

**Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia**  
**Trinity Theological College, Singapore**

**South-East Asian Church-Archives Project**

**Project Coordinator: Dr Michael Nai-Chiu Poon** [mncpoon@ttc.edu.sg](mailto:mncpoon@ttc.edu.sg)

The Centre is embarking on a long-term project in archival research, with special emphasis on South-East Asia and Indo-China. Historically South-East Asia served as an important gateway to East Asia for the Dutch Reformed Church, and missionary societies in Britain and the United States of America. . The past fifty years have also been a period of major population movement and political realignment in East Asia. How Christians in this region faced change and how national churches emerged are important subjects of inquiry.

At present, the archives are housed in the Special Collections Room within Trinity Theological College Library. There are at present over four thousand microforms, in either microfilm or microfiche format, from the Harvard-Yenching Collection, Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Church Missionary Society, Conference of British Missionary Societies Archives, Methodist Missionary Society Archives, and Presbyterian Church of England Foreign Missions Archives. The Special Collections also serve as a depository for research theses on Asian Christianity of local researchers and emerging scholars from other parts of the world.

Our plan:

1. Firstly, the strengthening of library holdings and microfilm collections; in particular, (a) writings and biographies of Christian leaders in South-East Asia; and (b) copies of printed material from the former missionary presses in Singapore, Malacca, Jakarta, and other mission centres in the region.
2. Secondly, the dissemination, reflection and interpretation of archival material. We plan to publish monographs, in Asian languages and English, on the holdings, making key historical documents more easily available for post-graduate programmes on Asian Christianity in Trinity Theological College and for churches in South-East Asia.
3. Thirdly, the establishing of a digital image and document resource database for research and teaching of history of Christianity in Asia accessible on-line. This is of strategic importance in helping young churches in remote regions to become more confident of their identity.
4. Alongside this, we seek to promote and facilitate the preservation of church records among South-East Asian churches, to the end that we would be the regional repository of church archives. An immediate task is the collecting of personal reminiscences of Christian leaders over 65 years of age.

Mission archival research so far is mainly concentrated in the West. Often, scholarship is also detached from church life. The developing of an archival centre here in South-East Asia, in close partnership with national churches, in this century of major socio-political realignment, would go some way in helping the church today to take on a truly world-wide identity.

July 2004