitvanit](#) (7 Mar 2007 Appointed -)

Historical Summary

Date	Event	From	To
Diocese of Nakhorn-Sawan			
9 February 1967	Erected	Archdiocese of Bangkok	Diocese of Nakhorn-Sawan (erected)
Diocese of Nakhon Sawan			
2 July 1969	Name Changed	Diocese of Nakhorn-Sawan	Diocese of Nakhon Sawan

Statistics

Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests	Total Priests	Catholics Per Priest	Permanent Deacons	Male Religious	Female Religious	Parishes	Source
Diocese of Nakhon Sawan												
1970	4,171	3,987,765	.1%	17		17	245			21	12	ap1971
1980	5,518	5,650,000	.1%	3	16	19	290		21	25		ap1981
1990	8,380	7,338,125	.1%	13	9	22	380		12	22	20	ap1991
1999	9,537	7,549,813	.1%	22	6	28	340		11	24	22	ap2000
2000	9,856	8,299,235	.1%	21	8	29	339		11	33	22	ap2001
2001	9,237	8,272,430	.1%	20	7	27	342		12	37	28	ap2002
2002	10,272	8,280,400	.1%	18	7	25	410		12	37	28	ap2003
2003	11,251	9,036,800	.1%	18	7	25	450		12	37	28	ap2004
2004	10,878	8,358,639	.1%	35	1	36	302		6	44	28	ap2005

Past and Present Ordinaries

- [Gaetano Pasotti](#), S.D.B. † (1931 Appointed - 3 Sep 1950 Died)
- [Pietro Luigi Carretto](#), S.D.B. † (12 Apr 1951 Appointed - 26 Jun 1969 Appointed, Bishop of [Surat Thani](#))
- [Robert Ratna Bamrungrakul](#) † (26 Jun 1969 Appointed - 28 Apr 1975 Appointed, Bishop of [Chiang Mai](#))
- [Joseph Ek Thabping](#) † (2 Oct 1975 Appointed - 12 Feb 1985 Died)
- [John Bosco Manat Chuabsamai](#) (25 Nov 1985 Appointed - 24 Jul 2003 Resigned)
- [John Bosco Panya Kritcharoen](#) (18 Mar 2005 Appointed -)

Historical Summary

Date	Event	From	To
Mission "Sui Iuris" of Rajaburi			

30 June 1930	Erected	Vicariate Apostolic of Bangkok	Mission "Sui Iuris" of Rajaburi (erected)
Prefecture Apostolic of Rajaburi			
28 May 1934	Elevated	Mission "Sui Iuris" of Rajaburi	Prefecture Apostolic of Rajaburi
Vicariate Apostolic of Rajaburi			
3 April 1941	Elevated	Prefecture Apostolic of Rajaburi	Vicariate Apostolic of Rajaburi
Diocese of Bangnokhuek			
18 December 1965	Elevated	Vicariate Apostolic of Rajaburi	Diocese of Bangnokhuek
Diocese of Ratburi			
21 October 1966	Name Changed	Diocese of Bangnokhuek	Diocese of Ratburi
26 June 1969	Territory Lost	Diocese of Ratburi	Diocese of Surat Thani (erected)
Diocese of Ratchaburi			
26 June 1969	Name Changed	Diocese of Ratburi	Diocese of Ratchaburi

Statistics

Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests	Total Priests	Catholics Per Priest	Permanent Deacons	Male Religious	Female Religious	Parishes	Source
Vicariate Apostolic of Rajaburi												
1949	10,389	2,541,039	.4%	7	28	35	296		22	40		ap1951
Diocese of Bangnokhuek												
Diocese of Ratburi												
Diocese of Ratchaburi												
1970	13,543	1,041,444	1.3%	21	12	33	410		17	51	12	ap1971
1980	16,248	1,693,525	1.0%	19	10	29	560		15	76	13	ap1981
1990	15,962	2,042,462	.8%	28	17	45	354		34	118	25	ap1991
1999	15,136	2,221,267	.7%	43	18	61	248		24	113	33	ap2000
2000	15,346	2,259,493	.7%	45	18	63	243		23	113	33	ap2001
2001	15,246	2,264,970	.7%	50	20	70	217		35	115	33	ap2002
2002	15,427	2,281,014	.7%	52	18	70	220		34	86	33	ap2003
2003	15,367	2,298,585	.7%	54	18	72	213		24	82	23	ap2004
2004	15,730	2,327,381	.7%	56	13	69	227		19	82	33	ap2005

Past and Present Ordinaries

- [Pietro Luigi Carretto](#), S.D.B. † (26 Jun 1969 Appointed - 21 Jun 1988 Retired)
- [Michael Praphon Chaicharoen](#), S.D.B. † (21 Jun 1988 Appointed - 20 May 2003 Died)
- [Joseph Prathan Sridarunsil](#), S.D.B. (9 Oct 2004 Appointed -)

Historical Summary

Date	Event	From	To
26 June 1969	Erected	Diocese of Ratburi	Diocese of Surat Thani (erected)

Statistics

Year	Catholics	Total Population	Percent Catholic	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests	Total Priests	Catholics Per Priest	Permanent Deacons	Male Religious	Female Religious	Parishes	Source
1970	3,820	3,270,989	.1%		24	24	159		28	31		ap1971
1980	5,007	5,943,000	.1%		31	31	161		35	66	13	ap1981
1990	5,908	7,061,000	.1%	1	32	33	179		37	101	29	ap1991
1999	6,586	8,540,114	.1%	5	26	31	212		61	74	36	ap2000
2000	6,586	8,540,114	.1%	5	26	31	212		61	74	36	ap2001
2001	6,682	8,629,828	.1%	6	34	40	167		70	95	37	ap2002
2002	6,500	8,167,224	.1%	6	33	39	166		49	105	19	ap2003
2003	6,178	8,904,385	.1%	8	32	40	154		40	103	39	ap2004
2004	6,682	9,015,380	.1%	9	34	43	155		44	99	39	ap2005

Conclusion: Today, in the ten dioceses of Thailand, the various responsibilities of the ten Bishops are well coordinated through the regular meetings of the Episcopal Conference. The whole population of Thailand is around 60 million inhabitants (statistic of 1994), but the Catholic population is hardly 250,000, that is about 0.4%.

Thailand has been called "**The Land of Smiles**"; in fact, in spite of the presence of various different religions in the country, all people live in peace and harmony. And so, in a true spirit of friendship, the Catholic Church continues to collaborate in the spiritual and social development of the country.

☆☆☆