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*Walter Vella had an affection for and
a deep understanding of the Thai people.
Those of us who knew Walter and
who likewise loved him mourn his passing.
May his soul find eternal peace.*

English Missionaries Among the Thai

KENNON BREAZEALE

It was not a good choice of years for any foreigner to be arriving in the Thai kingdom, especially not for an Englishman. The king had ascended from a position of power rather than status by birth, having half-brothers of higher princely rank, the elder of whom was rumored to be the rightful heir. He was a scant three years on the throne, and had inherited from his father an awkward position to the south in his rebellious Malay dependencies adjacent to the English settlement at Penang Island. In the northeast he was embroiled in a war with his largest Lao dependency. From the west there were fears of a renewed invasion by the Burmese; and before long there were to be major wars in the east and the far north as well. It was a reign filled with suspicion and anxiety, that knew no peace with its neighbors. The English East India Company had just taken possession of the peninsular lands of Burma, peopled by the Mons; and the contiguous Thai territories across the mountains—indeed, even Bangkok itself—were heavily populated by their Mon relatives. The Rajah of Kedah for many years had been living in the safety of the Penang settlement, following an incursion by Thai soldiers into Kedah. Was it possible the English would use these bases to move next against the Thai kingdom itself? They were obviously a most powerful neighbor. They had defeated the Burmese, whose armies had often proved tactically superior to those of the Thai. Their ships were swifter and stronger, carrying immeasurably greater fire power, as the Thai well knew as a result of their own frequent trading missions aboard Chinese-style junks to Singapore. There were at the time rumors that Buddhism would be vanquished by a foreign religion, which many interpreted as a reference to Christianity. And there was also the anxiety among Bangkok officials over which side the English might support in the Thai war with Kedah.¹ In spite of misgivings and much opposition in Bangkok, the English Company had obtained only two years earlier a treaty with the Thai kingdom in order to begin opening the port of Bangkok to foreign trade—a unique docu-

ment concluded at a time when all the surrounding kingdoms were strongly resisting the idea of formal relations of any sort with anyone.

Into this inauspicious setting sailed the first two representatives from the London Missionary Society (LMS), aboard a Chinese junk from Singapore, arriving at Bangkok in August 1828. Charles Gutzlaff was sponsored by the English Society, although a Prussian by birth, with unofficial connections in the Dutch missions of the East Indies. He was already far more at home in the Orient than his companion, Jacob Tomlin, who was fresh out from England to the Malacca mission of the Society that very year.² One of the first important men they met in Bangkok was the *Phra Khlang* (a kind of combined treasury and foreign affairs minister), a kindly old man whom they first encountered sitting on a bamboo bench at home, working in his carpentry shop, clad in nothing more than a sarong.³ Although he was one of the most powerful individuals in the kingdom, and the minister charged with foreign affairs, he had never heard of the German people, and could not quite make out where Gutzlaff had come from.⁴

The two new arrivals found themselves practically alone as Europeans in Bangkok. The only resident Europeans at the time were an English merchant, Robert Hunter, who had arrived at Singapore in 1821 and subsequently began to trade to the settlement from Bangkok;⁵ several French Catholic priests, who limited their efforts to the native Portuguese-mestizo Christian community, and whom Tomlin regarded as the 'greatest enemies' of the Protestant missions;⁶ and finally the Portuguese consul Carlos de Silveira. The consul, a Brazilian by birth, had been in Bangkok for eight years already.⁷ He was a liberal Catholic, however, and having little to do with the priests, he did not hesitate to provide housing for the two new arrivals in a little cottage on the riverbanks. There, they were in the midst of the largest concentration of the poorest classes in the entire kingdom. In those days, land-based Bangkok was an agglomerate of villages, separated by gardens and padi fields, connected by footpaths that became muddy and difficult to negotiate during the monsoon season already in progress when Tomlin and Gutzlaff landed. The royal city situated along the east bank was an exception, with its solidly built palaces and temples, defended by a city wall with concentric canals beyond. A Chinese commercial quarter was in the making, too. The remainder of the population lived and worked in the innumerable floating bamboo houses and shops that lined the riverbanks and canals, naturally relying on small boats as the principle means of transport.

The city was not just alien to them, but also wary of them. Protestant-style missionary work was something entirely new to the people of

Bangkok, who regarded the existing Catholic community as just another peculiarity of a city with a very heterogeneous population drawn from throughout the mainland of Southeast Asia and China. The appearance of these two strange individuals who, unlike the quiescent Catholic community, went about talking of religion to everyone indiscriminately, naturally aroused a certain amount of suspicion. One man came to investigate them because, in his home village some distance away, an old man had predicted that the millennium was drawing near and that holy men would soon appear. It was imagined by some that this might mean Tomlin and Gutzlaff!⁸ Many people in Bangkok, including the king, thought they might merely be spies, perhaps sent to prepare the way for an English attack on Bangkok. These fears were heightened by the appearance in a nearby provincial town of a young girl claiming to be the reincarnation of a princess who had died in Bangkok. Although threatened with death by the court if she continued to persist in the claim, the girl adamantly insisted that she was indeed the princess reborn in another body. A great stir arose in official circles after a high-ranking *bhikkhu* interpreted the episode to mean that some disaster would befall the kingdom; fanciful imaginations immediately focused on an English invasion, adding credibility to the theory that Tomlin and Gutzlaff were spies.⁹

Much suspicion was aroused also by the religious pamphlets that were brought from the Malacca press and distributed liberally by the two foreigners. The tracts were all printed in Chinese, which the Thai themselves, of course, could not read. The king, having a set collected and translated, found nothing really dangerous in them, however, and no seizures were made at first.

Unfortunately, a major political scandal was brewing just as the foreigners arrived; and this was to have an adverse effect on their work almost from the beginning. The explanations of the scandal vary. According to one source, a group of licentious *bhikkhus* were discovered in an attempt to enter the royal harem, with the help of two princes.¹⁰ According to another, the king had tried to conscript the *bhikkhus* for state services—probably in the Lao war the year before—against which they rebelled.¹¹ At any rate, several hundred of them were arrested. In the confusion, an edict was issued prohibiting anyone from accepting any more of the missionaries' pamphlets. Some tracts were actually seized from the Chinese; then Consul de Silveira was censured, obliging the missionaries to move temporarily to Hunter's house; and finally Hunter was approached about the possibility of shipping the pair out of the kingdom.¹²

Part of the difficulty at first was that they were working mainly

among the Chinese, because Gutzlaff was already fluent in the Chinese language and also because few Thai came to see them. They were thus suspected of being spies sent to organize the Chinese community to assist an English attack.¹³ After the scandal, and when they were in danger of being expelled from the country, Gutzlaff went to the deputy *Phra Khlang* minister, who understood Chinese (and was probably at least part-Chinese himself), in order to explain fully the purpose of the mission and the nature of their work.¹⁴ They appealed also to the provisions of the recent treaty, which vaguely recognized the right of Englishmen to visit the country so long as they did not contravene any of its laws.¹⁵ The *Phra Khlang* himself finally informed them that no one would object to their work, if only they would act quietly and discreetly.

After the initial fright, life soon settled into a regular pattern. They found that, in spite of the edict, the curious were still seeking them out and taking away the Chinese pamphlets. Indeed, within their first two months they gave away twenty-five of the twenty-seven boxes of tracts that they had brought with them.¹⁶ Gutzlaff was particularly popular because he was a physician. Soon, Teochiu (Swatowese) and Cantonese speakers, as well as Vietnamese residents of Bangkok who could communicate with him through the use of Chinese characters, were coming in droves for consultations and medicines.¹⁷ Some were women, including Vietnamese ladies educated well enough to read the Chinese pamphlets.¹⁸ One visitor was a Cantonese woman who claimed the distinction of being the sole genuine Chinese woman living in Bangkok.¹⁹ Nonetheless, few Thai people ever bothered to pay a call.

Tomlin was not in good health; and he finally conceded to what he deemed "the will of God." Leaving Gutzlaff to continue the mission work alone, Tomlin departed in May 1829 on a schooner bound for India with a cargo of sugar.²⁰ Within three months of his return to Singapore he married another missionary.²¹ He and his wife Sarah were then sent to the Society's station on the island of Java, where they spent the latter part of 1829 and early 1830, returning to Singapore in May 1830 because of Tomlin's continuously declining health.²²

Gutzlaff had written to Tomlin in July 1829 with the news that Consul de Silveira had decided to leave Bangkok, and that shortly Gutzlaff and the two remaining French priests would be the sole Europeans in the city.²³ Hunter had already left, and another trader, Captain Steward, had long since left on his schooner with Tomlin. An American Captain Coffin had stopped at Bangkok in January 1829, but he too had already departed, taking to America the famous Siamese twins and also an appeal from Gutzlaff to the American churches to organize an American mission to the Thai.²⁴ There are no records to show how

much longer Gutzlaff remained. He did not correspond with the Society in London, and his letters to the Straits missions have not been preserved. Instead of going to China as he was planning, he returned to Singapore, where he married Miss Maria Newell of the Society. Together they left Singapore in February 1830 to return to Bangkok.²⁵ Mrs. Gutzlaff, who knew the Chinese language already, was learning Vietnamese as well; and the couple continued the work begun the previous year. Their twin daughters were born in Bangkok in February 1831—probably the first Europeans to be born in the new Thai capital. One of the infants died at birth, followed by the mother a few hours later.²⁶

Meanwhile, another of Gutzlaff's appeals had reached Dr. David Abeel, an American missionary in China who was a minister of the Dutch church in North America. Abeel went to Singapore in 1831, where he joined Tomlin.²⁷ Sarah Tomlin went to stay at the Malacca mission while her husband and Abeel proceeded to Bangkok together, expecting to join Gutzlaff. Having suffered much insuccess and the loss of his wife, Gutzlaff had already found passage aboard a Chinese junk to Tientsin and had gone downriver from Bangkok on June 3. He was delayed a fortnight on the bar at the mouth of the river, during which time he received news that his surviving infant daughter, left in the care of friends, had died. His junk finally sailed from the river on June 18.²⁸ Only twelve days later, on June 30, Tomlin and Abeel arrived at the bar on their way up from Singapore.²⁹

Tomlin and Abeel continued the mission work for another half year. But in January 1832 they started out again for Singapore on a merchant ship commanded by Captain C. L. Shaw, carrying Hunter (who had returned to Bangkok) and another merchant named McDonald.³⁰ Tomlin rejoined his wife but never visited the Thai kingdom again because of his poor health. The Society in London was dissatisfied with his work and dismissed him officially in a letter dated November 1832, although because of the slow communications of the times he was still at Malacca in the middle of the following year.³¹

Abeel returned alone to Bangkok in May 1832, distributing religious tracts to junks, which he hoped would take them to China. This work apparently very much annoyed the high officials in the capital—who were, by this time, involved in major wars with the Vietnamese and with the Malays of Kedah again. Abeel encountered far more obstruction than his predecessors.³² His departure in November 1832 from the kingdom³³ marks the end of the missions sponsored by the LMS, which had lasted slightly more than four years altogether.

There was a fifth missionary from the Society who travelled in the

kingdom but never went up to the capital. Dr. Walter Henry Medhurst, who served at the Malacca mission from 1816 and then on Java from 1822 to 1843,³⁴ had himself suggested the 1828 mission to Bangkok, back in 1826, including a possible general tour of Indochina as well.³⁵ He had intended to accompany the first mission but arrived at Singapore only a few days in 1828 after Tomlin and Gutzlaff had sailed for the first time. Unable to find any trader bound for Bangkok or Cochinchina, he obtained passage on a junk stopping at all the towns on the eastern side of the Malay Peninsula as far north as Songkhla, returning to Singapore by the same route, during August, September, and October.³⁶ Eventually in 1843 he, like many others, moved to China itself, never having seen Bangkok at all, in spite of several plans to do so dating back to 1821 when he was residing at the Malacca mission.³⁷

Only five missionaries sponsored by the LMS visited the Thai kingdom during the years 1828 to 1832. Nonetheless, with the exception of a few months at the end of 1829 and early 1830 (when Gutzlaff was at Singapore) and early 1832 (when Tomlin and Abeel went to Singapore), an LMS mission existed in Bangkok for a period of four years. Tomlin, Medhurst, and Mrs. Gutzlaff were English; Gutzlaff was German and Abeel was American. All of them, except Tomlin, were trained primarily to work among the Chinese, which is one of the reasons why the Thai mission never became a permanent one. There are numerous other reasons for the failure to establish a lasting mission, besides the simple factor of limited financial resources. An important consideration was that the LMS missions in the Straits Settlements themselves were not permanent. But to understand this in relation to their plans for the Thai people, one should first examine briefly the formation of the Straits missions.

The Straits Settlements Missions

The London Missionary Society was founded in 1795. In the Far East, missionaries were sent to China first, and some of them began appearing in the Straits Settlements during the Napoleonic wars, at the time (1811-1818) when Java was temporarily under British control. It was Dr. Morrison, a missionary at Canton, who first suggested to the directors of the Society that Malacca would be an excellent center for a seminary where missionaries could learn the languages of the surrounding countries.³⁸ During 1813-1814 one of his Canton colleagues, William Milne, made a tour of the Malay Peninsula and East Indies, visiting Java, Sumatra, and Penang.³⁹ He stopped at Malacca in June 1813, where the East India Company's governor, Colonel Farquhar, indicated

that the Company would allow missionaries to reside in the settlement. And in February 1815 the directors despatched Reverend Thompson from London, with instructions to go out and found a mission there.⁴⁰ Unknown at that moment to the Society in London, Milne at Canton was writing in the very same month to them that he had already agreed with Morrison to establish six or seven new branches of the China mission and that the ones in Malaya and Java would come under his own supervision. He envisaged central bases in the peninsula and Java, which would allow an expansion of the work into the Thai kingdom, Cochinchina, and especially into China itself.⁴¹ Milne left Canton in April 1815, arriving at Malacca in May to found the first Straits Settlements mission.⁴²

Toward the end of September 1815, Mr. and Mrs. Thompson arrived at Malacca from England.⁴³ When the decision was being taken to found a Malacca mission and send Thompson out, the directors had obtained information from the renowned East Indies scholar Marsden that there might be as many as ten thousand Chinese at Malacca, certainly more than half the total population.⁴⁴ Milne himself was highly enthusiastic about the prospects for the missions in relation to the Chinese there and emphasized the need for written Chinese scriptures, since many of the inhabitants, whether they spoke Chinese well or not, could read no other language.⁴⁵

One of the major purposes of the Straits missions was to serve as a center for translating and printing the Bible and religious tracts in the Chinese language and to serve as a base for dispersing these works, aboard the trading junks that plied the seas of Southeast Asia, to all ports where there were Chinese settlements, and indeed into China itself at a time when China was still exceedingly hostile to missions. The Anglo-Chinese College, founded at Malacca and much supported by Milne, was removed early in 1823 to Singapore, less than a year after his death. Thus, although the Malay people were not neglected, the missions were, from the very beginning, oriented especially toward Chinese settlements in Southeast Asia.

The second mission to be opened was the one at Penang in 1820, superintended by T. Beighton from that date until 1844 when he died and the mission was finally closed.⁴⁶ There were overland trade contacts from Penang to Songkhla, thence to Bangkok by Chinese junk. Indeed, Bangkok officials sometimes instructed the governors of Songkhla or other nearby towns to send trading caravans across the peninsula to Penang to purchase foreign manufactured goods. For the ordinary traveller, however, the overland route was not a safe one because of dacoits, and junks not infrequently had to run from pirates. Thus there

were formidable communications barriers between the Penang mission and Thai territories just to the north and northeast. Although bordering on a Thai dependency (Kedah, on the mainland), the Penang mission displayed little interest in the Thai kingdom itself, not even in the upper parts of the peninsula more firmly under Thai control than were the Malay states. Beighton and John Ince made their first visit to Kedah in March 1821 to begin mission work there.⁴⁷ Technically speaking, one might regard any of the Penang missionaries who entered Kedah as working in the "Thai realm," although Kedah was not entirely under Thai control during any of this period. Before the end of 1821 they were faced with what was to become a recurrent theme in Kedah for the remainder of the days of the Penang mission. In November 1821 a Thai army attacked the capital, and the rajah and many Malays fled to Penang for safety. At this juncture Medhurst was at the Malacca mission, and a plan was already afoot to send him on a mission to the Thai country. With the outbreak of war, his visit had to be abruptly cancelled.⁴⁸

Less than a month later, the East India Company's envoy John Crawfurd arrived at Penang, en route to negotiate an agreement for opening the port of Bangkok to trade for the Company. The Straits missionaries were hoping that, if he succeeded, the land of the Thai would be opened as a fertile field for new missions.⁴⁹ But Crawfurd returned empty-handed; it was not until June 1826 that another envoy, Captain Henry Burney, negotiated and signed at Bangkok a treaty opening the port to freer trade and also guaranteeing some rights to English subjects wishing to visit or trade there. During the remaining years of the Penang mission, Beighton did add some commentary on Thai affairs to his letters and reports to the Society—at least once in every two or three years—constantly referring to the endless warfare between the Thai armies from the eastern coast of the peninsula or Bangkok and the Malay people of Kedah. From the viewpoint of Penang, it seemed impractical to think again about establishing a mission to the Thai. The situation in Singapore, however, was markedly different.

Samuel Milton and the Thai Mission Schemes

In October 1819, the year that Singapore was founded, Samuel Milton arrived at the new settlement as an LMS missionary. He worked there not only with the local communities (including Malays, Chinese, and some Thai) but also the British garrison.⁵⁰ In 1822 he wrote to the Society urging them to establish a permanent mission in Singapore, predicting correctly that the place would become the most important British

settlement in the East after Calcutta.⁵¹ Milton organized daily worship services in a small chapel that he built himself, conducting prayers in Malay, Chinese, and Thai. He hoped, once the Singapore mission work was running smoothly, to be able to visit Bangkok himself.⁵² But he was never to do so.

Milton did not get on well at all with the other missionaries. He was described by them as being an unsettled and erratic person who was moody, periodically threatening to resign and return home. In 1824 he wrote to London bemoaning the fact that, in spite of a general declaration in 1818, no united LMS mission yet existed in the Straits,⁵³ although Morrison had, at least in theory, temporarily succeeded Milne as general superintendent of the missions. It was originally intended that the three mission stations work together as a single unit. But they failed for a long time to do so. Many of the missionaries did not get along with one another, each jealously guarding his own powers and prerogatives. Milton was no exception. He maintained poor relations with the founder Milne, at the neighboring Malacca mission, until the latter's death in 1822.⁵⁴ Then he aspired to succeed at Malacca as superintendent himself, but Morrison instead appointed Humphreys, who was the only missionary who had not deserted Milne already and gone elsewhere.⁵⁵ Superintendent Thomsen at Singapore found it utterly impossible to get any cooperation from Milton, who would not even help to submit a joint report to the directors in London.

Two lavish projects illustrate how financially irresponsible Milton was. First, he had half-way built a large stone house at Singapore, which he then wanted to sell to the Society, but which Thomsen declared would cost more to complete than it would be worth.⁵⁶ Milton had delusions of grandeur, hoping to displace the Malacca mission and make Singapore the great mission center. He designed the enormous new house to accommodate four resident missionary families, with a spacious ground floor intended to serve as an academy, which he hoped would be connected with the Bishop's College at Calcutta. But none of this wild scheme ever materialized.⁵⁷

Milton then leaped into an ill-planned scheme to establish a printing press for Singapore, although a perfectly adequate one was already in operation at Malacca. In a typical fit of rivalry, shortly after Milne's death, Milton disappeared abruptly from Singapore and went to Calcutta in December 1822. Without any authorization or without consulting anyone, he bought a new printing press at enormous cost, imagining quite wrongly that Thomsen for the Society and Raffles, the governor of Singapore, would help to pay for it. He had hardly set up the press and begun operating it when, in April 1823, Dr. Morrison saw

no alternative but to persuade Raffles to take it off Milton's hands and transfer it to the Singapore Institution to be used for official printing purposes.⁵⁸ Nearly two years later, after Milton wrote the directors during one month saying that he had been persuaded by Morrison to give up the press, Milton wrote again the next month accusing Thomsen of conspiring to have it removed from his control, denouncing Thomsen and the governor for preventing the Gospels from being spread!⁵⁹ The real reason was, of course, that Milton was in financial difficulty because of his grandiose schemes. He never accepted this fact, insisting instead that all his debts were legitimate ones for which the LMS directors were responsible.

Even Morrison, once he had returned to London, declared to the directors that Milton's "mind is deranged" and that Milton always tried to blame others for all failures. There was a perpetual feud with Thomsen, who finally lost patience and wrote to the directors:

He does not possess common prudence, nor veracity, nor honesty. He has been the cause of much unpleasantness and trouble to us, and a great dishonour to the Gospel. He quarrels with and abuses everyone. He calls the Directors rogues, and everything that is vile, and threatens to go home and prosecute them for the money which he says they owe to him.⁶⁰

By the time this was written, Milton had cast off all connection with the Society. No one knew when. He had been threatening to resign for so many years that, when he finally did so, no one even noticed.

Translating and Printing Work in Thai

The unhappy story of Samuel Milton is mentioned because he did at least try to make a contribution to the projected Thai mission work. The most important project was his effort to translate and print the Scriptures in Thai. In March 1821 a Thai teacher had been sent from the Penang mission down to Milne in Malacca to begin teaching the language to the missionaries in hopes of sending someone up to Bangkok later.⁶¹ Although the plan that same year to send Medhurst to the kingdom was cancelled, during the following decade a succession of Thai scribes and assistants arrived to help with the work at both Malacca and Singapore. By late 1822, before Milton obtained his own press, he was already having a printing font for the Thai alphabet cut at Singapore; he was also having a Thai assistant translate Genesis and the Gospels into Thai for future printing.⁶² After receiving Milton's letter of 1822 indicating all this, the directors decided the following year that the mis-

forced to resign within a year or two. Apparently his successor in charge of the press took no interest in the Thai printing projects. Nothing further was accomplished. The existing Thai pamphlets, printed cheaply for distribution, were handed out by the missionaries; no copies of them seem to have survived.

Some of the tracts and portions of the New Testaments on which printing had begun at Singapore in 1830 were taken up to Bangkok by Tomlin and Abeel during their mid-1831 visit. The works caused a great stir because the Thai people had never before seen their own language in printed form.⁷¹ Unfortunately, no copies of these early printings seem to have been sent to the Society in London, since they were mere pamphlets for local use. And probably none have therefore survived. There was, at the time, no press in Bangkok. The first one arrived in the mid-1830s under the American mission.

Tomlin seems to have made only a single personal contribution to the translating work. Shortly after his arrival in 1828, with the help of a Thai assistant, he rendered the Lord's Prayer into Thai. The sample he sent to the Society in London is probably the oldest extant copy.⁷² Although he made no further contribution of religious translations, he did print the journals of his voyages to Bangkok, first at Singapore in 1829 and then at Malacca in 1832. They were published mainly to give future missionaries an idea of what conditions to expect. Tomlin also published for commercial sale in 1844 a summary account of his two visits to the kingdom, as well as other travels in Southeast Asia, the parts concerning the Thai being drawn mainly from his printed journals. Gutzlaff, soon after his arrival in China, prepared an account of his own voyages for publication in London. Abeel published editions in 1834 and 1835 in America and London of his China and Bangkok journals. All five of these books are valuable to historians as eye-witness accounts of life in the Thai capital during a time when there are few other records to give information on the subjects they discuss. Although Tomlin's two journals (especially the second) are full of musings on the question of whether Christianity would take root in such a heathen country—not to mention his frequent rude remarks about idolatry—they are still useful to historians today.

One additional contribution by Gutzlaff should be mentioned. He took a particular interest in learning the Lao language and went around to the various prisoner-of-war camps in order to provide medical treatment to the Lao families carried off by the Thai commanders in the Bangkok-Vientiane war. By the time he left Bangkok the second time, he had prepared an incomplete Lao-English dictionary, plus a Lao translation of part of the New Testament and other religious works.⁷³

Translations and Printing in Chinese

Printing in Chinese had been under way in the Straits Settlements for many years before the first missionaries arrived in Thai territory. During early 1816 Morrison had several times urged Milne to obtain a printing press; by the end of the year, one with English and Malay (Arabic script) fonts was received from Calcutta.⁷⁴ During the succeeding years this press was employed in printing not only religious tracts but also several serials and some news reports.⁷⁵ The official historian of the LMS suggested that the only significant work of the Malacca mission was the vast number of pamphlets, leaflets, portions of Scripture, and other religious works printed in Chinese and Malay.⁷⁶ Even Milton at Singapore was busy helping with the printing of the Medhurst Chinese dictionary—or so he claimed.⁷⁷ One of the reasons for wanting to establish a permanent Thai mission was that books and pamphlets in Chinese might be placed aboard the many junks stopping at Bangkok and find their way thence to the ports of China, and possibly even to Vietnamese ports where the educated classes could read the Chinese. To the surprise of Tomlin and Gutzlaff, however, this flow of information had an ebb as well. They discovered, on arrival in Bangkok in 1828 with twenty-seven boxes of Chinese pamphlets, that they were not the first to bring printed Christian works to the peoples of Bangkok. One Chinese family in the capital already possessed copies of the Gospels plus religious tracts that had been brought by traders from Canton.⁷⁸

Both of the Gutzlaffs made important contributions in Chinese. Mrs. Gutzlaff at Bangkok during 1830 and 1831 was active in writing pamphlet material in Chinese and also in preparing both a new Chinese-English dictionary and a Vietnamese-English one.⁷⁹ Later, Dr. Gutzlaff worked with Drs. Medhurst and Bridgman in China to complete the New Testament in Chinese in 1835. And in 1840, thanks largely to Gutzlaff alone, the translation of the Old Testament was completed.⁸⁰

Gutzlaff was interested principally in China. Although he was the only one to produce any results in translating scriptures and preparing a dictionary in the Thai language, he regarded his efforts among the Thai as purely transitory. Indeed, in both mid-1828 and mid-1830 he was hoping to leave for China at almost any time,⁸¹ although he did not finally sail until mid-1831. Personally, he had already adopted a highly sinified manner, even while living among the Bangkok Chinese, wearing Chinese dress and practicing Chinese customs. He was even admitted by adoption there into the Chinese clan of Kwo, from Tung-Anh in

Fukien, calling himself "Kwo Shik-Lee."⁸² Hence it was never intended that he should remain for long among the Thai.

Failure to Establish a Permanent Thai Mission

There are numerous reasons why the LMS missionaries failed to establish a permanent mission among the Thai peoples. The directors might have had hopes that Tomlin would remain. But he proved too sickly to withstand the climate, unable to remain for long periods in either Bangkok or Java.⁸³ And this, along with the fact that he produced nothing of value in terms of translations of scriptures or religious tracts in the local languages, contributed to the directors' decision in 1832 to dismiss him from the Society. Abeel likewise found the climate of Bangkok too rigorous; he too was forced to leave for reasons of health.⁸⁴ Even the indefatigable Gutzlaff complained of declining health on the eve of departure from Bangkok for the last time. In fact his physical condition had deteriorated so badly that he had to be carried aboard the junk physically by Hunter and friends.⁸⁵

There were numerous resignations and dismissals from the Straits missions, in addition to Milton's and Tomlin's. Some of these were demanded by the directors themselves, for reasons of conduct or for financial mismanagement, which made the men involved unacceptable to carry on the work of the Society. Jealousies, lack of coordination, the lack of rapid correspondence, and certainly the absence of cooperation on the spot in planning their efforts at times all delayed and hindered the work which might otherwise have been accomplished even before the mid-1820s, at a time when political circumstances might have been more favorable to a permanent establishment on a small scale in the Thai kingdom.

Bad luck was also a factor. Total lack of control over communications and travel impeded decisions and caused lost opportunities. Any major proposal had to be referred to London for approval. This was no quick or easy matter in the days of slow sailing vessels that had still to pass all the way around southern Africa. Even assuming that there was a ship homeward bound to carry a letter, a half year would probably pass before the directors received it, and certainly there would be a wait of a full year or more before a reply could be expected back in the Straits. The same was true of any correspondence among the ports of Southeast Asia and China. It was in 1826 that Dr. Medhurst first proposed a general tour of the islands, the Thai kingdom, Cambodia, and Cochinchina; but two years passed before the voyage actually began. And owing to lack of communications and means of travel, Medhurst

himself was never able to participate. He arrived in Singapore only days after Gutzlaff and Tomlin had departed for Bangkok—they thought he was not coming after all and were in any event obliged to take whatever transport they could possibly find.

Medhurst wanted to follow them to Bangkok but could not find a junk to take him there, or to Cochinchina. One of the reasons was that junk captains and their crews, each of whom traded independently of one another and thus had their own private financial interests in any particular voyage, did not wish to carry foreigners. A junk entering Bangkok or Cochinchina ports direct from a Malay port paid less in taxes than if it had been to Singapore. If it carried a European passenger, this certainly proved that it had stopped at Singapore.⁸⁶ Even if one could find a junk willing to take Europeans, travel was still highly dangerous. The junk might sink or be wrecked in a tropical storm. These slow-moving vessels were often chased by Chinese, Thai, or Malay pirates who roamed the coasts. Medhurst, on his trip up the east coast from Singapore in 1828, gives an eye-witness account of being pursued, unsuccessfully, by a pirate ship, which was not at all an uncommon occurrence.⁸⁷ Unless a swift schooner associated with the East India Company happened to be going to Bangkok, practically the sole form of transport was by Chinese junks, stopping for indeterminate periods of time along the way at all the little settlements of the east coast of the Malay peninsula.

A second reason why junk captains and even European ships were reluctant to carry missionaries was the hostility of some local authorities to the missionaries. Medhurst was refused passage aboard a French ship bound for Cochinchina because of the recent expulsion of French priests from there and the captain's desire to avoid becoming entangled in such a political problem.⁸⁸ Gutzlaff was prevented several times from leaving Bangkok by reluctant junk captains,⁸⁹ who probably feared that if they took him to China they would get into trouble with local mandarins. Gutzlaff's final departure from Bangkok in July 1831, with no possible way of knowing that Tomlin and Abeel would arrive a mere twelve days later, is another instance of bad luck for all concerned.

A decisive factor in the decline of English interest in Thai mission schemes was that, by the early 1830s, the American missions had already begun to send missionaries to this corner of Southeast Asia. In October 1832, on the very eve of Abeel's final departure from Bangkok that ended the temporary LMS efforts, an American missionary and his wife arrived at Penang, with a group of fellow Baptists destined variously for Burma and Singapore.⁹⁰ This was John Taylor Jones, who reached Bangkok in March 1833 with a special mission to the Thai,

although he worked also with the Chinese.⁹¹ His supervisors at home approved his work and shortly thereafter decided that a mission should remain permanently in the kingdom.⁹² In 1835 William Dean arrived as the first American missionary designated especially to the Chinese.⁹³ During 1835 and 1836 a number of Americans passed through the Straits, visiting their LMS colleagues, en route to Bangkok,⁹⁴ and a permanent American mission was to remain thereafter. The works of the Gutzlaffs were inherited by the new arrivals. Their Thai-English dictionary served as the foundation for the completed work published by Eliza Grew Jones, and their Bible translations were revised by Robert Burn, chaplain at Singapore, using the Thai printing font. After Burn died, the font and copies of existing translations were acquired in 1835 by Dr. Dan Bradley, who took them up to his new post as medical missionary at Bangkok and later gained an important reputation as the founder of the first printing establishment in the Thai kingdom. Thus, with the Thai in good hands already, the LMS did not sense any need for a duplicate effort.

Before the Americans began to arrive, nonetheless, the LMS had formulated a definite, if only momentary, plan for a permanent Thai mission. A letter from Thomsen at Singapore arrived in London in September 1830 with news that the Gutzlaffs had just returned to Bangkok, that the Thai New Testament was soon to be printed, and that the dictionary would be printed if funds could be found, concluding with a note urging that two permanent members of the Society be appointed to Bangkok, with a view toward spreading religious works not only in the kingdom but also to China by way of Chinese traders.⁹⁵ This joyous news was received with enthusiasm at the Society, and in 1831 O. T. Dobbin and J. Patterson were designated to go out to Bangkok on a permanent basis. However, deaths in the Calcutta mission reduced the LMS staff in India badly; these two men had to be reappointed to India almost immediately, without ever starting out for Bangkok. No further plans were made for any mission to the Thai.⁹⁶

The End of the Straits Missions

It was the opening of the ports of China itself after 1843, and the establishment of the Anglo-Chinese Theological Seminary at the new colony Hong Kong, that brought the preparatory missions and the college in the Straits to an end.⁹⁷ By the mid-1840s it was thought more urgent to work directly in China—rather than from Southeast Asian bases where the growing European communities already maintained their own permanent churches anyway. The Chinese settlements in the Southeast

Asian ports were tiny in comparison to the vast numbers of potential converts in China, where seemingly endless fertile ground awaited breaking. Much of the rationale behind the existence of the Straits missions was undermined when there was no longer any need for a staging-point and printing center outside China. Missionaries could now be sent direct to the Chinese homeland, and printing could be done there as well. The Malacca mission, first to be opened, was first to be closed in 1843.⁹⁸ Medhurst, who had been residing at the Batavia mission since 1822, moved to Shanghai the same year.⁹⁹ In spite of protests from the remaining missionaries, the Penang mission was closed in 1844.¹⁰⁰ And in 1847 the last LMS mission in the Southeast Asia, at Singapore, finally closed its doors.¹⁰¹

NOTES

The Archives of the London Missionary Society are deposited in the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The archival materials relating to the Straits Settlements are in the series entitled "Ultra-Ganges Missions," subdivided into four sections:

1. Journals (1 box of papers)
2. Malacca Mission (3 boxes of papers)
3. Penang Mission (4 boxes of papers)
4. Singapore Mission (2 boxes of papers)

Each box is subdivided into numbered files, and some of the files are subdivided into numbered manuscript items. A note given in the form "LMS, Malacca III/2/3, Tomlin to Ellis, 20 June 1883" would indicate a letter from Tomlin in the Straits to Ellis in London, deposited in the Malacca Mission archives, box III, file 2, manuscript item 3.

1. Charles Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832, and 1833, with Notices of Siam, Corea, and the Loo-Choo Islands*, 2nd ed. (London: Westley & Davis, 1834), p. 75.
2. LMS, Malacca II, Tomlin to Hankey, 3 March 1838.
3. Jacob Tomlin, *Missionary Journals and Letters* (London: J. Nisbet, 1844), pp. 118-119 (hereafter *Missionary Journals*).
4. Jacob Tomlin, *Journal Kept during a Voyage from Singapore to Siam and while Residing in that Country* (Singapore, 1829), p. 10 (hereafter *Journal*).
5. LMS, Singapore I, Milton to Burder, 25 October 1821.
6. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals*, p. 124.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
8. Tomlin, *Journal*, p. 52.
9. Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages*, pp. 29-30.
10. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals*, p. 122.
11. David Abeel, *Journal of a Residence in China and the Neighbouring Countries from 1830 to 1832*, rev. ed. (London: Lord, 1835), p. 198.
12. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals*, p. 123.

13. Ibid., p. 122.
14. Ibid., p. 126.
15. *State Papers of the Kingdom of Siam, 1664-1886* (London, 1886), pp. 75-78, the "Burney Treaty," 20 June 1826, Article V.
16. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals*, pp. 119, 124, 125.
17. Ibid., pp. 128-131.
18. Ibid., pp. 135-136.
19. LMS, Singapore II, J. Tomlin, "Journal. Bangkok, Siam, August 25th 1828 to October 25th."
20. Tomlin, *Journal*, p. 60.
21. LMS, Singapore I/5, Tomlin to Orme, 17 August 1829.
22. Jacob Tomlin, *A Missionary Journal Kept at Singapore and Siam from May 1830 to January 1832* (Malacca: Mission Press, 1832), p. 3 (hereafter *A Missionary Journal*).
23. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals*, pp. 211, 217.
24. Ibid., p. 171.
25. LMS, Singapore I/5, Thomsen to Orme, 13 February 1830.
26. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, p. xviii.
27. *Siam and Laos as Seen by Our American Missionaries* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1884), pp. 351-352.
28. Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages*, pp. 103, 105-107.
29. Tomlin, *A Missionary Journal*, p. 31.
30. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, p. 236.
31. LMS, Malacca III/2/D, Tomlin to Ellis, 20 June 1833.
32. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, pp. 257, 268, 269.
33. Ibid., p. 292.
34. Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895* (London, 1899), 1:436 and 2:438.
35. Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages*, p. 52.
36. LMS, Ultra-Ganges Journals I, W. Medhurst, "Journal of a Voyage up the East Coast of Malacca," August-October 1828. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals*, pp. 134-135.
37. LMS, Penang I/3/D, Beighton to Burder, 28 November 1821.
38. LMS, Malacca I, "Memoir respecting Malacca, February 1815."
39. LMS, Malacca I/1/A, Milne to Directors, 23 February 1815, Appendix.
40. LMS, Malacca I, "Memoir respecting Malacca, February 1815."
41. LMS, Malacca I/1/A, Milne to Burder, 6 February 1815.
42. Ibid., Milne to Directors, 30 December 1815.
43. Ibid., Milne to Burder, 25 September 1815.
44. LMS, Malacca I, "Memoir respecting Malacca, February 1815."
45. LMS, Malacca I/1/A, Milne to Directors, 23 February 1815, Appendix.
46. Lovett, *History of London Missionary Society*, 2:438.
47. LMS, Penang I/3/A, Beighton and Ince to Hankey, 27 March 1821.
48. LMS, Penang I/3/D, Beighton to Burder, 28 November 1821.

49. Ibid., Ince to Hankey, 14 December 1821.
50. LMS, Singapore I, Farquhar to Burder, 27 May 1823.
51. Ibid., Milton to Burder, 23 September 1822.
52. Ibid.
53. LMS, Singapore I/3, Milton to Directors, 31 December 1824.
54. LMS, Singapore I, Milton to Burder, 25 October 1821.
55. LMS, Singapore I/3, Notes by Morrison in reply to Milton's letter of December 1824.
56. LMS, Singapore I, letter 39, Thomsen to Burder, 29 September 1824.
57. LMS, Singapore I/3, Notes by Morrison in reply to Milton's letter of December 1824.
58. Ibid., Milton to Directors, 31 December 1824.
59. Ibid., Milton to Directors, 30 January 1825.
60. LMS, Singapore I, Thomsen to Directors, 2 October 1826.
61. LMS, Penang I/3/A, Beighton and Ince to Hankey, 27 March 1821.
62. LMS, Singapore I, Milton to Burder, 23 September 1822.
63. Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages*, p. 52.
64. LMS, Singapore I, letter 30, Milton to Burder, no date (but January or February 1823).
65. Ibid., Milton to Directors, 31 December 1824.
66. LMS, Singapore I/3, Milton to Directors, 30 January 1825.
67. LMS, Singapore I/5, Tomlin to Orme, 13 January 1829.
68. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals*, p. 161.
69. LMS, Singapore I/5, Thomsen to Orme, 13 February 1830; Thomsen to Paterson, 24 June 1831.
70. Ibid., Thomsen to Paterson, 24 June 1831.
71. Tomlin, *A Missionary Journal*, pp. 42-43.
72. LMS, Singapore I/5, Tomlin to Orme, 13 January 1829, and enclosed translation in Thai of the Lord's Prayer.
73. Ibid., Thomsen to Paterson, 24 June 1831.
74. LMS, Malacca I/2/A, Milne to Directors, 14 January 1817.
75. LMS, Malacca I/2/C, Milne to Burder, 10 August 1818.
76. Lovett, *History of London Missionary Society*, 1:436.
77. LMS, Singapore I, letter 30, Milton to Directors, no date (but January or February 1823).
78. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals*, p. 112.
79. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, p. xviii.
80. Lovett, *History of London Missionary Society*, 2:512.
81. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals*, pp. 218-222; LMS, Singapore, I/5, Tomlin to Orme, 10 June 1830.
82. Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages*, pp. 105-106. G. B. McFarland, ed., *Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam* (Bangkok, 1928), p. 5.
83. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals*, p. 218.
84. *Siam and Laos*, pp. 351-352.
85. Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages*, p. 103. McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, p. 4.

86. LMS, Ultra-Ganges Journals I, W. Medhurst, "Journal," August-October 1828.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages*, p. 102.
90. LMS, Penang III/4/B, Beighton to Directors, 26 October 1832.
91. *Siam and Laos*, pp. 352-353.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., pp. 160-161.
94. LMS, Penang III/7/A, Beighton to Ellis, 2 January 1835. Penang IV/1/B, Beighton to Directors, 14 December 1836.
95. LMS, Singapore I/5, Thomsen to Orme, 13 February 1830.
96. Lovett, *History of London Missionary Society*, 2:439.
97. Ibid., 1:436.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid., 2:438.
100. Ibid. LMS, Penang IV/5 and 6, various letters to Directors, 1843-1844.
101. Lovett, *History of London Missionary Society*, 2:439.

The Integration of Karens in Northern Thai Political Life During the Nineteenth Century

RONALD D. RENARD

When the Sgaw and Pwo Karens first appeared in Thai history they pursued a highly migratory and often servile life, fleeing the Burmese as well as the Thais to avoid conscription by both sides in the Konbaung Wars, which started in 1753.¹ During these wars, the Burmese extended their hold from the area immediately around Ava to include the Burma Delta, Arakan, and for short periods of time, Ayutthaya as well as several Shan and northern Thai capitals such as Kengtung and Chiang Mai.² In addition to attacks on these lowland and valley capitals, Burmese armies also made their presence felt in the upland areas surrounding the Irrawaddy Delta. For example, when the Burmese invaded Chiang Mai, many Thais fled or were taken prisoner. Caves full of northern Thai manuscripts dating from this era, apparently stashed for safekeeping—but never retrieved—are evidence of rapid changes in the Chiang Mai highlands.³ In addition, most major northern Thai towns, from border towns like Mae Sariang to Chiang Mai itself, were depopulated for long periods of time during the Konbaung Wars. In all the historical literature and oral tradition regarding these times, there is no evidence but that which indicates that entire populations of Thais in this area were uprooted and forced to move.⁴ There is also unanimous agreement that during the Konbaung Wars Karens from Burma, escaping strife in the delta and surrounding areas, entered the northern Thai hills in an increasingly large stream to become the predominant upland group in these hills.⁵ These Karen immigrants were to play a role important to Chiang Mai life which, by the 1880s, had led to their involvement in all aspects of northern Thai society and to the beginning of their assimilation into Thai life.

The Burmese after capturing Chiang Mai in 1764 found that they could not hold it. They were able, however, to intimidate the Thais from retaking the town until Chao Kawila, a member of northern Thai royalty from Lampang (see map 1), led a determined campaign that