PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONCEPTS OF 'RECORDS' AND 'ARCHIVES' IN THAILAND AND THE CURRENT ROLES OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF THAILAND (NAT)

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Abstract

An exploration of the definitions of 'record' and 'archive' in Thailand identifies not only the lack of integration of records and archives but also the Thai perception of archives as memory and heritage. This perspective determines the role of the National Archives of Thailand (NAT) to acquire, appraise, arrange, preserve, conserve, and provide access to archives in its holding. The law requires that non-current records of Thai public agencies be transferred to NAT and have their historical value appraised. In addition, under the National Archives Act of Thailand B.E. 2556 (A.D. 2013), NAT is required to record significant national events and oral history. The legal authority to manage public records belongs to the public agencies who own them. However, under the Office of the Prime Minister's Regulations on Records Management B.E. 2526 (A.D. 1983), No.2 B.E. 2548 (A.D. 2005), and No.3 B.E. 2562 (A.D. 2019), their authority to establish and manage records is overseen by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). The separation of authority for managing records and archives in Thailand plays a significant role in the functions of NAT. First, to ensure that non-current records are effectively transferred, NAT should collaborate with the OPM to develop guidelines to help Thai public agencies properly implement their record management systems. Second, to claim the records of significant national events and oral history as archives, NAT should develop national standards on how to collect, appraise, arrange, and provide access to them. Finally, the key requirement is that archives be recognised as both non-current records and reliable cultural heritage information in accordance with modern archival theories incorporating two archival paradigms: (1) evidence and (2) memory and heritage.

Introduction

The article aims to discuss perspectives on the concepts of 'record' and 'archive' in Thailand and their influence on the current roles of NAT. The discussion compares modern archival theories with Thai perspectives to help clearly understand the factors contributing to the difficulties of NAT, as a national archive, in developing its roles to both conform with modern archival theories and meet the needs of Thailand. Previous studies, in particular Poolsatitiwat (2017), found that the roles of NAT have been developed from the Thai perspective of archives as related only to historical documents and that this affects the development of NAT to pursue its roles as a national archive. Currently, NAT is facing difficulties in designing, implementing, and overseeing the record management systems in most Thai public agencies, although this is one of the four main roles of national archives according to modern archival theories (Kormendy, 2007; Yale, 2015; Roe, 2016).

To achieve this paper's goal, data from documentary research and semi-structured interviews was examined through a triangular analysis. Documentary research had two main approaches. The first was to study three key official documents: (1) the Office of the Prime Minister's Regulations on Records Management B.E. 2526 (A.D. 1983), No.2 B.E. 2548 (A.D. 2005), and No.3 B.E. 2562 (A.D. 2019); (2) the National Archives Act of Thailand B.E. 2556 (A.D. 2013); and (3) International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 15489-1: 2016 Information and documentation-Records management - Part 1: Concepts and principles. The second approach was to review literature on (1) the definitions of 'record' and 'archive', (2) the functions of archives, and (3) the roles of national archives. The semi-structured interviews were face-to-face and one-to-one interviews with 29 people working as chief executives, managers, division heads, and archivists at NAT, Bank of Thailand (BoT) Archives, Buddhadasa Indapanno Archives (BIA), and six university archives. The research results were analysed and discussed in four main parts: (1) the four main perspectives on the concepts of 'record' and 'archive' in Thailand, (2) the impacts of the unique Thai archival context on the functions of NAT, (3) the current roles of NAT as a national archive, and (4) recommendations to develop NAT to fulfil its roles.

The Four Main Perspectives on the Concepts of 'Record' and 'Archive' in Thailand

According to Poolsatitiwat (2017), the four main perspectives on the concepts of 'record' and 'archive' in Thailand are: (1) the definition of 'record' and 'archive', (2) the establishment and functions of archives, (3) the context of "being an archivist", and (4) the status of Thai archivists as a profession. Each perspective has a distinctive character that differs from those in modern archival theories. This context constitutes the specific nature of the archival paradigm in Thailand. The exploration of these four main perspectives, identified in Poolsatitiwat (2017), helps explain the current Thai archival concept and paradigm shaping the current roles of NAT.

Definitions of 'record' and 'archive'

A comparison of the definitions of 'record' and 'archive' in modern archival theories with those in Thailand reveals significant differences. Modern archival theories, particularly from anglophone countries, such as Pearce-Moses (2005), State of Queensland, Department of Public Works (2010), InterPARES 2 (2018), ARMA International (2007), International Council on Archives - Committee on Descriptive Standards (ICA-Committee on Standards, 1999), and International Organization for Standardization (ISO, 2016), view records as completed documents created as evidence of business transactions and activities and kept as evidence of those transactions and activities. Likewise, archives are non-current records or reliable cultural heritage information assessed to have enduring value and kept permanently as evidence and memory.

In Thailand, on the other hand, the Office of the Prime Minister's Regulations on Records Management B.E 2526 (A.D. 1983), No.2 B.E. 2548 (A.D. 2005), and No.3 B.E. 2562 (A.D. 2019), and the National Archives Act of Thailand B.E. 2556 (A.D. 2013) define records as documents that are: (1) sent to or received from others, (2) created as evidence or to comply with laws, or (3) written to provide information (Poolsatitiwat, 2017). Likewise, 'archive'

means non-current documents assessed to have historical value and kept permanently as historical evidence and national memory and cultural heritage (Poolsatitiwat, 2017).

In addition, data collected from the interviews defines 'archive' further as (1) a place founded for collecting archival records of national history and culture, or (2) documentaries, historical books, or chronicles regarding Thai history or historical events (Poolsatitiwat, 2017).

The above definitions of 'record' and 'archive' identify the different perspectives on records and archives. In modern archival theories, records are completed documents containing seven elements of being evidence, which are (1) content, (2) context, (3) structure, (4) completeness, (5) authenticity, (6) liability, and (7) usability. Archives are either non-current records or reliable cultural heritage information containing enduring value and kept for evidence and memory. From the Thai perspective, on the other hand, records are all types of documents including those incomplete or not having seven elements of being evidence. Archives are non-current documents, documentaries, historical books, and chronicles of historical value (but not necessarily enduring value, in terms of modern archival theories). Archives are kept specifically for historical evidence, national memory and heritage. This approach reflects the specific paradigm of archives in Thailand. Archives in Thailand are non-current documents kept as historical evidence and national memory and heritage.

The establishment and functions of archives

Thailand's definitions of 'record' and 'archive' play a major part in the purpose and functions of archives in Thailand. Data collected from both literature studies of the history of NAT, BoT, BIA, and six university archives and interviews with 29 archival staff working in these archives shows the relationship of the definition, the purpose, and the functions of archives in Thailand according to the following diagram (Poolsatitiwat, 2017)
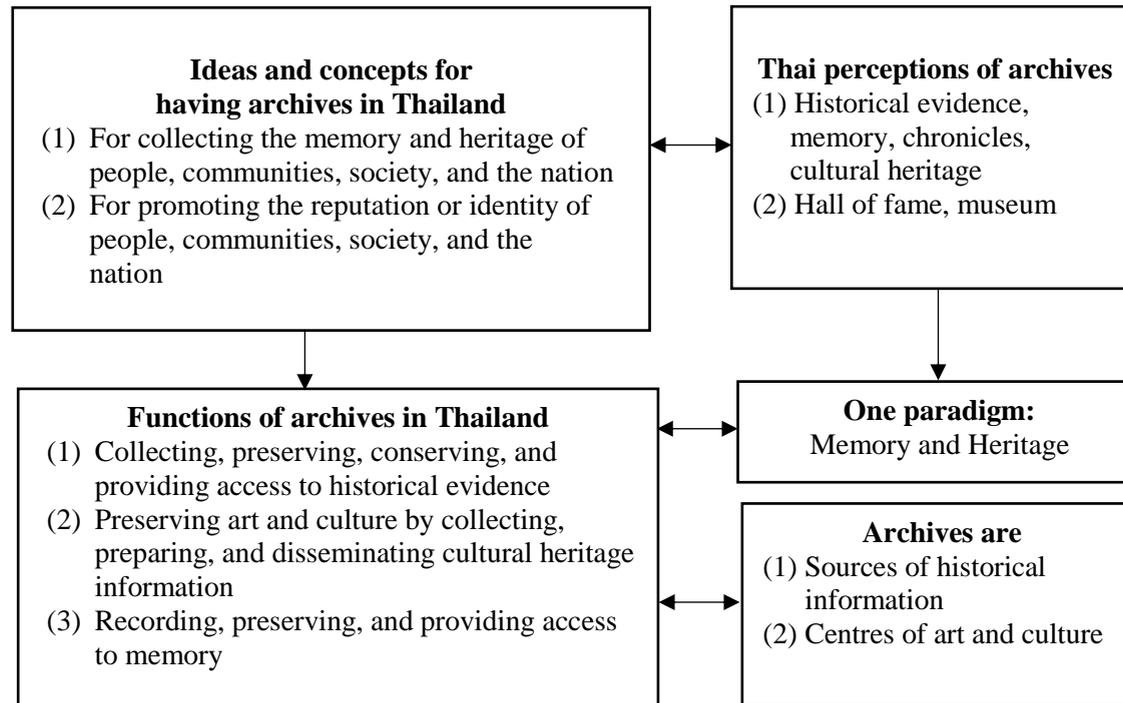
Figure 1: The Relationship Between the Definition and Functions of Archives from the Thai Perspective Adapted from Poolsatitiwat
(2017)

'Figure 1: The relationship between the definition and functions of archives from the Thai perspective' shows that the main purposes of establishing archives in Thailand and their current functions are related to two main elements. The first is associated with the view that archives are historical documents (not non-current records or completed documents of organisations as in modern archival theories). The second concerns the perspective that archival institutions are established to acquire, prepare, and disseminate cultural heritage information on well-known people, the central government, and the nation state (excluding reliable information on ordinary people, minority groups, and local communities to fill gaps in national history as in modern archival theories). The functions of archives from the Thai perspective are therefore to: (1) collect and keep any type of documents containing reliable cultural heritage information and (2) prepare and provide access to reliable cultural heritage information in terms of oral history, records of national memory, historical books. This implies that archivists working in Thailand may not need to understand archival theories since they are managing cultural heritage information not non-current records. They may need historical knowledge and practice to act as semi-historians to prepare oral history and historical books. This is reflected in perspectives on "being an archivist" in Thailand as well.

Perspectives on "being an archivist" in Thailand

Data from interviews with 29 archival staff working in NAT, BoT, BIA, and six university archives in Thailand reveal four main specific perspectives on "being an archivist" in Thailand. First, anyone and everyone can be an archivist in Thailand. Second, generic skills are more important than archival theory. Third, passion for working in their organisation is more significant than having an archival degree. Finally, archivists in Thailand are not recognised as a profession and the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC, 2011) categorises an archival position as non-professional. Poolsatitiwat (2017) concluded that: according to the perspectives of 29 archival staff, Thai archivists are people who do not want to be archivists but would like to work in archival institutions and should have qualifications that the archival

institutions need, which are not related to archival theory and practices on managing archives or transferring non-current records to archives, but the skills to fulfil the functions of archives, which are preserving, preparing, and providing access to historical documents and cultural heritage information.

This perspective also has a huge impact on developing the archival knowledge and professional status of archivists in Thailand.

The status of Thai archivists as a profession

Hughes and Hughes (2013) discuss how the professional status of any career depends on social recognition. Kallberg (2012) examines how to enhance the professional status of archivists and identifies three main factors: (1) the legal authority to enhance professional recognition, (2) the political power to support enhancement, and (3) the identity to recognise the existence of archivists. The analysis of an archival career in Thailand by Hughes and Hughes (2013) and Kallberg (2012) reveals that the professional status of archivists in Thailand cannot be enhanced due to a lack of the following three factors (Poolsatitiwat, 2017). First, the National Archives Act of Thailand B.E. 2556 (A.D. 2013) does not establish any roles and responsibilities for archivists. Thai archivists, in particular national archivists, therefore lack authority to act as professional archivists. Currently, no 'archival position' is recruited at any Thai public agencies except NAT and the Office of the Royal Secretariat (ORS). Some public agencies assign 'librarian positions' or other positions to manage their archives. Second, most archival institutions in Thailand are unconcerned by their lack of professional archivists because their missions can be performed by their staff without degrees in managing archives and records. This results in a lack of organisational support to enhance the professional status of Thai archivists. Finally, no archival positions at any archival institution in Thailand require an archival degree, and qualification is diverse, depending on totally different needs between institutions (Poolsatitiwat, 2017). Archivists at NAT, for instance, who are considered national archivists, are recruited for having degrees in history, humanities, languages, social sciences, or other areas in accordance with the specific needs of each section of NAT. After recruitment, new staff gain knowledge and skills for archive administration through (1) job

training, (2) meetings, (3) seminars or short courses, (4) overseas study visits, and (5) reading manuals by senior staff members, without attending any formal archival programme for an archival degree. Some of them personally decide, however, to spend their free time and money to take the only one formal archival programme operating in Thailand, at Silpakorn University. Some of them currently have obtained an MA in Archives and Records Management from this university.

In addition, the limited number of archival scholars in Thailand means few research projects are conducted to enhance the archival skills and expertise of those working as archivists or archival staff in archival institutions in Thailand. Likewise, archival practices, principles, and theories applicable to the context of Thailand have not been developed. This context prevents the specification of (1) the body of archival knowledge applicable to Thailand, (2) the qualification, knowledge, and skills that Thai archivists should have, and (3) the roles and responsibilities of archivists in Thailand. Consequently, archivists in Thailand are not recognised as a profession.

In conclusion, the four main perspectives on the concepts of 'record' and 'archive' in Thailand involve at least three specific archival perceptions. First, archives are regarded as memory and heritage. Second, archival institutions have been established for keeping historical documents and providing cultural heritage information. Third, anyone can be an archivist and national archivists are seen as semi-historians not professional archivists. The unique Thai archival context makes it hard to develop archival practices in Thailand in accordance with modern archival theories. In addition, the context has a huge impact on the functions of NAT.

The Impacts of the Unique Thai Archival Context on the Functions of NAT

Data collected from (1) the National Archives Act of Thailand B.E. 2556 (A.D. 2013), (2) interviews with the head of NAT, the heads of four sections in NAT, and eight archivists working at NAT, and (3) an analysis of the unique Thai archival context identifies the current functions of NAT as the following diagram (Poolsatitiwat, 2017).
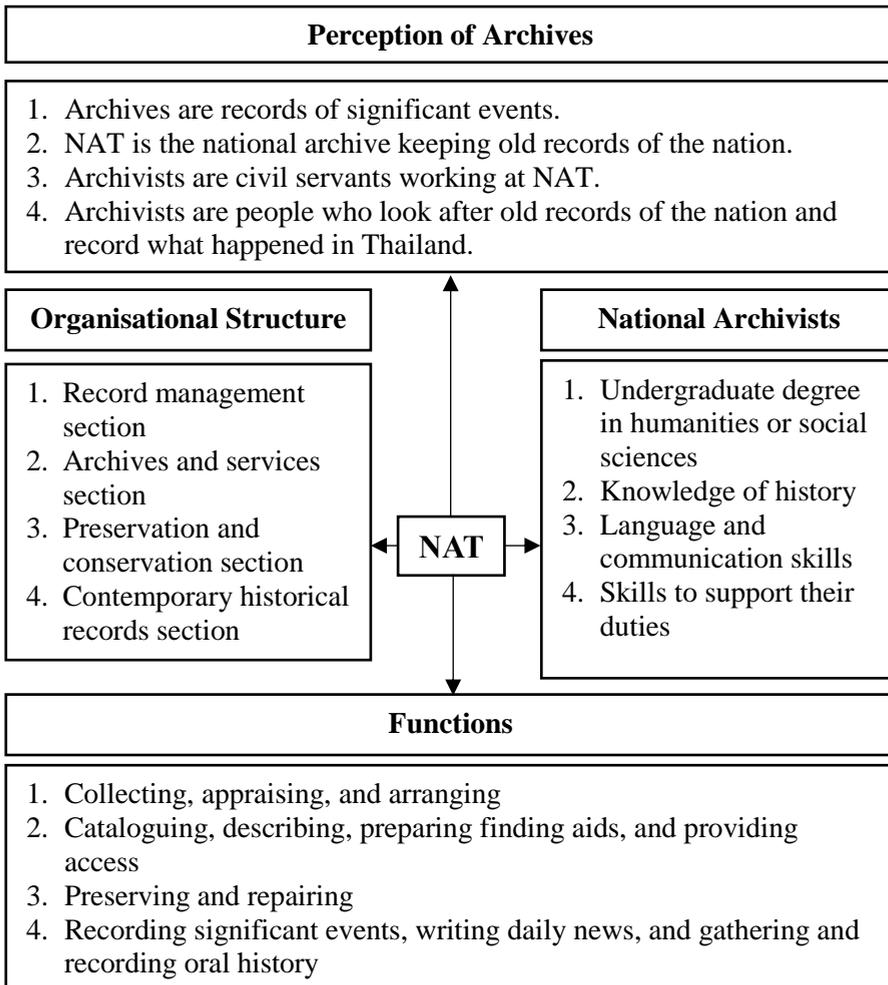

Perception of Archives

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1. Archives are records of significant events.
2. NAT is the national archive keeping old records of the nation.
3. Archivists are civil servants working at NAT.
4. Archivists are people who look after old records of the nation and record what happened in Thailand.

Organisational Structure

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1. Record management section
2. Archives and services section
3. Preservation and conservation section
4. Contemporary historical records section

NAT

National Archivists

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1. Undergraduate degree in humanities or social sciences
2. Knowledge of history
3. Language and communication skills
4. Skills to support their duties

Functions

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1. Collecting, appraising, and arranging
2. Cataloguing, describing, preparing finding aids, and providing access
3. Preserving and repairing
4. Recording significant events, writing daily news, and gathering and recording oral history

Figure 2: The Current Functions of NAT Adapted from Poolsatitiwat (2017)

Figure 2: The current functions of NAT' reveals the impact of the unique Thai archival context on the perspectives of the Thai government on (1) archives, (2) the structure and functions of national archives, and (3) the qualification of national archivists. NAT has been developed on the basis of the following three concepts.

Development of the national archive's structure to serve the perspective of archives as national memory

According to Poolsatitiwat (2017), the Thai government views archives as either records of significant national events or memories of the nation and NAT is responsible for keeping them. Archivists are civil servants working at NAT. Their main duties are looking after those archives and recording what happened in Thailand. This perspective is reflected in NAT's organisational structure, its function, and its staff's qualifications.

NAT's organisational structure has been developed into four main sections: (1) record management, (2) archives and services, (3) preservation and conservation, and (4) contemporary historical records.

Identification of the national archive's functions to serve only one archival paradigm

The perception of archives as only memory and heritage is reflected not only in NAT's structure but also in its functions. NAT has four main functions. The first is collecting, appraising, and arranging archives (seen from the Thai perspective as historical documents), and these duties are performed by the record management section. The second function is cataloguing, describing, preparing finding aids, and providing access to those archives, and these duties are carried out by the archives and services section. The third function is preserving and repairing those archives, and these duties are done by the conservation and preservation section. The fourth or final function is recording significant events, writing daily news, and gathering and recording oral history, and these duties are conducted by the contemporary historical records section.

Specification of national archivists to have knowledge in history not archive and record management

Since NAT serves only the memory and heritage paradigm, the qualification of its staff focuses on knowledge of history. Applicants for national archivist roles at NAT are required to have at least an undergraduate degree in the humanities or social sciences with at least 30 credits in history courses (OCSC, 2011). They should have language and communication skills, in particular academic writing skills in Thai and reading skills in English

(Poolsatitiwat, 2017). This background can help them fulfil their duties, especially recording significant national events and writing daily news. They must also have extra skills relevant to their duties, but an understanding of archival theory and practices regarding the whole process of archives management is not mandatory.

The structure and functions of NAT and the qualifications of its archivists contribute to its capacity to fulfil its role as a national archive. Kormendy (2007), Yale (2015), and Roe (2016) identify two significant roles of national archives, which are regarded in modern archival theory as the key functions of national archives. The first role is transferring public records and collecting national cultural heritage information to keep permanently as archives and the second is providing access to those archives. To comply with modern archival theories by successfully performing these two significant roles, NAT needs both the legal authority and the archival knowledge and practices to deal with (1) the design and oversight of record management systems in Thai public agencies, and (2) the preservation of Thai history and the construction of national identity. The current functions of NAT and the existing capacity of its archivists, however, may affect its performance in this regard.

Constraints on design and oversight of record management systems in Thai public agencies

Poolsatitiwat (2017), Rapeepatchai and Poolsatitiwat (2017), Poolsatitiwat (2019), and Kootiem and Poolsatitiwat (2018) discuss the constraints on NAT in designing and overseeing record management systems in Thai public agencies to comply with those identified in ISO (2016) and Shepherd and Yeo (2003). Their discussion reveals two factors contributing to these limitations. The first factor relates to the non-systematic record management system in most Thai public agencies characterised by the "4 Nos". The "first no" refers to "no record management policy". Record management policy has not been included in the working plans, strategies, and missions of most Thai public agencies. This leads to the "second no" of "no authorised record management unit". Thai public agencies tend to assign either a small unit, a person, or people to work with record keeping/management as part of their role or roles. They are provided with a partial authority limited to collecting and

depositing non-current records. In addition, not all Thai public agencies have established a central unit as a record management section. These omissions lead to the "third no", which is "no recordkeeping system". Most Thai public agencies have not formally implemented a central recordkeeping system. Each department generally keeps its records according to its own system created by those assigned to manage records. Likewise, staff responsible for managing records tend to have limited relevant knowledge since Thailand has no formal curriculum for record officers or record managers. These factors lead to the "fourth no", which is "no central file plan and retention schedule". Due to limited knowledge and record management personnel, not all Thai public agencies have created or implemented file plans and record retention schedules.

The "4 Nos" in most Thai public agencies hinder the management of public records in Thailand in accordance with both the Office of the Prime Minister's Regulations on Records Management B.E. 2526 (A.D. 1983), No.2 B.E. 2548 (A.D. 2005), and No.3 B.E. 2562 (A.D. 2019) and the National Archives Act of Thailand B.E. 2556 (A.D. 2013). Most Thai public agencies are unable to transfer their non-current records to NAT and need assistance implementing record management systems. However, to fulfil the need, NAT may require authority from the Thai government and cooperation from the Thai public agencies. NAT may also need to develop those assigned to manage records to have more knowledge of record management, as it is a significant tool to tackle the "4 Nos". The two requirements may necessitate expanding the role of NAT.

The second factor that limits NAT's role in helping implement a record management system in Thai public agencies relates to (1) its authority from the Thai government, (2) cooperation from Thai public agencies, and (3) its capacity. Poolsatitiwat (2017) and Kootiem and Poolsatitiwat (2018) identify these constraints. First, NAT lacks authority to design, implement, and oversee the record management systems of Thai public agencies because the National Archives Act of Thailand B.E. 2556 (A.D. 2013) and the Office of the Prime Minister's Regulations on Records Management B.E. 2526 (A.D. 1983), No.2 B.E. 2548 (A.D. 2005), and No.3 B.E. 2562 (A.D. 2019) do not give it that authority. NAT can only provide guidelines on creating retention schedules and consultancy to help Thai public agencies transfer non-current records to NAT

on time. But most Thai public agencies lack record management knowledge or human resources and budgets to create their own file plans and record retention schedules to comply with the guidelines and transfer their non-current records to NAT on time. These constraints prevent NAT from taking any active measures. NAT can only send notifications to Thai public agencies to transfer their records to comply with the two regulations.

According to Shepherd and Yeo (2003), Williams (2006), Poolsatitiwat (2017), Rapeepatchai and Poolsatitiwat (2017), Kootiem and Poolsatitiwat (2018), and Poolsatitiwat (2019), the practical response to these two factors should be to enhance NAT's role. NAT should take part actively as a centre to provide training or workshops on how to manage good recordkeeping and regularly publish resources such as manuals, guidelines, and standards to support Thai public agencies. In addition, NAT should take a role as an assistant to help those public agencies to create their own file plans and retention schedules. However, these two roles need both authority and knowledge. NAT should have authority to establish a centre for training in recordkeeping, and staff at Thai public agencies should attend training courses or workshops operated by the centre. Thai public agencies should also manage their records to comply with either manuals or standards developed by NAT. NAT's archivists should have expertise in record management, including how to create file plans and a record retention schedule. The question is whether NAT has the authority and capacity, since the Thai government, which supervises NAT, has equipped it to manage national historical documents not public records. The qualification of NAT's archivists has also focused on social sciences and history not archive and record management. This is reflected in NAT's role for national history but not non-current public records, as in modern archival theories. NAT therefore needs to develop its role in this regard to serve the unique Thai archival context.

The privileged role of a semi-historian to preserve and construct national history and identity by providing and preparing reliable cultural heritage information through historical documents related to significant national events, national daily news, and oral history

Poolsatitiwat (2017), Krahan and Poolsatitiwat (2017) and Wongbun and Poolsatitiwat (2018) discuss the unique function of NAT in contrast with

those identified in modern archival theories. The function relates to (1) the specific Thai archival context to regard archives only as national memory, cultural heritage, and identity and (2) the inclusion of the contemporary historical records department in the organisational structure of NAT.

Poolsatitiwat (2017) found that archives from the Thai perspective are historical sources with reliable information for the memory, cultural heritage, and identity of the Thai nation, whereas NAT is viewed as a state organisation with responsibility for preserving and preparing those archives for the Thai government and people. This perspective is reflected in both the structure and functions of NAT. The record management section has been developed to collect old documents of national historical value from both the public and private sectors. The archives and services section have been developed to arrange and provide access to those archives. The preservation and conservation section have been developed to preserve and conserve those archives. But the organisation's structure and functions do not address the role of designing and controlling public records before their transfer to NAT.

Krahan and Poolsatitiwat (2017) and Wongbun and Poolsatitiwat (2018) discuss how the Thai government has assigned two roles for NAT. The first is recording significant national events and collecting daily news. The role is quite similar to that of the royal scribe during the Ayutthaya and early Rattanakosin period in terms of recording significant events in the palace (Poolsatitiwat, 2017). The second role is of a 'semi-historian'. NAT must provide Thai society with reliable information on significant national events and daily news by publishing reference books: archives of significant national events and a year book of national news. The contemporary historical records department has been developed to serve these two roles, which derive from Thai tradition and have never been included in other national archives.

The unique roles of NAT, differing from the roles of archives in modern archival theories, have a huge impact on its current roles as a national archive.

The Current Roles of NAT as a National Archive

Cook (1997), Flinn (2012), Brown (2013), and Cook (2013) discuss the significance of archives and identify three aspects: (1) reliable information, (2)

evidence and good governance, and (3) memory and heritage. The three perspectives play an important role in managing archives, in either paper or digital form, and can be summarised in the following table:

Table 1: The Current Roles of Archives

Information perspective	Evidence and good governance perspective	Cultural heritage perspective
Archives provide reliable information and can be used for reference.	Records are evidence representing transparency, accountability, and good governance.	Archives are not only non-current records but also contain reliable cultural heritage information.
Archives should be accessible for appropriately qualified individuals.	To be used as evidence, archives as non-current records must be kept by protecting their content, context, structure, integrity, authenticity, reliability, and usability.	Archival institution must collect, prepare, keep, and provide access to cultural heritage information.
The needs of users are increasingly considered for services and access to archives.	As non-current records, archives must have restricted access to comply with the law.	To be used as information, archives as cultural heritage information should be provided as information not records.
Online services and keyword searching are used to attract more users.		

'Table 1: The current roles of archives' identifies three main aspects dominating the current concept of archives. First, accurate data is contained in records whereas reliable information is created from accurate data and used for effective innovation. Second, records must be kept for evidence and used for making correct decisions and fair judgments and these are the significant criteria for the good governance of organisations. Third, memory and heritage constitute identity and are derived from archives, which are mostly collected from records. Therefore, currently, archives comprise three main perspectives: (1) information, (2) evidence, and (3) cultural heritage.

But Poolsatitiwat (2017) and Wongbun and Poolsatitiwat (2019) argue that the unique Thai archival context means the roles of archives in Thailand

currently have only two perspectives. The first concerns the three aspects of information. First, archives provide reliable information on history and can be used for reference. Second, archives should be accessible but access must be restricted to comply with laws on freedom of information and personal data protection. Third, information technology such as online catalogues, online access, and mobile applications are increasingly considered for providing services and access to archives. The second perspective concerns three aspects of the cultural heritage perception. First, archives are historical evidence containing cultural heritage information that must be collected and kept for disseminating culture. Second, archival institutions must collect, prepare, keep, and provide access to cultural heritage information. Third, to provide more reliable cultural heritage information, archival institutions should act as semi-historians by providing documentaries, textbooks, and exhibitions. This context gives two distinctive roles for NAT that may differ from those in modern archival theories.

Promoting national identity and disseminating Thai culture

Kormendy (2007) and Yale (2015) discuss how national archives should preserve and provide access to archives or non-current records transferred from public agencies and how national archives should have the authority to design and oversee the record management systems of public agencies. The concept of archives in modern archival theories like Kormendy (2007) and Yale (2015) cannot be fully implemented in Thailand, where archives are not regarded as non-current records. Archives in Thailand are non-current documents and reliable cultural heritage information kept as historical evidence, and national archives are the place to keep and disseminate them as the source of national history including using them to construct national identity. In this regard, the core functions of NAT consist of only two main functions. The first function is promoting national identity and disseminating Thai culture according to government policy (Wongbun and Poolsatitiwat, 2018). To achieve this function, NAT (1) records significant national events assigned by the government, (2) publishes history textbooks on significant national events, (3) issues a national daily newsletter approved by the government, and (4) exhibits archives to promote national identity.

Providing historical evidence for historical research

The second function is providing evidence for research into national history. To achieve this function, NAT (1) collects and appraises non-current documents transferred from public agencies or donated or purchased, (2) arranges and describes non-current documents that are appraised to be kept permanently as archives, (3) preserves and conserves them, (4) provides access to them, and (4) exhibits them to promote national history.

Data from interviews with the head and archivists of NAT also identifies the approaches NAT has developed to fulfil the two distinctive roles (Poolsatitiwat, 2017). The approaches are (1) sharing experience, (2) on-the-job training, and (3) publishing archival manuals. The context, however, in which most NAT archivists lack an archival degree and have not conducted sufficient research to develop the body of archival knowledge to fit with both the unique Thai archival context and modern archival theories, presents many challenges (Poolsatitiwat, 2017). NAT's three approaches may be inadequate in their current forms to answer the questions it now faces:

(1) How to collect and appraise hybrid and digital non-current records transferring from public agencies whose records may not be kept systematically in the standardised record management system?

(2) How to preserve and conserve hybrid and digital archives that need technological knowledge to protect their content, context, and structure?

(3) How to check the reliability of data and information used for preparing cultural heritage information in the forms of oral history, historical reference books, and national daily newsletters?

(4) How to ensure the reliability of historical reference books and national newsletters as primary evidence in historical research?

(5) How to provide online access to the archive to comply with laws and fulfil users' needs?

To answer these five questions, NAT needs to understand three main factors derived from the unique Thai archival context and contributing to the challenges. The first factor is the separation of legal authority to manage records and archives between the OPM and NAT. Records are controlled by the OPM under the Office of the Prime Minister's Regulations on Records Management B.E. 2526 (A.D. 1983), No.2 B.E. 2548 (A.D. 2005), and No.3 B.E. 2562 (A.D.

2019). Archives are managed by NAT under the National Archives Act of Thailand B.E. 2556 (A.D. 2013). Both laws require public agencies to transfer their non-current records to NAT without enforcement. This implies that non-current records, which are controlled by the OPM but are created, kept, and deposited by the public agencies, will be transferred to NAT only when the public agencies are ready and willing to do so. Similarly, NAT has no authority to deal with public records, although they are the primary sources of archives. The second factor is the lack of a central record management unit and system among most Thai public agencies. The term 'records' and knowledge of record management have not been fully developed and implemented in Thailand. Most Thai public agencies have appointed neither a records officer or a records manager position. The third and final factor is the Thai archival paradigm of archives as only memory and heritage. Unlike the Thai archival paradigm, modern archival theories have two paradigms for archives, as either non-current records or reliable cultural heritage information. They are both evidence representing good governance, and memory and heritage for constructing identity and recognition.

The above three factors limit NAT's capacity to develop its archival practices to respond to the five questions it currently faces. The development of the following mechanisms, however, may help NAT enhance its role as a national archive, conforming with modern archival theories and the needs of Thailand.

Recommendations to Develop NAT to Fulfill Its Role

The first mechanism is assistance to establish and monitor the record management system in each public agency. Good practices in managing public records at the National Archives of Malaysia (NAM) demonstrate this approach's significant success. NAM sent each Malaysian public agency at least one national archivist to assist in designing and implementing the agency's record management system. Then, to ensure that the system would be effective and that non-current records would be transferred to NAM systematically, NAM monitored the system through two main tools: direct consultancy and awards. NAM provided each Malaysian public agency with one of its archival staff

members to act as a record consultant. The public agencies were able to consult with their record consultant anytime. The award, in the form of a certificate, is given every year to the public agency with the highest score in the monitoring system run by NAM. The first mechanism helped NAM receive non-current records of all Malaysian public agencies regularly and consistently.

The second mechanism is establishing an information technology (IT) unit and gaining government assistance. NAM's example also shows how to successfully manage digital records and archives. NAM developed its own IT unit, which requested assistance from the Information Technology Division of the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) to develop a national standard for managing public digital records. MAMPU was established by the Malaysian government to modernise and reform the national administrative system including digital records. MAMPU's assistance helped NAM implement a national standard to deal with digital records of all Malaysian public agencies. This enhances NAM's capacity to manage digital non-current records transferred from each Malaysian public agency, as most of those records have been managed to comply with the standard since their creation. The second mechanism helps NAM tackle the lack of IT literacy to manage records and archives in the digital world effectively.

The third and last mechanism is establishing a research unit to develop archival principles and practices applicable to the unique Thai archival context. NAT is required to record national significant events, collect national daily news, gather and record oral history, including the preparation of national cultural heritage information in the forms of a historical reference book on each national significant event and a yearly book on national news. These tasks are archival work from the Thai perspective. To provide archives and primary evidence for historical research, NAT should conduct research to develop relevant national standards. Duranti (1993) and Gilliland and McKemmish (2004) examine how archival principles, standards, and theories have been developed through research and how archivists should develop them to fit with the context of their institutions. Conducting research, therefore, can help NAT develop a national archival standard applicable to the Thai context and the third mechanism can help NAT achieve this aim.

The above three mechanisms imply that NAT needs (1) authority and cooperation from the Thai government, the OPM, and public agencies, (2) expertise in record and archive management, and (3) IT support. The question is whether NAT can obtain these requirements since the Thai government and the OPM have not perceived archives as non-current records. Archives in their perspective are historical documents or cultural heritage information kept to disseminate national history and culture. Archives, therefore, are managed by archivists, who are regarded as semi-historians, under the responsibility of NAT, the Fine Arts Department, and Ministry of Culture. They have also viewed digital records as digital information that should be developed by IT professionals under the responsibility of the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society. In addition, most archivists working at NAT do not have an archival degree and are not regarded as professional archivists. Research on records and archives in Thailand is also constrained by the scarcity of archival scholars and professionals. This context may reduce the possibility of implementing the three mechanisms to tackle NAT's current challenges. The Thai archival paradigm and the specific Thai archival context mean NAT should implement the following recommendations, as they are the first step to implementing the three mechanisms.

Increasing the functions of NAT to fit with the roles of a national archive according to modern archival theories and the needs of Thailand

Data analysis and discussions show NAT's limited capability for dealing with public records and this results in its inefficient acquisition. To enhance its limited authority, NAT should set up an official unit to work closely with the OPM, the office with authority to deal with public records, to produce step-by-step guidelines or manuals on implementing a central record keeping system including the creation of file plans and record retention schedules. In addition, NAT should consult with the senior officers of each public agency on applying the guidelines or manuals at their agency. NAT should provide them and their records officers with seminars, training courses, workshops, or information on implementing a central recordkeeping system, including how to create a file plan and record retention schedule. These measures can help the

agencies see the need to manage their records systematically from creation through to transfer to NAT.

The number of public digital records and archives in Thailand has been increasing dramatically. The management of digital records and archives needs both IT knowledge and professionals. NAT should consult with the Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture, and the OPM to request IT professionals to help produce guidelines, manuals, or standards both for managing digital records from their creation and for managing digital archives to ensure they stay updated.

Finally, in the unique archival Thai context, NAT's roles include preparing reliable national cultural heritage information in the form of historical reference books. To fulfil its unique role, NAT should assign its archival staff members in the contemporary historical records division to conduct research into creating a national standard. Without such a standard, this reliable cultural heritage information cannot achieve international acceptance.

Developing archival knowledge in Thailand to fit with the two paradigms of archives identified in modern archival theories

According to Duranti (1993), the body of archival knowledge should be developed to comply both with the concept of archives as evidence, memory, and heritage and with the context of each society. This development can be achieved through study, practice, and research by both archival scholars and professional archivists. The data analysis and discussion, however, show the differences (Poolsatitiwat, 2017). Most archival staff members working at NAT lack an archival degree but are able to fulfil their duties through on-the-job training that includes (1) sharing knowledge and practice with the senior archivists working in their section, (2) attending workshops to enhance their archival knowledge and practices, and (3) writing manuals on their duties to fulfil the requirements for promotion. These methods lead to the working problem of silo mentality. Most NAT staff are expert in their duties but cannot deal with the whole process of archive management. Archivists in the preservation and conservation division, for example, have been trained to be expert in preserving and conserving archives but are unable to acquire, appraise, arrange, prepare descriptions, and even provide access to archives. In addition,

the Thai government, the Ministry of Culture, and the Fine Arts Department, including Thai society, have not recognised archivists as a profession. The archivist position in NAT is not categorised as a profession in the Thai Civil Servant System. Likewise, most archival staff in Thailand, excluding those working in NAT, do not regard themselves as professional archivists.

The lack of archival scholars and professionals has prevented the development of the body of archival knowledge applicable to the unique Thai context. NAT staff have produced many manuals but this cannot take the place of research. NAT should consult with the Fine Arts Department and the Ministry of Culture to ask for research funding and should assign staff members with archival degrees to conduct research in this regard. This research could help NAT gain enough rigorous data to negotiate with the Thai government to implement the three mechanisms.

Developing national archivists able to work as professional archivists

Due to the unique Thai archival context in which archives are seen as collections of historical document and national archivists are viewed as semi-historians, NAT is under the Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture. The top executive and most senior officers in the Fine Arts Department do not fully understand modern archival theories and do not realise that archivists are professionals. Poolsatitiwat (2017) discusses the problematic cycle of the lack of professional identity among Thai archivists. The cycle relates to archival degrees, recognition, and motivation. Poolsatitiwat (2017) suggests an approach to tackle the cycle. First, national archivists should have archival degrees and recognise themselves as professional archivists. This would help motivate them to enhance their professional status in society. They should then enhance their professional status by engaging in study, practice, and research to prove that they have sufficient archival knowledge and expertise to develop the body of archival knowledge appropriate for (1) modern archival theories, (2) the unique Thai archival context, and (3) the needs of Thailand. This process would help both Thai society and government to recognise their identity and regard them as professional archivists. Without professional recognition, NAT will struggle to

enhance its authority to fulfil its role as a national archive according to modern archival theories.

Since having professional archivists is the key requirement, NAT should consult with the Fine Arts Department and the Ministry of Culture to obtain scholarships for its staff. NAT staff should be regarded as professional archivists and this would be enhanced by having both archival degrees and expertise. Most NAT staff already have expertise in their archival work. To solve the problem of silo mentality, NAT could train its staff to deal with the whole process of archive management through job training and workshops. This cannot replace an archival degree, however. NAT staff members would still need one to qualify as professionals, as it is a major requirement for OCSC to justify professional status for any position in the Thai civil servant system. NAT, therefore, should require its current staff to study for an archival degree through scholarships, rewards, and promotion. With enough recognised professional archivists to conduct research and negotiate with relevant authorities, NAT would be able to implement the three mechanisms.

Conclusion

In summary, the four main perspectives on the concepts of 'record' and 'archive' in Thailand construct the unique Thai archival context, which differs from the roles identified in modern archival theories. As the Thai archival paradigm perceives archives only as memory and heritage, archives in Thailand have been established for collecting, preserving, and providing historical documents and cultural heritage information. Likewise, archival staff members working in any archival institution in Thailand are not regarded as professional archivists but as semi-historians, librarians, document administrators, or museum managers. These perceptions have a huge impact on NAT, as a national archive, in developing its roles to comply both with modern archival theories and with the unique Thai archival context including the expectations of the Thai government.

NAT is currently unable to fulfil its role as a national archive according to modern archival theories. NAT faces difficulties in enhancing its role to manage public records since the Thai government, the OPM, Thai public

agencies, and even the Fine Arts Department and Ministry of Culture, have not seen the relationship between public records and archives. From their perspective, records are created and used for organisational purposes, whereas archives are historical documents kept for national identity and cultural dissemination. This view is reflected in the Thai government's system to manage records and archives. The authority to deal with records is allocated to the OPM while NAT is responsible only for managing archives. NAT, therefore, has limited authority to participate in designing, implementing, and controlling the record management system of any public agency in Thailand, although this is one of the main roles of a national archive in modern archival theories.

In addition, to serve the unique Thai archival context and the expectations of the Thai government, NAT has to record significant national events and disseminate national cultural heritage information through publishing historical reference books. These are not roles for a national archive in modern archival theories, although Upward (1996) and Cook (2013) include reliable cultural heritage information as one part of archives. Archival institutions and archivists collect reliable cultural heritage information but do not publish historical information.

To meet the two different expectations, and fulfil its authority provided by the Thai government and regulations, NAT should develop at least two practical measures. First, NAT should strengthen its collaboration with the OPM, senior officers in each Thai public agency, and the national IT agency to create guidelines on implementing a public hybrid and digital record management system and help each Thai public agency introduce and maintain this system. The other measure is to conduct research to implement a national standard on acquiring records of significant national events and related materials to be kept as archives. The two approaches cannot succeed, however, unless national archivists working at NAT are developed to become professional archivists, with archival knowledge and expertise to conduct archival research and create a national standard for records and archives applicable to the Thai context and in compliance with modern archival theories. This is the only practical way to enhance archival knowledge and practices in Thailand to achieve the two archival paradigms of evidence and memory and heritage.

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