

HeRD #87 - Easter & Songkran

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