

Boon Mark Gittisarn (1898-1987)

Boon Mark is one of the most important figures in 20th century Thai Protestant history. He was born in Rat Buri on 1 September 1898 and graduated from the Bangkok Christian College (BCC) in 1921. He converted to Christianity while at BCC. In 1923, he married Muan Suphaphun. After graduation, he became an American Presbyterian Mission evangelist in the Pitsanuloke Station. He graduated from McGilvary Theological Seminary in 1930, and in 1933 he became station evangelist for the Presbyterian Bangkok Station. The first General Assembly of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), April 1934, elected him Assistant General Secretary, and in August 1934, he was installed as Pastor of Second Church, Bangkok. In 1938-1939, he was the translator for the controversial Chinese revivalist, Dr. John Sung and became Sung's most outspoken supporter. The CCT elected him General Secretary in 1938. During World War II Boon Mark traveled extensively encouraging CCT churches and helping them withstand pressure and oppression; after the War, however, Boon Mark left the CCT in 1948 and became associated with the founding and early development of Pentecostalism in Thailand. In 1957, he founded Thailand's first independent church, Bangkok Church, and he also founded the independent "Association of Free Churches" with himself as General Secretary. He played a central role in the evangelistic campaign of the American Pentecostal preacher, T. L. Osborn, in Bangkok in 1956. He subsequently associated himself with the United Pentecostal Church (UPC), an American group. Although the UPC in Thailand experienced significant growth at first, it declined rapidly when he withdrew from active leadership in the late 1960s. He then remarried and joined the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Boon Mark died 20 May 1987.