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Mission Statement:

The Christian Ethnographer is a student-run journal dedicated to enriching the fields of missiology and anthropology through the publication of excellent ethnography. We study ethnography in order to better understand humanity as part of God's creation, created in His image to contribute to the work of His kingdom with insights gained through research and ministry. We also aim to give a voice to young scholars who can revitalize ethnography with a Christian faith-based approach.

Table of Contents

(Please click on the hyperlinks.)

Articles

[In the World but Not of It: Orthodox Religious Identity at a Protestant University](#)

by Holly Sutley page 1

[For the Love of the Lahu: How Christianity has Protected Indigenous Culture from Assimilation](#)

by Ashley Kafton page 5

[Santonepin: A Critical Look into Three Organizations and their Communal Impact](#)

by Kaci Shay page 11

My Journey After Eastern

Alumni Stories

[Bethany \(Osterstrom\) Robbins](#)

Class of 2004 page 15

[Lizzie \(Miller\) Barrick](#)

Class of 2009 page 20

Missiology and Anthropology News

[The Fall Ethnography Presentations](#)

page 24

[Visiting the Burmese Church](#)

page 24

In the World, But Not Of It: Orthodox Religious Identity at a Protestant University

By Holly Sutley

Abstract:

Orthodoxy is rooted in tradition, with focuses on material worship, history, unity, and ceremony. When put in a Protestant setting, Orthodox practitioners must conform to their environment while holding strongly to their religious practices. Because of this they seem to face a sort of dual-identity. This ethnography examines how they handle their opposing cultural values. In the environment of Protestant University (a pseudonym), Orthodox students have formed a club and sought many ways to reconcile their historical faith and their modern world. Compared to other religious minorities, they struggle little since they are not being oppressed or persecuted. However, they do have difficulties in assimilating to Protestant University's culture and have sought out creative ways to practice their unique faith where the university could not provide the means.

Protestant University is home to a group of students called the Orthodox Christian Fellowship, or OCF for short. This small group of students gathers regularly to practice Orthodox worship together in the Protestant setting of their university. OCF members lie at the intersection of two traditions: Orthodoxy and Protestantism. In this middle ground they balance the evolving Protestant movement with the steady Orthodox way. We will now look at some major contrasts between Protestantism and Orthodoxy and how OCF members find compromise between the two. It is important to note that the extremes I use to contrast the traditions do not speak for the entire Protestant or Orthodox experiences.

Protestantism has had a history of rejecting customs and coming to seek God in a "refreshed" fashion. Compared to Orthodoxy, Protestantism is very aligned with the Western cultural values of innovation and newness. Protestants also tend to be very involved in the present: the history of the church is generally not a significant factor in their faith. Orthodox Christians

value the past greatly, and continually repeat and remember the church's past throughout the church calendar. Overall, there is a significant divide between the "now" of Protestantism and the "then" of Orthodoxy. For OCF members, the University Honors College is a large component in bridging this gap. This program takes a classical approach to studying religion and philosophy, looking at the great works from Church history and analyzing them. The majority of OCF members are a part of the University Honors College, which is very selective about who they admit into the cohorts. Orthodox practitioners also greatly value community, which is fulfilled by the close cohort style of Honors College as well as the tight-knit OCF group. Overall, the Honors College seems to be an attractive program for Orthodox students, and one that involves Orthodox values in student life. In this way, OCF members have somewhat reconciled this "now vs then" discord in their beliefs and values.

In the Protestant movement there is also an emphasis on youth. Protestant University students tend to see their views as more progressive than those of older generations. Orthodoxy, in contrast, strongly value elders for their wisdom and faith guidance. Because of this, the Orthodox students often look to Honors College professors who engage in dialogue and lead philosophical discussions. However, we can see that their need for guidance is not fully met by what Protestant University offers. For months, OCF members have been trying to find a priest that will come to the university to lead them in Vespers, a Saturday evening liturgical service. Since the wisdom of elders is less recognized at Protestant University, OCF members have to look to outside sources for this part of their religious experience.

Feminism is also a pervasive movement at Protestant University. Since the university is fairly liberal amongst Christian colleges, feminism is mostly a mainstream, supported cause. Bridget, a female member of OCF, would not say she rejects the equality of the sexes. Orthodox Christians, in her explanation, are not disrespectful towards women. However, her view on women's rights is at odds with the liberal Christian view. According to Bridget, women and men are made to fulfill distinct roles in the church. That is why women are not allowed to be priests: "you can just be a woman, you don't have to be like a man." The high respect for the Virgin Mary, or Theotokos (meaning "God-bearer") plays a big part of respect for women in the Orthodox church. Since the mother of God is so highly venerated, women in the Orthodox church are also strongly respected. Monasticism in the early church was also a large factor in female empowerment in Bridget's eyes.

One more large divide between Protestantism and Orthodoxy is in the elements of worship. Protestant

worship is mainly focused on the mind. In Orthodox worship, there is a lot more involved with physical objects and movements. Their faith experience often involves icons, prayer ropes, symbolic jewelry, etc. These and other physical elements are made with thoughtful prayer and are important parts of their daily practices of faith (see below).

Figure 1
A Prayer Rope Made by an OCF Member



Movements and chanting during liturgy are also included in their practice. The Orthodox students can engage with their minds in Protestant University's faith environment, but for their other needs they turn to OCF. Here, they can liturgically worship together and bond over their methods of worship. Apart from the difficulties of trying to fast in the university's dining hall, OCF members feel that Protestant University is welcoming of their worship style, though it distances them from other students to some degree.

Figure 2
Icons Painted by an OCF Member



Overall, Protestant University has a very accepting attitude towards Orthodoxy, which OCF members do recognize. That being said, the university also has a culture that is highly accustomed to the modern West. The religiosity of most students, as we have seen above, is strongly impacted by factors pervasive to Western culture. In contrast, the Orthodox students tend to reject most Western values, seeing them as less God-oriented than traditional values. OCF seems to be an accepted group at their university while also being a counterculture against the pervasive Western influence. While embracing the university's Christian ethos, they reject its willingness to accommodate to the Westernized world. In this, they make use of the religious resources at the university while not engaging in most Protestant forms of worship. Protestant University is sufficient for them in many ways, and where it is not sufficient, the Honors College and OCF fill the gaps. In addition, their club has been working to do more outreach this year so that they can impact the rest of the campus.

Modern anthropologists have been fascinated by the shifting face of identity in globalized culture. People with multiple allegiances must figure out how to make peace with worldviews and expectations that often conflict with one another. We can see examples of this all around the globalizing world, where people must make choices to solidify their sense of identity. Examining Muslims in working-class Europe may shed light on the experience of OCF students.

Justin Gest did a cross-national anthropological study of British Bangladeshi and Spanish Moroccan adult men. In his study, he focused on the well-documented "identity crisis" of Muslims in Europe when trying to balance two "essentialist identities" (Gest 2014: 1). In the individualism of postmodern society, these Muslims work intensively to meet both Islamic and Western standards of belonging. They seem to simultaneously embrace separate essentialisms, and they often shift identities depending on their context. In

the words of Gest, they have an “implicit desire to be ‘everything to everyone’” (Gest 2014: 3).

OCF members seem to be in much less of a crisis than Muslims in Europe since their identities are not mutually exclusive. OCF takes place at a Christian school which, according to OCF members, is very welcoming and understanding of their interpretation. I did not observe much of an identity crisis in OCF members, though they did have small troubles reconciling Orthodoxy with the university’s embrace of Western culture. We must also take into consideration that most OCF members grew up in a Westernized world, so balancing their beliefs has been practiced throughout their lives. Their circumstances are overall very different from that of Muslims in Europe and therefore they cope with their conflicting identities in different ways.

In Kyrgyzstan, Protestant Christian converts similarly face two conflicting identities. In this historically Muslim country, ethnic identity typically coincides with being Muslim, but there has been a large number of Christian conversions. Now, the Christian population is significant enough to influence the culture at large and therefore try to merge their two identities: Christian and Kyrgyz. In David Radford’s field work, he found that the concept of identity was brought into question throughout this social change. Instead of trying to balance two differing ideas of self, Kyrgyz Christians have challenged Kyrgyz society at large to fit their new identity, making it possible for them to merge their two identities into one (Radford, 2014).

Kyrgyzstan does not have an officially recognized state religion, yet it is essentially a Muslim country based on its population. Comparatively, Protestant University is an overtly Protestant Christian institution, though it accepts people of different religious practices. This makes it a similar religious environment to Kyrgyzstan. OCF members seem to be a lot more similar to Kyrgyz Christians than to European Muslims in how they react to their minority situation. OCF members put in effort to make their faith known and respected on campus, in the same way that there is a constant effort to “legitimize Kyrgyz Christian identity” (Radford 2014: 15). In a sense, they are trying to legitimize their Orthodox-postmodern identity, in line with the common Christian saying of being “in the world but not of it.”

Of course, their situations are not exactly the same: Kyrgyz Christians have most often converted from Islam, while in comparison most OCF members have entered into Protestant University already as Orthodox Christians. Yet there is still a choice in identity: Kyrgyz Christians choose to convert to Christianity knowing their home culture, and OCF members choose to attend a Protestant university while holding to their Orthodox tradition. Comparatively, European Muslims are often forced to leave their home country as

refugees, and therefore must balance two mutually exclusive identities rather than optionally taking on a new identity.

Further East, we observe Muslim Indians also going to great lengths to merge their overarching culture and their religious identity. Shafique N. Virani explores how the Guptis of Bhavnagar, India carry on their religious tradition. “Taqiyya” is the Muslim concept of masking Islamic identity while still following Islamic code for fear of negative repercussions in expressing their faith. Islam is not welcomed in the Guptis’ environment and therefore is not publicly expressed. Islam among Indian Guptis, however, is unique in its integration of Hinduism. According to Virani, Hinduism is not only a veil to their practices, but “an integral part of the Guptis’ belief system and identity,” (Virani 2011: 99). Having to keep one part of their identity hidden has shaped them to compromise part of their religious beliefs. In this case, they simultaneously mask their religious ways and merge it with the overarching cultural identity. This seems to be furthest from the OCF experience since OCF members never felt the need to mask their tradition. They are not a persecuted minority so they do not have to hide a large part of their identity. We can see that OCF members believe in many things that are common to both Orthodox and Protestant Christianity, but that is because they are both Christian denominations, not because one has adopted practices from the other.

It seems that there are many levels to finding an integrated individual sense of self when living between two differing identities, spanning from dissonance and crisis to full integration and acceptance. If religious minorities are not accepted in their culture, they will either change their overarching culture (Kyrgyz Christians), change their religious beliefs (Gupti Indians), or live with a divided identity (Muslim Europeans), and a large part of their choice is determined by their circumstances. OCF members seem to function most similarly to Kyrgyz Christians. This partially has to do with their Christian culture and upbringing, making it easier for them to find compromise between Orthodoxy and Protestantism. As a group they make an effort for inter-denominational dialogue on the university campus. Though OCF members cannot change Western ideology at large much, they can influence the students around them and freely reject Western values that they see as unproductive or contrary to their faith. Overall, they seem to have little difficulty in negotiating their two religious ties.

In this study, we have examined how minority religious groups reconcile their beliefs and their cultural context. In some situations minorities feel divided between their religious and social worlds, and in other situations the two can be smoothly (or roughly)

integrated. In this instance, OCF members are able to live between two worlds partially because the Honors College bridges the gap, and partially because they can feel satisfied with what the university and OCF have to offer. They seem to enjoy the Christian culture of Protestant University while simultaneously rejecting Western attitudes that come with a Protestant mindset. Though many religious minorities struggle to find peace, Orthodox Christians in this situation have taken their opportunity to reconcile their two worlds.

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Biography:



Holly Sutley is a student of Missiology and Anthropology at Eastern University. She has a deep passion for cross-religious communication and linguistics.

For the Love of the Lahu: How Christianity has Protected Indigenous Culture from Assimilation

By Ashley Kafton

Abstract:

A history of marginalization and colonization has left the Lahu people dependent on Thai society for many of their basic needs, such as land rights and education. However, the translation of the Bible into their native language has given the Lahu a key point of differentiation and cultural pride, protecting them from assimilating into Thai culture.

Throughout history, the world has lost an unknowable number of cultures to assimilation. Forced and voluntary assimilation have long been the natural effect of a smaller culture residing next to a dominant one. Is this simply the way things ought to be, or is there a way to resist assimilation and remain culturally independent? For the Lahu people living in Thailand, assimilation is not a given. Christianity has shaped the fabric of their culture, creating an environment where faith is dependent on what is Lahu instead of what is Thai. This has largely been done through the work of Biblical translation, which both gave value and importance to their indigenous culture, and removed Thai culture from the center of the village, the Church. The Lahu are an incredibly beautiful people, full of laughter and hospitality. Their food is spicy and their wit is quick; they dispel any notions of 'primitive' with one look at their complex cultural art forms. It has been an honor and a privilege to work with them, and it fills my heart with gladness to count many members of the Lahu community as my friends. Their steadfast faith and dependence on God is evident in all that they do, and it is inspiration for me both as an anthropologist and as a Christian.

I collected my data from January to May 2017 while studying abroad in Chiang Mai, Thailand. I lived at the Thai-Lahu Christian Church Bi-Vocational Training school (TLCC) located in Ba Luang Nua, a neighborhood twenty minutes outside of Chiang Mai city. The school primarily trained Lahu Christians in pastoral ministry and Biblical studies; there were

around 25 students ranging from sixteen through adulthood (see below).

Figure 1
The Thai-Lahu Christian Church
Bi-Vocational Training School



Living in close proximity to Lahu people outside of the village gave a unique opportunity to see how cultural practices and values manifested outside of their traditional village setting. I also had the opportunity to visit four Lahu villages: Mae Jam, Sakura, Nong Pham, and Khan Muang. Each of these villages were located in different geographical areas and depended on a different source of income, which provided a sampling of how different Lahu villages exist throughout Thailand.

Figure 2
Map of Southeast Asia



There are many ethnic minority groups in the Greater Mekong Subregion (see above), and although they all have distinct languages, customs, foods, and

cultures, they all have at least one thing in common: they have been systematically excluded and exploited by the majority people group. For the Lahu and other hill tribes in Thailand, that group is the ethnic Thais. Thai culture has extremely close ties to Buddhism, the dominant religion of the region. In fact, the ties are so close that many of the Thai cultural elements—reverence to the King, respect for elders, and an emphasis on kindness—are all directly linked to Buddhism. The Thais have practiced Buddhism for so many centuries that there is no way to look at Thai Buddhism without looking at Thai culture—the two are nearly synonymous. Indigenous hill tribes, like the Lahu, live at the margins of this cultural setting. Their name comes from their history of being pushed back into the hills and mountains of northern Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar by the political and cultural might of the majority people. Their socioeconomic status is inversely related to their elevation; they live at the higher altitudes, but are financially and socially in the lowest tiers of society. For a long time, this geographical separation kept the hill tribes relatively closed off from the rest of the country, and as Anne Fadiman pointed out in her study of the Hmong hill tribe, “assimilation was easy to resist because their contacts with the dominant culture were so few” (Fadiman, 1997: 120). However, as populations rose and the Thai government made slash-and-burn agriculture illegal, it became difficult for the Lahu to remain self-sufficient. Hill tribes are becoming increasingly dependent on the Thai people and their culture in order to survive. Essentials like gasoline and clothing cannot be found in the jungle, and village education is often unavailable, forcing the Lahu people into Thai society to meet their needs.

The Lahu is a hill tribe. Lahu is a broad name for the people group, but it can be broken down into four main subcategories: Lahu-Na (Black Lahu), Lahu-Shi (Yellow Lahu), Lahu-Nyi (Red Lahu), and Lahu-Hpu (White Lahu). Lahu-Na is the majority group and the common use of the language serves as a link between the subcultures. Like most of the hill tribes in the region, they originally migrated from the Yunnan province in southern China in the eighth century AD and began spreading out throughout what is now Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia. However, the ethnic Thais, as well as other dominant ethnic groups, started migrating into the region a few centuries later, and they soon overwhelmed the hill tribes, forcing them off their land. Many hill tribes were migratory people, and quickly adapted to living under Thai control. However, colonialism and the spread of the dominant Thai ethnic group pushed them further and further out of the fertile lands of the south, and into the mountains of northern Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar.

Dr. Daniel McGilvary established a mission station in Chiang Mai, Thailand in the mid-1800s, opening up

the region to missional work. William Young used this opportunity to go to northeastern Burma and spread the gospel to the Lahu people in 1903. This was the first time the Lahu heard the gospel, and the truths of the Bible ‘fulfilled’ many of the prophecies of their animistic religion. As a minority group, they already had messiah-like “priest-chiefs” that led the people against their oppressors, which was reflected non-violently in Christ (Walker 1974: 699-712). While Christianity was spreading between Lahu villages, the people migrated into northern Thailand and the Thai-Lahu Christian Church was formed. The Thailand Bible Society worked on developing a written language for the Lahu people, and eventually translated the Bible into Lahu-Na in 1989. The Lahu-Shi Bible was completed in 2013.

All of the villages and people discussed in this paper are Lahu-Christians in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. Christianity is growing rapidly in Lahu communities, especially in Thailand. It has become the center Lahu life, and often the church building was physically at the center of the village. Because of that, many of their activities and thoughts are centered around the church, and so the people discussed here differ greatly from non-Christian Lahu villages that mostly practice animism or Buddhism. However, the cultural forms have remained constant, and many traditional practices have remained the same, although the focus is now on Christ. For example, marriage has always played a large role in villages, but now they emphasize that the union is based in Christ (see below).

Figure 3
A Lahu Christian Marriage



In my interviews, the older members of the villages stressed the importance of passing down Lahu culture and Christianity to their children. One of the women,

Mae, showed me a bag she was weaving and said she was teaching her teenage daughter how to do back strap weaving. "If the young people do not learn, no one will know how to weave anymore," she said. Despite the language barrier, there was urgency in her tone. "Lahu must do it, no one else can." The older generation of Sakura village feared their traditional customs and art forms would be lost with the next generation, and had dedicated themselves to passing on their customs to the young people. However, Mae also lamented that the youth were not always interested in learning traditional ways, and would much rather hang out in the city or with their peers. Her husband, Ken, mentioned that a big problem the village faced was the increasing number of young adults who used drugs and alcohol, which went against the prohibition associated with their Christian faith. At the end of our conversation, they invited us to pray with them, and asked specifically for us to pray for their children to stop using these substances and that their faith would be strengthened.

At TLCC, the students had three chapel services per day that were announced with the ringing of a bell, as well as weekly services held on Sundays open to Lahu people in the wider community. The church services followed a similar pattern to that of a modern, American church. There was a choir that would lead in hymns that the congregation could follow along with in a hymnal, accompanied by a keyboard player. They would often have special performances by individual members of the church. The service was conducted entirely in Lahu Na, and the hymns sung were a mixture of translated Western hymns and ones written by Lahu composers. Rambo, one of the teachers at TLCC wrote several worship songs, and was deemed "the Lahu Michael W. Smith" by one of our group leaders.

Our group of ten white women who spoke next to no Lahu were welcomed with open arms into the church, and were asked to perform on the second Sunday. (Although the performance was a complete train wreck, the congregation loved it and complimented us after the service). The members of the congregation were always very excited to see us and would greet us with the customary "Che-sa-lah" (How are you?) accompanied with a handshake in which you shake with your right hand while gripping your right forearm with your left hand. The woman would wear colorful wrap skirts and blouses, while the men would wear dress pants and shirts. All of the people would carry traditional woven bags made by Lahu back-strap weaving and would mingle with their friends before service started. The sermons resembled many I have heard in the United States, and were primarily given by the pastor, Ajarn Phillip, although other speakers would talk as well. There was no formal children's service, and so they sat with their families, occasionally running around making mischief.

When asked what the biggest strength of the community was, all of the people in Khan Muang agreed that it was the unity of the village. They said their mutual faith in Jesus Christ is what strengthens the unity of their village and sets it apart from other Lahu communities. The unity of their community allows them to settle disputes and forgive easily, band together in times of difficulty, and accomplish more together than they would separately. It is this unique connection between village members that holds the key to their potential. They seek the good of every member of their community, and work collectively in order to achieve it. For example, they had a meeting about selling the handicrafts the women make, and wanted to ensure the products were made well and were all sold at a fair price that would benefit the community.

Figure 4
Agricultural Work



Their extensive knowledge of the land and how to cultivate resources from it without doing harm is a major factor in their ability to remain culturally independent from the Thai population (see above). Their fishing method utilizes the resources available in the jungle and they are careful to not deplete the fish population. Crop failure is a constant threat, but they diversify their crops, creating more food security. They do not take more from the jungle than what they need for the next day, and trust that God will provide. The jungle is their home and their life source, and so they care deeply about being good stewards and preserving the environment. Many of their medicines are made from roots and other plants found in the jungle, allowing them to save money on medical bills while also strengthening their connection to nature. Because their village is so isolated, they do not have to deal with the problems of city life and can focus on working towards the good of the community.

The Lahu's view of reality is fundamentally collective. A worldview is "a set of fundamental beliefs, values, etc., determining or constituting a

comprehensive outlook on the world” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016). A culture’s worldview not only shapes the way they perceive reality, it also influences the way individuals and the community as a whole behaves. Their collective worldview elevates the village above the individual and while “individuals were free to determine their own course in life,...every individual had a responsibility for understanding their role in the community and how their actions affected other people and everything else in creation” (Aboriginal Worldview, 2012). As previously stated, the people of Khan Muang village viewed unity as the most important part of their village; not their farming abilities. This unity is an unseen force that holds them together. They emphasized the importance of having patience with one another and acting in love, helping each other with loans and supporting each other’s endeavors. Their village leadership is chosen democratically, and they raise their children communally, so children often bounce between houses during the day, playing with their friends and eating lunch and dinner prepared by different families.

The strong community and emphasis on unity in Sakura and Khan Muang helps to safeguard against many social manifestations of poverty, but perhaps there is one the Lahu people may not even be aware of. The women of Khan Muang expressed the need for their children to be educated by Thai people because they felt in order for their children to succeed they would need to properly speak Thai, which no Lahu person would be able to teach them. The children are sent to live in a hostel half an hour away to go to Thai school in order to receive a good education. It is possible that the reliance on Thai people causes the villagers to feel inadequate or like they were not good enough to give their children what they need.

The dependency on Thai education is similar to the relationship colonized nations had with their oppressors. Although Thailand was never formally colonized by a Western nation, that does not mean the indigenous people were never colonized. Colonization is defined as “the action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area” (Oxford English Dictionary). This is the exact relationship between the Thai ethnic group and the hill tribes, so many studies on the European colonization of Africa apply here. Moss suggests about Africa that, “There are concerns that the colonial experience undermined Africans’ confidence in their own culture and that many have come to accept the European racist notion that African cultures are inferior” (2011: 29). Likewise, the social legacy of colonialism in Thailand is reflected in the Lahu peoples’ view of education; a Lahu education would be inferior, so their children must be taught by Thai teachers. The negative effects of colonization are also seen through high rates of human

trafficking, statelessness, and forced relocation, which Sakura village has recently endured.

The Lahu worldview is also in a state of flux due to exposure to Thai culture. The middle-aged women in Khan Muang made a clear distinction between themselves and the “older generation” who had fled from Burma, of which only one woman was still alive. This older generation did not ever want to leave the jungle, saw trucks and cars as dangerous, and believed them to bring war. Now, many villagers have motorbikes that they use to go into the city and drive to their fields. The older generation also usually wore more traditional styles of clothing, while most village women I saw wore pants at least once and only reserve their traditional attire for special occasions. Additionally, the oldest woman said she had ten children, her daughter had seven, and one of the women remarked that she would only have two. Superstitions surrounding birth control have been broken, which leads to lower birth rates and slower-growing villages. While these examples may seem small, they are manifestations of Schlitz, Vienten, and Amorok’s theory of shifting worldviews. “Worldview transformation, then, is a fundamental shift in perspective that results in long-lasting changes in people’s sense of self, perception of relationship to the world around them, and way of being” (2008: 19). These examples are a reflection of how Lahu culture and worldview is adapting to meet the needs of a new generation of people.

Despite the influence from the Thai majority and increasing reliance on Thai culture, the Lahu villages I studied remained culturally independent and had shielded themselves from assimilation. As stated previously, the Lahu worldview is in a state of flux, but this is not the first time. When Christianity was brought to the Lahu people, it radically changed the way they viewed the world, the Thai people, and themselves. Christianity is now as much a part of Lahu culture as backstrap weaving and rice farming, and it has been an integral defining point between them and the Buddhist Thai majority. The introduction of Christianity into Lahu culture has totally transformed the structure of a Lahu village, both literally and metaphorically. The church building was at the center of all the villages I visited, which was a physical representation of the centrality of Christ to their culture and community. Having Christ at the center provided a strong foundation on which to establish their villages and culture in Thailand, and is the main reason they have been able to resist assimilation. Their bonds go beyond a shared culture and language; they are not simply fellow Lahu, but brothers and sisters in Christ.

Christianity has given the Lahu another point of differentiation from the Thai majority. Anywhere between 90-94% of the population practice Buddhism

(U.S. Department of State), and this Buddhist influence is also seen in many aspects of Thai culture. With a few exceptions, to be Thai is to be Buddhist, so having a different faith separates the Lahu people from the Thais to the point that being Thai is automatically associated with unChristian behavior. The adults in the villages did not want their children “to become like the Thais,” and saw immodest dress, drugs, and alcohol as completely un-Lahu and a result of “becoming Thai.” The parents believed that if their children had stronger faith in God they would not do these immoral things.

Christianity has always been a point of divergence between the Lahu people and the Thai majority, but for much of Christian-Lahu history they have been reliant on the Thai language to spread the gospel. There has only been a Lahu-Na Bible for 25 years (see below), and a Lahu-Shi bible for 2 years.

Figure 5
A Bible Text in Lahu

Aw_u hkui⁻ pui_u hta^u, G^uui_usha mi_ugui_u leh mvuh^u
naw ma hta_u te hpan_u ve yo_u. Mi_ugui_u chi leh_u, te_u
chi⁻ aw_u ho_u aw_u han ma^u caw_u leh gaw_u cu gaw_u
peh^u hpeh_u ve yo_u.
Aw_u hkui⁻ pui_u ve li_u 1:1 (Genesis 1:1)

The importance of having a Bible in their native language cannot be over-emphasized. “Christian particularity has hinged on the particularity of culture and language, both essential components of translation. The resulting concrete cultural systems had their genesis in, or because of, the work of translation” (Sanneh 2009: 3). In his book, *Translating the Message*, Lamin Sanneh describes the restorative and confidence-boosting effect translation has on cultures. He credits translation into the native language as a means of preserving cultural identity and actualizing faith.

Before the Bible was translated into Lahu, the people had a core aspect of the Christian faith, the Holy Scriptures, dependent on Thai culture. This was yet another point where what was Lahu was inferior to what was Thai. But this all changed after translation, and the Lahu people saw more value in their culture and language because it was capable of communicating the gospel. A person identifies more emotion and deeper connection with their mother tongue than with any other language. A mother tongue is the first language spoken from childhood. According to Isaji, language does more than just convey the values, thoughts, and sentiments of a culture, but it represents the most fundamental level of social identity (1990). Translating the Gospel into Lahu not only alleviated their dependence on the Thais, but it actually justified their

ethnicity in terms of their religion and served as a way to link Lahu identity with Christian identity. To be Lahu is to be Christian, and that solidarity of both culture and religion has served as a protection from assimilation into Thai culture.

In *Translating the Message*, Lamin Sanneh explores how the power of Christianity and Bible translation impacted the Christian communities in the Niger River Delta in Africa (2009). Islam was a dominant religion in the region, and Christianity struggled to gain a foothold, but when Bible translation was implemented in 1906 in the native Igbo language there was a massive revival, both of Christianity and of indigenous culture. “Translatability had made the vernacular framework the indispensable coefficient of the range and scope of Christian expansion, with a corresponding marginalization of foreign agents and their cultural assumptions” (Sanneh 2009: 272). Islam had kept its spiritual grounding in Mecca, distant from the local people, but Bible translation into the native language put Christianity “into deeper continuity with mother-tongue aspirations” (Sanneh 2009: 271). The emphasis on the local setting of the people not only caused their faith to grow, but their pride in their culture as well.

There was no longer a dependency on non-native versions of scripture, and the truth of the gospel could fully be internalized by the community because it was heard and read in their mother-tongue. The implicit depreciation of native culture vanished, and they had “galvanized the national resolve and inspired movements of local empowerment” (Sanneh 2009: 275). Local ministers rose up to lead the congregations, further removing the indigenous people from their dependency on both Western and the dominant local culture. Sanneh goes on to say that translation not only aided the Igbo culture, but that it embodied Christ’s true intentions of spreading the Gospel. “Christianity-in-translation evokes Gentile beginnings, and by that path of cultural inclusion upheld God’s faithfulness toward all peoples” (ibid). Sanneh’s writings make it clear that not only is translation necessary for deeper faith, but that Christ intended Christianity to strengthen native cultures.

Christianity was easily contextualized into the Lahu culture, causing it to spread quickly and remain an integral part of life during and after migration into Thailand. In fact, it fit so well with their culture that it transcended beyond simply religion and into the very fabric of their culture. Villages are now metaphorically and physically structured around the Church, which has given a strong foundation on which to resist assimilation and promote their indigenous culture. The translation of the Bible into Lahu not only limited their dependence on Thai culture, but it gave the people a sense of cultural pride and importance. The unity in

Christ within a Lahu village is what gives it the strength to remain culturally independent while living alongside the Thai majority.

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Biography



Ashley Kafton was born and raised in Jackson, NJ, but has a deep desire to live and work internationally. She is a member of the Templeton Honors College and will graduate in May with a degree in Economic Development, and minors in Anthropology and Sociology. She is passionate about advocating for the rights of indigenous peoples, especially those in the Greater Mekong Subregion. She will go on to get her Masters in International Development from Ohio University in the fall.

Santonepin: A Critical Look into Three Organizations and their Communal Impact

By Kaci Shay

Abstract:

This paper introduces three ministries which are active within their community in rural northern Thailand. The purpose of this research was to observe and interview people in these ministries in hopes of learning more about them in their cultural context and also providing a bit of insight as to how they could improve their work. Participant observation and informal interviews were used to conduct this research. All three ministries were highly effective and intentional, and would need only minor changes to be fully holistic and active.

I participated in a practicum experience for one month while studying abroad in 2017. My partner Lauren and I had the pleasure of working in northern Thailand in the rural town of Santonepin. While living at Santonepin we were able to work and interact with three different organizations and groups. The first was Hangtum school, a local public school starting with nursery age students and going up to grade six. Lauren and I taught English for two weeks in the morning for the students in kindergarten and up. The second organization was ECHO Asia Impact Center. This organization works toward developing ethical and sustainable agricultural practices for local farmers. We worked under the local supervisors, and the responsibilities and duties changed daily depending on what took priority. The final organization is the Santonepin church, where we lived. Here we had the opportunity to live and interact daily with all the congregation members.

Hangtum school allowed us to teach English to some of the students while also giving their regularly scheduled teachers a break to catch up with other work. Lauren and I were not qualified teachers, but with the use of technology we created lesson plans and were able to effectively communicate some English. The principal, Ajarn Udom, gave us both Thai names, which everyone soon began to use. My partner's name was Kru Pueng (Teacher Bee), and mine was Kru Fai (Teacher Cotton). As we grew to understand more of the culture, we saw that being given these names were

just one of many signs of hospitality given towards guests.

Figure 1
Teaching English



Typically, Lauren and I would receive our classroom assignment in the morning, so we would try to have a few different lessons with varying skill levels planned in advance. In most classes we provided a vocabulary set with an activity depending on the general age of the children. Lauren and I would walk around and check the students work and provide positive reinforcement and encouragement, which probably had more impact than most of what we taught in those two short weeks. To break up lessons Lauren and I would find or create games or songs related to the topic that would allow all the students to be engaged and still have some connection back to the materials.

Typically, our only 'down time' while at the school was during lunchtime, which provided a nice opportunity to have informal interviews and conversations with Ajarn Udom. As with most elementary schools, the environment was fairly chaotic and Ajarn Udom answered the questions as best he could. I also chose to ask the questions in English and some of the questions needed to be rephrased so that he could understand. The students needed simpler questions so that they would be able to understand them in English or so I would be able to translate them into Thai if necessary. It is possible that these limitations may have changed the meaning of the original questions or altered the perceptions that the students had of what they were being asked.

One of the themes discovered from our conversations with Ajarn Udom was the pride he took in the hard work ethic found in the school, both from the faculty and the students. When asked about the typical day, Ajarn Udom first discussed the morning cleaning that is done stating that, "Students come at 7:30 to clean." This was a point of pride because it was a method for the school to cut costs while also having the ability to discipline the students. Through the interviews conducted with the children, there was an affirmation of the high priorities placed on respect and the structure

of hierarchy as displayed throughout Thailand. Malee, a student I interviewed from grade 5, discussed her gratitude toward her teachers for correcting her math, which she believes she does not do well. Manu from grade 4 was pleased about his abilities to learn Thai through the school.

At ECHO Asia Impact Center, Lauren and I worked alongside the staff and tried to assist them in their duties while soaking up as much information as they were willing to provide. Each day was truly different than the one before it, and there was no set schedule. The day was structured around which plants needed tending and what individual projects needed work. As we began to volunteer full time, Lauren and I were able to assist in tasks that were more time consuming, which allowed our on-site supervisors, P'Wah and P'Paw, to work on larger projects or on contacting clients. Mornings were reserved for harvesting plants because it was cooler at this time and the sun was not as intense. Harvesting allowed ECHO to collect the seeds inside the plant and test for quality, as well as send them to farmers around the region.

The next step in the process was separating the seed from the plant. P'Wah always reminded Lauren and me that the plant would be used as another resource; nothing was to be wasted in this process. Sustainability was crucial to the staff at ECHO, and nearly all of their methods and projects worked towards a more sustainable agricultural future. After seed separation, we checked the seeds for quality. Good seeds would go into one pile and bad seeds would be another. Each seed and its quality characteristics differed, and oftentimes Lauren and I would forget certain characteristics and need assistance from one of the staff members to ensure the seeds would be good enough pass on to the farmers.

The final step was packaging. P'Paw created an incredibly detailed chart referring to each seed, what its weight should be, and the amount that should go into each package. Depending on the amount of seeds harvested, each step in this process could take several hours. Oftentimes, Lauren and I would spend the entire afternoon shift just packaging seeds or checking the quality of the piles. During these longer shifts, P'Wah would often indulge us in her vast knowledge about the particular seeds or different techniques ECHO uses to create a sustainable environment. Hearing the passion and intelligence from all the staff at ECHO created an appreciation and new awareness for creation care.

Figure 2
Working with Seeds



Conducting the interviews at ECHO ran similarly to those at Hangtum. They were informal and occurred through conversations. I interviewed P'Wah, one of our supervisors as well as an intern working at ECHO from Florida named Karis Lotze. These interviews were conducted inside the ECHO office and during periods of seed preparation because these times included mundane work that allowed for conversation while continuing what needed to be done. I asked P'Wah and Karis the same set of questions to see if their positions and primary culture would play a role in their answers given.

One of the common threads between both P'Wah and Karis' interviews was the importance of cultural awareness particularly in their relationship to the farmers. During her approximate 10 months with ECHO Asia, Karis did not interact with the local farmers due to cultural differences. The staff at ECHO understand that this creates an unequal and hierarchical work environment that elevates the status of foreigners and is counterproductive to their purposes. P'Wah on the other hand, works carefully and intentionally to ensure that those in the agricultural community do not believe they are abandoning cultural practices through changing the farming techniques.

The final organization we worked with was Santonepin Church itself. Church life revolves around a tight community that continually comes together to grow in their faith. During our time in practicum, Lauren and I had daily interaction with this community; each night a member of the church would come to the parsonage, and we would go to eat dinner at their home or eat together at the parsonage. These gestures of hospitality allowed us to better understand the culture and receive overwhelming amounts of love from each family. We also interacted with different families for about two hours each night, as the community members ventured into the parsonage to check in on us and ensure that we were not lonely or scared in this new environment. They faithfully came and joined us

despite the language barrier, despite their exhaustion from the day, and despite the lack of engaging activities.

The pastor of the church, who was also our overarching supervisor, Ajarn Chulee, came on the weekends and typically had activities for the church members to attend to which we were also invited. Most of these events included thanksgiving church festivals in surrounding cities and towns where members of the church give thanks to God for their crops in that season and celebrate with a large, communal lunch after the service. Saturday evenings were always reserved for Bible study which was held in the parsonage and conducted by Ajarn Chulee. A smaller number of church members attended this service and the people who attended stayed consistent. On Sunday before the main church service, the pastor held a quicker Bible study typically for the older members of the church. Afterwards the service, Ajarn Chulee held one more informal Bible study, conducted in a church member's house. It is clear that the members of this community consider their faith a priority and find time to listen to the words that Ajarn Chulee has prepared.

Figure 3

Interacting with a Church Member



Despite the extensive contact with the church members, interviews and conversations were difficult because church members spoke very little English. Our lack of Thai vocabulary, as well as the lack of translators, created barriers in the conversations that were almost impossible to overcome. However, later on we realized that this inconvenience had a positive element to it. Thai culture is a shame-based culture and there is a high priority on 'saving face' within the community and for the individual. Some of the questions that I wanted to ask were certainly not intended to embarrass anyone, but they could have been perceived as an embarrassing intrusion. If that had happened, the community members might have

changed their view of me and the interactions and intense familial community might have ceased to exist.

The two women I interviewed for this field research were considered our host mothers. They are step-sisters, and stayed in the parsonage with us each evening to ensure that we were protected and felt safe and had company. Ba Pai and Ba Pen, the two women, would often join our community time later than usual, so when the other family members left to go back to their homes, these two women stayed. Because of this, I was able to concentrate the interviews on them and avoid awkward or embarrassing lines of questions with the other church members. It was also easier to continue conversations after most of the community members had left. These interviews were conducted in the common room of the parsonage where we met for community time and Bible study. We all sat on the ground, and Ba Pen typically had some sort of bead or weaving craft to keep herself occupied or for us to try to learn. It was an open space which created easy accessibility for conversation and interviews.

One of the most unexpected parts of the interviews was a common sentiment that Ba Pai and Ba Pen expressed toward Lauren and me. Both of them included Lauren and me as their daughters and described coming to be with us as part of what a typical day looks like for them, including sharing activities like singing and coloring. Both women spoke very clearly in a present tense, as if these visits were part of their normal activities, despite the fact that we were only there for a temporary amount of time.

It was incredible to work with and learn about these three organizations that are working to create a community and to involve the local people in the work. As a missions student, I am not limited to anthropological research, but can employ missiological principles to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the ministries and organizations as well.

Hangtum school is not a ministry in the usual sense because they are a Buddhist public school, but they do serve the community. From their standpoint as a public school and as a part of the institution of education, there are some concepts and impacts that could be transformed, one of which is the attitude of the educators. The school was understaffed, and some of the teachers shared that they felt under-qualified. Because of this distrust of their own abilities, the teachers often completed the bare minimum required of teachers and frequently relied on workbooks as their primary tool for getting information to the students. This format of classroom management can be effective for the purpose of receiving and processing information, but the students need more engagement. They need the opportunity to develop higher academic standards and learn in ways other than rote memorization. Creativity, abstract thinking, and

positive reinforcement should be incorporated into the classroom to ensure that this will occur.

Figure 4
Santonepin Church Bible Study



ECHO Asia Impact Center is a ministry that has a lot of impact through its intentions and goals for the entire region of SouthEast Asia. During our time at ECHO our supervisor P'Wah discussed her goals and her desire to move the entire Asia branch to Myanmar because of the higher population of farmers and agricultural workers there. In this form ECHO would be more effective and have the potential to reach more people in that area. However, after we left Santonepin, ECHO moved their location to Doi Saket, about three hours closer to the city of Chiang Mai. A problem with this ministry is that their goals do not seem clear. This could be a smaller branch related issue, or it could go back to the overall ministry of ECHO as an organization. Right now, with their recent move closer to a major city there is hope that ECHO will have the opportunity to partner with other organizations and work more effectively alongside their partners. There are a lot of good ideas that should be implemented, but before some of them are incorporated the ministry develop a clearer understanding of what they want to accomplish and where they will be most effective in achieving that goal.

The final ministry that we interacted with is Santonepin church. This church has very committed members and the ability to beautifully spread the love of Christ. During our time there, the only pastor was Ajarn Chulee, and because of her numerous other responsibilities she would only come up to the church on the weekends. This does not allow for the community members to fully live and experience having a pastor full-time, which does not seem fair to them. Thankfully, this problem has recently been solved. In September the church appointed an associate pastor who lives in Santonepin full time. This allows community members to come to this pastor with issues and concerns, and provides someone to be there

in times of emergency. It also keeps Ajarn Chulee as the senior pastor without creating a conflict over her other responsibilities. Santonepin church could be more involved with the institutions of its community. There is a lot of camaraderie between church members, but outside of the congregation there is not a lot of local interaction. This could be because the needs of the members of the church take many of the time and resources or maybe because of the stark differences between Christian communities and Buddhist communities. Whatever the reasoning, some form of outreach could allow the church community and the general community to begin to form a bond and open the door for the Good News to be shared.

Biography:



Kaci Shay is a senior at Eastern University studying missiology and anthropology. She hopes to return to Southeast Asia to teach in a creative classroom as a form of ministry.

My Journey After Eastern

By Bethany (Osterstrom) Robbins
Class of 2004

Bethany Robbins has worked with troubled teens, been a foster mother, and taught at an international school in Morocco. She is currently living in Korea where she intends to continue teaching.



When I was thirteen, I had a dream. I wanted to be a missionary and travel to India. I wanted to run an orphanage and be a mother to many. This dream followed me through high school and led me to Eastern University (Eastern College in those days!). Eastern was one of the few schools that offered a missions degree and was not strictly a Bible school. I wanted a liberal arts degree. I visited Eastern my sophomore year of high school and the very moment I stepped onto the campus, I knew I was home. I started my first year with the idea that I would double major in Missions and Sociology, though it was my anthropology class that intrigued me most. I was taking an anthropology class about women. I was very much in over my head, as I was the only freshman in a class of juniors and seniors and was new to a challenging academic environment. If it were any other subject I probably would have dropped the class and searched for an easier course, but I really enjoyed it and pushed myself to keep up. I managed to get a C in that class. I think I received an A or high B in every other class that semester, but that C was the one I was most proud of. My academic goals became clear to me that semester. I wanted to be an anthropologist!

I wanted to take every class Dr. Meneses and Dr. Hummer offered. And that is exactly what I did. At that time there was no anthropology major, but I knew it was in the works. I worked very closely with Dr. Meneses to ensure that I took every class necessary to

be on track for when the degree became available. You could say I put all my eggs in one basket, but it all paid off. Anthropology was officially offered as a major the second semester of my junior year, and I was on track to graduate with it! I graduated from Eastern University in May of 2004 with a BA in Missions and Anthropology.

After graduation, I did what many young Christian graduates do, I got married. There was no time to lose and I wanted to get my life started. My husband, Jason, did not have the same dream that I had, to travel off to India and run an orphanage. He was a mathematician. We decide to stay in Pennsylvania and we struggled through our first year of marriage trying to make ends meet, but we were happy and in love so we didn't care. He got a job working at a small Christian school that paid in peanuts. I took a job at AAA travel, handing out travel books, exchanging money, and teaching customers how to read a road map. I guess traveling to India was off the table for now. I constantly looked for jobs that would fit my anthropology degree, but no one wanted to hire a newbie out of college. I tried looking into businesses that hired people from overseas. I thought I could assist in the cultural transition. I applied for jobs at universities working with international students. It makes complete sense to me now why they would want someone with ten years or more experience, but at the time it was very frustrating.

The next year, I got in touch with one of my parent's best friends. He worked closely with the international students at Ohio State University. He was a part of a missions organization that helps international students adjust to American life and provides a "family" like atmosphere for them. He mentioned to my parents that the school had started to see a rise in Indian students and that they didn't have anyone on the team that knew much about Indian culture. The team had been working mostly with Far East Asian students and they were struggling to connect with this new population. This provided me with a dream-like scenario. I loved India and its people. I had spent my four years at Eastern studying and taking every opportunity to write and research about the culture. Jason and I headed to Ohio to meet with this man who was basically offering me a dream job! He made it pretty clear that the opportunity was mine if I chose it. It was a missions organization, so we would need to raise support. To this day I can not really explain it, but everything inside of me said, "no." Jason didn't have peace about it either. We both loved the idea of it and it seemed to be a great fit. He could teach anywhere and we really liked the city of Columbus. And yet it just felt wrong. We went home pretty bummed and confused.

The reality of life in Pennsylvania was becoming clear. We didn't make a lot of money. The housing market was very expensive. The job market was low. I had left AAA because we had moved to a different town, and I was having trouble finding a new job. It got so bad that I went to a temp agency and they turned me away saying I was too qualified for any of the jobs. It was a frustrating situation and we were feeling a bit desperate for things to change. My brother had moved to Arkansas a few years back and was running his own business and doing quite well. He told us that the Wal-Mart headquarters were nearby and it was a great place to find a job. The cost of living was quite low, especially in comparison to Pennsylvania.

With nothing to lose we packed up our things, stuffed them in our car and headed to Arkansas with no jobs, but hope for brighter days! It was low risk since my brother let us live with him and helped us both job hunt. I found a job quickly at a daycare. Of course I was slightly frustrated that it had nothing to do with anthropology or missions, but we needed money and it was only temporary. Jason found a great job with Sam's Club as a market researcher. Things were already looking up. We found a nice house to rent. I eventually got a job at the Wal-Mart home office working in pharmacy compliance. It still didn't fit my dreams, but I was being practical. In 2005, we bought our first house. We were very proud first time home owners. I remember that as soon as we "closed" on the house we went to Home Depot and bought paint and painted every room a different color. We couldn't wait to make that house a home. A year and a half later I was pregnant. I left Wal-Mart after my son was born because I couldn't bear to leave him. Jason had decided that he wanted to return to teaching and got certified in Arkansas. He found a teaching job right away. I decided that being a mother was my new dream and it was all I wanted. India would just have to wait.

Fostering Teens

Fast forward a few years and my son was getting ready to turn three. We were at a point where living off one salary was just not cutting it. I had worked with my brother a bit and did some home child care, but I needed a real income. It was time to go back to work. I found a job working in a detention center. Actually it was a shelter for kids, ages 12-17, who needed a place to live while they were waiting for their court hearing. Some of the kids were runaways and some were put in the home while waiting for a foster home to become available. This job was really special. It was like my very own little orphanage. The kids there were so desperate to be heard and cared about.

It was remarkable to me how simply providing for their basic needs could build trust and create vulnerability. Making sure a new "client" had a new bar of soap and toothbrush ready for them, helping with homework and making sure they had the things they needed for a comfortable night's sleep—all these things helped the kids relax and feel safe. I really enjoyed working in that environment and being that parent for them.

There were three siblings in the shelter that had been in the program for ten months. The program is set up to be a ninety-day program. The problem is, when you are fourteen, sixteen and seventeen, and you have a drug addict mother who is in and out of jail, and you have a "record," foster homes are not banging down your door to foster you. The kids wanted to stay together and the only way to do that was to keep them in the shelter. I grew quite fond of those kids. I had a crazy idea. I thought, "why not us? Someone had to do it, why shouldn't it be us?" I mentioned the idea to Jason one night and he was all in. I didn't expect his reaction. I thought he would help me see all the reasons why it was a terrible and foolish idea. I think he also realized that someone was going to have to sacrifice for these kids and no one else was going to do it. I had to quit my job at the shelter and petition to the CEO of the organization to allow us permission to have contact with the kids after I terminated my position. My contract clearly stated that after an employee quits, or a client leaves the program, they are not to have contact for a minimum of two years. Because I intended to foster the siblings under a government program, they granted us permission. Jason and I went through a very invasive interview process and did two months of foster care training, and then the State of Arkansas dropped three teenagers off at our house. Who knew the amount of food three teens could eat, the amount of water they would use and how much laundry they could create. It was an adventure for sure.

I took a job working for a "sister company" to the shelter. It was a Therapeutic Day Treatment school. I worked with therapists, in a school setting, helping teens with behavior problems and mental illnesses transition into the mainstream classroom. I spent my days talking kids down from violent episodes and suicidal thoughts, and teaching them how to use coping skills to manage their behavior. I spent my evenings dealing with three teenagers struggling with issues of past abuse, learning how to be in a family, and no longer having to survive their dysfunctional childhood. Few evenings went by when there wasn't someone in trouble at school, or having an emotional break down, or sneaking out, or caught in a lie, or a call from the police. It was normal teenage issues, but magnified because of their background. We also had a

three year old in the midst of all this. Fortunately, they treated him like a prince and he adored them too. Somehow through all the craziness we formed a family together. We loved those kids and they loved us back in the best way they knew how.



In the middle of the first year of fostering, we brought a fourth teenager into the home. It was a friend of the kids. His mother had been abandoning him to run off with a boyfriend for weeks at a time. He was often left home alone with the electricity turned off and no food in the house. So he came to live with us too. He stayed for about six months before he headed back home. The two oldest siblings lived with us for a year. The oldest was nineteen, moved out to attend college, and got herself an apartment. The middle sibling was eighteen, and had had enough of us telling him what to do. He struggled the most with the idea of having a family. He ended up dropping out of high school and trying to make his own way. The youngest stayed with us for two more years. She truly became one of the family. She stretched us in ways we didn't think were possible. Unfortunately, for my own children, there is nothing they will be able to get away with after all we have learned from parenting four teens that tried every trick in the book!

In 2012, I was pregnant with my daughter, my son was four, and we still had our youngest foster daughter living with us. We received a call from the State asking us if we could take a four year old little girl, "just for the weekend." We ended up taking her in and then, as it goes, she had a brother. So, we took him too. A weekend turned into a month. The two kids ended up having special needs and I had to quit my job at the Therapeutic Day Treatment school to care for them. Eventually, they left to live with family members and I continued to stay home, as I was due to give birth in a month.

That fall, I began homeschooling my son. It was

my foster daughter's last year in State care and we were busy preparing her for being on her own. She left our home that March and we closed our home to fostering. Things calmed down quite a bit after that and both Jason and I felt like we could breathe in peace again. Fostering was a beautiful experience, but it was also exhausting and forced us to sacrifice in every way imaginable. I am thankful that my husband was such a rock for me during those difficult years.

The Fire

Everything was calm until September 2013. Jason's school was having a talent show in the evening. Our daughter was getting a little antsy and we left early to get her to bed. When we arrived back home, we came back to our house having been destroyed by a fire. The roof and back of the house were gone and the rest of it was sitting in about a foot of water. The firemen had already come and gone and only the news reporters were at the house waiting for us. The firemen came back to explain to us what had happened. They helped me as I ran through the dark, soaking wet house trying to salvage my son's school books and some of our clothes. As we had so many years before, we moved back in with my brother while we tried to figure out what was next. Apart from some toys, my wedding pictures, and a load of laundry that was in the washing machine, we lost everything. What wasn't damaged by the fire was ruined by the water used to put the fire out. Insurance is an amazing thing. They provided us with a place to live while we figured out how to get our house rebuilt. Arkansas had a rather harsh winter that year and it took longer than expected to rebuild the house. It was a difficult time for us, feeling homesick for a home we could never have again. And while I don't consider myself a "materialist" person, there are things we lost in that fire that are not replaceable. Yet, I know that it was a blessing that no one in my family was hurt, even the cats got out!

It took a full year before we were able to move back in our house. It had been completely torn down and rebuilt with a fresh floorplan. Jason and I designed the house together and with the help of friends and family, built it. It was, for us, a dream home. At the time, to call it a blessing in a disguise, was not something I could hear. But I know in the end it was.

We moved into our house in late August. The following January, Jason came home from work one day and just casually asked me, "What would you say if I wanted to get a job teaching in Thailand?" I said, "yes, let's do it!" That was not the answer he was expecting me to give him. He thought I would tell him all the reasons why we couldn't do that. But for

me it was the adventure I had been waiting for. We had already been through hell and back with foster care, lost all our belongings and our house, what did we have to lose? I had always wanted to go overseas and here was my opportunity. Who knew this was a possibility for a teacher! Jason and I spent the next two months researching how to make it work and applying for a teaching position. He was given an interview with an American school in Morocco, teaching high school math. The next day they offered him the position and we took it. Now we had two months to sell our newly built house and all our acquired new possessions and move our family to Africa. So, that is what we did. We put our house on the market, had yard sales, took a few trips to Goodwill and packed our eight suitcases. We closed on our house August 18th and got on an airplane to Morocco the very next day. The journey to Morocco was unbelievably difficult, with five canceled flights along the way, lost baggage, and last minute airport changes from Boston to New York. Three days later we made it to Morocco.

Morocco

Morocco was an adventure every day. I loved the exotic culture and it was exciting to finally be living in another place so contrasting from my own. I finally got to experience real cultural shock, all the great misunderstandings and language setbacks, and the other experiences I had studied so long ago. It was stressful at times, but Jason and I were no strangers to a challenge at this point. Two months into the school year, the school hired me into their Learning Support department. They liked the experience I had working with students with challenging behaviors and wanted my help building their department. I worked with students that struggled with ADHD and anxiety, but also worked with a group of students that were just learning English. In the end, I became a special education teacher to kids struggling academically. My second year at the school, they hired me to be the fifth grade teacher, after two teachers had quit and returned to the United States. Honestly, Morocco is not for everyone, it is a difficult place to adjust to. Even though I did not have a teaching license, I was offered the position and I took it. It was the best job I had ever had. I fell in love with teaching from day one.



In Morocco, I was able to visit a local orphanage. I got to witness a wedding ceremony in the mountains with Moroccan Berbers. I witnessed a sheep being sacrificed for the Muslim holiday called Eid-al-Adha and joined the family as they thanked God for his many blessings. I sat on buses filled with Moroccan people and traveled through their country side. I ate their food and tried to cook it, and attempted to learn their language. I shopped in the markets and tried new things. It was an experience I had started to lose hope I would ever have. It wasn't India, but it was very much part of a dream I had and I was finally living it. I had amazing conversations with Muslim women who loved God. I learned more about my own faith, confirmed my own beliefs, and left with a fresh understanding of how big God really is.



Teaching internationally had become a dream come true for our family. We were finally in a stable financial situation. The school provided us with housing and transportation to work, so we didn't need a car. We were able to travel all over Europe on breaks. We went to England, France, Spain, Italy and Hungary all in the two years we lived in Morocco—not to mention traveling all over the country of Morocco. My kids were learning Arabic and French. They had friends from all over the world.

Jason's contract was over after two years and we knew that we didn't want to stay in Morocco for a third year. We also knew that we were not finished traveling and working internationally. We signed up

with a recruiter again and applied to teaching positions all over the world. Jason interviewed for different jobs but we finally found a school in South Korea that seemed like a good fit for our family. He signed a contract and we packed again. We took a quick trip home for the summer. We saw our friends and family we hadn't seen in two years and then hopped back on a plane and headed to South Korea.

Korea

We are now living on an island called Jeju in South Korea. Jeju is called the "Hawaii of South Korea" and it is as beautiful and amazing as it claims to be. Sometimes I think we have hit the international teaching lottery! I am homeschooling my daughter, who is now five years old. My son, now ten, is in fifth grade and attends the school where Jason works. We plan on staying here for a while. Depending on how things go, we may stay until the kids are done with school.



But considering the way our adventure of life has gone so far, who knows what will happen tomorrow! Next year I am going back to school and getting my teaching license. I plan to teach here on the island the following year. In some ways, my journey after Eastern has played out completely different than the picture and plan I had drawn out in my head. But as I look back over the last fourteen years, I think my dream actually did come true, it was just packaged a little differently than I expected. I was a mother to many that needed me, and I was able to travel to amazing places that I never thought I would see. And I was able to do it alongside my best friend. The best part of my journey is not over. I can't wait to see where the next fourteen years take me.

My Journey After Eastern

By Lizzie (Miller) Barrick
Class of 2009

Lizzie Barrick has worked for Mission Year, the YMCA, a nonprofit community development organization in Norristown, PA, and the Mennonite Central Committee. She and her husband Jim moved to Jakarta, Indonesia in July of 2017, where Lizzie is volunteering as a middle school science teacher with students who are refugees from a variety of countries, while taking Indonesian language classes with the Indonesian Australian Language Foundation.



Sunrise at the Borobudur Temple in Magelang, Indonesia. This is a Buddhist temple that was built around the 9th century with Buddhist Javanese architecture.

Back at Eastern

When I started attending Eastern University back in 2005 I did not know what anthropology was. I was interested in some type of service work, most likely in a Christian setting, and I was still looking for a major that would be a good fit. A few months into my freshman year I heard about the Missions and Anthropology major, and I was very excited about the possibility of majoring in missions. Eventually, a friend explained that anthropology was the study of humans and culture. Since that sounded fascinating to me as well, I decided to declare Missions and Anthropology as my major. As time wore on I continued to be pleased with the content of the classes and the department as a whole. It was eye opening to hear about missions with historical and

anthropological insight, as well as to learn about anthropology with a Christian perspective.

A Break From School

After graduating from Eastern with a BA in Missions and Anthropology and a minor in Spanish, I started working as an Environmental Education Instructor at the Upper Main Line YMCA in Berwyn, PA. I absolutely loved teaching children about environmental education, as well as leading off-site hiking adventure trips. Since the position was only part-time I obtained another part-time job in retail.

After being reminded about the Mission Year program by some other Eastern alumni, I did some major soul-searching. I was interested in volunteering for a year with Mission Year, but I was nervous about freezing my school loans and ultimately still paying interest. I also felt as though God was leading me to participate in the introductory master's level class that Eastern offered through Mission Year. The idea of going back to school and accruing more loans was not appealing to me. Neither was the idea of intense studying, as test taking was often difficult for me. I became quite frustrated as I prayed about Mission Year and the potential to pursue a degree in Urban Studies. I even called my mom hoping that she would think it was a bad idea and tell me not to go. As it turned out she told me I needed to do whatever God was leading me to do, and I ended up getting placed as a volunteer with Mission Year in Houston, TX in August 2010.

Mission Year was the perfect setting to process all that I had learned at Eastern. I was able to grapple with what it meant to participate in an organization serving others with a Christian mission statement—and to serve without pushing Christianity on people in an abrasive way. Building relationships with people through the homeless ministry, children's ministry, and urban garden ministry through my volunteer placement at Ecclesia Church, allowed me to see to what extent I could have genuine friendships and share my faith. I also was blessed by friendships that my housemates and I had with our neighbors that year. In some instances I shared about my faith less than I might have expected, and then there were times when I really didn't bring Christianity up at all—and some of our neighbors would bring the conversation up themselves. Living in Christian community with six other young adults was one of the hardest continual challenges during the year; we were from all over the country, of varying ages, and had different personalities. Despite many differences, we became very close and I am so thankful for each of my housemates from my time there that year. As mentioned, my placement with Mission Year included

a few different service opportunities. That varied experience also taught me much about how different community members and organizations contribute to a community.

Towards the end of my time in Mission Year I heard of a new nonprofit opening in Norristown, PA, called Centro de Cultura, Arte, Trabajo y Educación (CCATE). CCATE strives to empower the Latino community in the greater Philadelphia area. They offer a wide variety of classes for both adults and youth. I was extremely happy to receive the opportunity to be the Program Coordinator for CCATE following my time in Mission Year. At that point I moved back to Norristown (I had jumped around between St. Davids, Norristown, and Devon between graduating and Mission Year). The job was a huge learning experience. Since the nonprofit was brand new, the Executive Director, board, and myself had to create all the paperwork, promotion, and policy. I also continued working for the YMCA and my retail position since none of my positions were full-time.

Back to School

When I started at CCATE I was still very hesitant about continuing with a master's degree; eventually I finished enrolling in the Urban Studies program at Eastern with a Community Development major. The classes were awesome, I would read about a theory in my homework and could apply it to work at CCATE the next day. I was also pleasantly surprised that graduate school ended up barely having any multiple choice tests which I hated, and the work was almost completely writing. I actually enjoyed the homework and papers that were assigned to us because they worked better with my learning style.

At that time I went down to a substitute position with retail, and started working at Riverbend Environmental Education Center as an Environmental Educator and Adventure Camp Coordinator. Though I continued working at CCATE and YMCA, the Riverbend position really allowed me to implement the environmental education experience from the YMCA and the logistical experience from CCATE into one role. I loved doing both the behind the scenes scheduling and planning, as well as going out to lead youth education and high adventure trips.

A Wedding

While living in Norristown and working in the area, I was also living in the Norristown Community House. It was a group of young adults who wanted to live together in intentional Christian community, facilitated by Becky and Peter Bowersox. Another

Eastern grad, Jim Barrick, moved into the apartment building next-door. Eventually, hiking together on the weekends turned into dating and after a couple of years we were married in June 2014. We continued to live in Norristown after the wedding.

Post Graduate

I had chosen the part-time three-year plan for the master's degree for Urban Studies; when the three years was winding down I had to figure out what I would do next. I enjoyed all of my jobs but none of them were offering year round full-time positions. Of course, I would have school loans upon graduation so I prioritized finding a full-time position in another nonprofit in the area.

The last few months of classes I repeatedly checked on a few different organizations who had mission statements with which I resonated. I was interested in continuing to work in Norristown or Philadelphia and when I found out that Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) had an opening in their Philadelphia office I immediately applied. MCC endeavors to work for relief, development, and peace in the name of Christ. My role at MCC was as Human Resources Coordinator—East Coast, which included the area from Maine to Puerto Rico. Working in human resources (HR) required sitting behind a desk much more than I was used to, but I enjoyed visiting various places along the east coast to recruit. The other MCC East Coast staff were amazing and I had fun learning from them and striving to resource them from the HR role. I learned a great deal in HR. My supervisors at MCC were great at providing relevant experiences in professional development, and the HR Department helped me learn policy to a much greater depth. This position also offered a behind the scenes view into a nonprofit structure to an extent that I had never learned before in school or in previous positions.

How We Ended up in Jakarta

Though, I am originally from Michigan and Jim is from New York, we had both lived in PA for more than ten years. I was at a point where I was hoping to move somewhere new before we discussed a more long-term home somewhere in the US. Jim has been very supportive of my dreams throughout our relationship, and he decided to be onboard with this idea as well. We were also motivated to move to learn about another culture in person and to see how God was/is working in other communities.

The decision making process of getting to Jakarta was very involved, mostly because we looked at such a wide variety of organizations and countries before

making a decision. We had to figure out how and where we wanted to go, and through which organization. We also wanted to continue working or volunteering in a manner that was somewhat related to our professions (teaching and community development/nonprofit). In addition, we had a wish list of specific things that we were looking for: medical coverage, access to hospitals (we both have allergies), ability to continue with the organization if we had an unplanned pregnancy (some organizations actually send you home if there is a pregnancy), ideally loan reimbursement, documented policies in place for the organization (which conveys maturity of the organization as a whole), and a term of two years. We also recognized that our time frame would be from August on because Jim wanted to be sure to finish out the school year and honor his contract with his school in Philadelphia.

Once we had the wish list set I started doing some research. We started looking at applications a year in advance because of what I had heard about competitive programs like Peace Corps potentially taking a number of months for the application process. Peace Corps itself did cover the majority of our prerequisites so we started out applying with them. After talking back and forth with the Peace Corps recruiter we found that we were not selected for our first choice position, and we were not interested in the other openings they offered. The process with Peace Corps started with research in August, an application in October, choosing to say no to the two countries they suggested by January. This was also earlier in the process of us applying, so at that point we were holding out hoping to move to a Spanish speaking country so that at least one of us could speak the language.

MCC has many international placements to work in a wide range of positions such as engineering, farming, education, communications, and many other roles. I was working at MCC during this process; however, at the time, MCC did not have a placement for a married couple with a term that was only two years long. Around November when we were waiting to hear more from Peace Corps, I was on the lookout for contacts or websites that had info on living abroad. My biggest interest was in ecotourism, farming, and outdoors camps. While I found a lot of great information through friends' suggestions and hours of online research, I was not able to find an ecotourism or farming program that we could participate in and still make our loan payments.

We talked to some family friends, and friends of friends, and received some helpful suggestions to make sure we were fully informing ourselves on the process of being open to learning about a new culture, and getting ideas on search engines for organizations.

The most helpful international teaching website that was recommended to us was Search Associates. The most helpful volunteer search engine that we found was the Catholic Volunteer Network website.

Throughout the entire process it seemed that the places that we were most interested in chose other candidates, and other opportunities that we were not interested in because of distance actually sought us out. It was getting towards the end of March 2017 and Jim and I discussed that we needed to either find a definite placement, or decide to continue on in our current jobs in Pennsylvania. We had a couple of positions that we were moderately interested in through Search Associates, when an offer for an interview came up with *Sekolah Pelita Harapan* (SPH) in Indonesia. Jim had filled out an application with SPH at the recommendation of his coworker. Neither of us had looked into the school much but we figured he might as well apply. The interview ended up going well and we were able to talk to the principal, realizing that the school addressed our entire wish list. After prayer we decided to discontinue our other applications and go with SPH with me hoping to find a way to get involved with the community once we arrived.

What We are Doing in Indonesia



We enjoy hiking. This is south of Jakarta near Sentul, Indonesia. We visited the trail through idGuides, an eco-tourist organization that also provides education to elementary through high school students. They work with the local community.

Living in Indonesia has been full of amazing experiences and some major challenges. The biggest immediate adjustment for me was no longer working a full-time job. Jim's school was great helping us navigate the first couple of weeks, we learned how to obtain reliable taxis and were able to buy basic necessities. I knew I wanted to get involved with something in Jakarta when we moved here and I got some helpful advice through another American who is

working in the nonprofit realm and whose husband is also working at SPH. It was clear that learning the language would be a huge help in relating to others in any capacity through nongovernmental organizations (NGO) here.

While Jim and I did a mini class on culture shock and living abroad back in Pennsylvania, and I had studied abroad and lived in a range of economic and geographical locations in the United States, we had never been to Indonesia before and were unfamiliar with the culture. As a result I frequently went back and forth on a pendulum, either in excitement—in trying new food, seeing beautiful landscapes, and meeting new people—or, swinging to the other end of the pendulum, in frustration—in getting sick, too overstimulated from sights and smells, and feeling overwhelmed, needing more time alone as an introvert.

Over time I have swung to lesser extremes, however challenges such as becoming ill still occasionally surprise attack my morale. I still have not found an NGO near to where we live where I can be involved on a daily level. However, I do make it a point to travel further to volunteer one day per week at an NGO over an hour away.

Taking language classes has helped my confidence immensely in navigating the city and has helped me understand the culture a bit better. I plan on continuing to keep an eye out for NGOs where I might be able to be more involved as I learn more of the language. The transition from full-time work to not having a job was eased by volunteering for a couple of hours online per week with Mission Year as well. I had gotten in touch with Mission Year when I realized I would have some spare time in Indonesia. Once we moved to Indonesia, volunteering to do online research for Mission Year ended up being a blessing for me because it gave me something constructive to do with my time. After all, when we first moved here there were very few things to do other than buy groceries and cook since the apartment was already clean and we don't have any children.

TBD

After Jim completes his two-year term with SPH in Jakarta we plan to return to the US. We do not know where we will end up at this point and have that familiar feeling of both anxiety and excitement over potential future plans. We assume that I will continue to work in the nonprofit realm and Jim will continue as a teacher. I have faced many challenges after Eastern but I have had many positive life and professional experiences as well. I am thankful for the ways Eastern equipped me, and thankful for a support system of friends and family in my life that continually

encourage me when I face challenges that I have to learn how to address on my own.



Prambanan, a Hindu temple in Yogyakarta. It was created in the 9th century. Jim and I were able to visit during our Christmas break.

MISSIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS

The Fall Ethnography Presentations

On November 17, 2017, the following students made formal presentations of their ethnographic research and ministry:

April Balobalo



Ashley Kafton



Brittney Daniel



CeCelia Guarini



Emma Buchanan



Hau Nuam



Kaci Shay



Maddalyn (Fay) Erato



Visiting the Burmese Church

On March 18, 2018, a large group of Missiology and Anthropology majors visited the Burmese church in Philadelphia that we have been visiting for four years. The church is pastored by Dr. La Seng Dingrin who also teaches for our program. Students, Hau Nuam and Parker Vowels, gave the sermon together with Dr. Meneses. Dr. Bush presented the work being done through his church ministry in a poor neighborhood of Manila in the Philippines. Afterwards, we all went to our favorite Vietnamese restaurant for dinner!



Hau Nuam and Parker Vowels, preaching.



Dr. La Seng Dingrin and Dr. Bush, speaking.



Church violin quintet.



Burmese church photo.