

Thailand Trip Report

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Roxanne, my wife, and I were in Thailand from Dec 27 through Jan 10, 2004. The primary purpose of the trip was to participate in Angkana Boonsit's ([picture -1](#)) defense of her dissertation for the degree of Ph.D. at Thammasat University, the largest and most prestigious University in Bangkok, Thailand.

In the late summer of 2003, Angkana's major advisor, Dr. Suwatchara Piemyat, Professor, Faculty of Social Administration at Thammasat University ([picture -2](#) at left), contacted me via e-mail to inquire about the possibility of Angkana coming to study Restorative Justice with me. After a search of the internet, they had decided that for her dissertation, she wanted to study Restorative Justice and they were particularly attracted to principles, models, and strategies as I have articulated them. They were particularly attracted to the focus on spirituality and peacemaking. After many e-mails, arrangements were made and they applied to the Thailand Research Fund. The grant that was awarded to Angkana paid for her to study with me for three months in Fresno, for Dr. Suwatchara to visit her for two weeks in Fresno and assist her with her writing, and for me to travel to Thailand and participate with her and her other advisors in the final defense of her dissertation.

Angkana, with help and encouragement from her major advisor Dr. Suwatchara, forged new ground in several areas. She was the first to do a Ph.D. dissertation on Restorative Justice in Thailand. She focused her research and recommendations on using Restorative Justice in cases of Domestic Violence. She was first in the Faculty of Social Administration to write her dissertation in English and to defend it in English, making her work more accessible to the international community. And, through the make-up of her committee, used her dissertation to introduce and/or advance Restorative Justice with the leaders of the criminal justice system in Thailand. Other advisors and committee members were, General Director (Department of Corrections, Ministry of Justice) Nathee Chitsawang, General Director (Department of Probation, Ministry of Justice) Dr. Kittipong Kittayarak, Dr. Daecah Sungkawan (Chair of the Committee and Dean of the Graduate School at Thammasat University) and Dr. Pattamaporn Butsapathumrong (External Advisor from the Asian University of Science and Technology).

On Sunday, January 4, Angkana successfully defended her dissertation and with just a few minor conditions, all committee members signed off and celebrated with Dr. Angkana Boonsit ([pictures 3,4,5](#)).

Dr. Suwatchara and Angkana had also arranged several meetings and three Restorative Justice presentations for us. Director General Nathee met with us in his formal meeting room ([picture 6](#)) at the Department of Corrections to discuss Restorative Justice possibilities in their correctional institutions throughout Thailand. He arranged a tour of the Central Women Correctional Institution in Bangkok with Director Kanchana Keskarn as our host ([picture 7](#) on Ron's left). Later he again joined us at the prison for a foot

massage and meal (both parts of the vocational training program at the prison). Director General Kittipong, Thailand Department of Probation, hosted a formal eight course dinner ([picture 8](#) at Ron's right) for the committee members to honor Dr. Angkana, who is a senior level probation officer, to discuss the use of Restorative Justice in their probation department, and to welcome us to Thailand. He invited me to be a consultant to their project and to help them evaluate their progress as they move forward implementing Restorative Justice.

General Director Nathee and General Director Kittipong arranged for me to present a three hour lecture on Restorative Justice to approximately 80 of their senior level staff members from the Departments of Correction and Probation and several members of the judiciary ([picture 9](#)). They both gave introductory remarks instructing their departments to begin to implement Restorative Justice and Peacemaking into their departments as soon as possible. Dr. Angkana translated the lecture into Thai.

Professor Emeritus Khun (Lady – A designation by the Queen for exceptional service to the people of Thailand) Duangduen Bisaljustra, hosted a gathering at Bhdungsit Pittaya ([picture 10](#) at center in green), a private school (K-12, approx 1,200 students) in a very poor district in Bangkok, for leaders in that school and 20 other schools to hear a lecture by Roxanne and I on the implementation of Restorative Justice in schools, especially focusing on Discipline that Restores.

Dr. Suwatchara also arranged for Roxanne and me to be guest lecturers in a Social Work class at Thammasat University.

We were treated with honor and respect throughout our stay. Cars were provided by the Department of Corrections, Department of Probation, and Thammasat University to take us to meetings and each provided us with guided tours to such places as the Royal Palace (pictures [11,12](#)), Ayutthaya (the old city capital), several beautiful palaces of the King and Queen, and both campuses of Thammasat University ([picture 13](#)). We enjoyed New Year's Eve with thousands of Thai in the streets at the World Trade Center. We learned again of the rich history of Thailand, a country that was never colonized. We learned more of the strategies of peacemaking they employed to prevent colonial takeover. They demonstrated their acceptance of potentially hostile countries through architecture of the king's palaces ([picture 14](#)) and even a Buddhist temple in the style of a Christian Cathedral ([picture 15](#)). They argued that they were civilized already and demonstrated their civility in many ways including the use of knives, forks and spoons when that was considered important and helpful.

I look forward to our ongoing work together on Restorative Justice. In 2005 Thailand will host the United Nations Crime Congress, which might include a formal recommendation to member nations to implement Restorative Justice. I suspect that in the future, we will have much to learn from the emerging efforts in Thailand to implement Restorative Justice.

Before we left, I asked Dr. Angkana and Dr. Suwatchara why they had chosen me. The first answer was, it was God's will. Angkana then explained that Dr. Suwatchara asked her to search for a person who had both significant practitioner and theoretical experience, and who approached Restorative Justice from a spiritual perspective. They said that I was the one who emerged.

The experience was a wonderful gift to us. We have many new colleagues in Restorative Justice and more than that, we have new friends.