

Advocate and Partner: Missionaries and Modernization in Nan Province, Siam, 1895-1934

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John Fairbank wrote of China that "the missionary movement ... was a profound stimulus to China's modernization", and he cited missionary medical, educational, and humanitarian work, including extensive rural contacts, as the basis for his conclusion.¹ And George Antonius in his classic study of Arab nationalism noted that in the Arab revival of the last century, the American Presbyterian Mission in Syria played an important role in the rebirth of Arab literature and education. The Presbyterian missionaries were one important source of the emergence of the Arabs into the modern world.² A reading of Thai³ history suggests that the missionaries in Siam might well have had a similarly important impact. However, the role of the missionaries after the decades of the 1830s to the 1850s has been little studied and is hardly understood. This has been especially true because the historical study of Thai modernization⁴ has focused primarily on national policies and strategies where the missionaries had less influence after the reign of King Mongkut (1851-68).

In this article, I propose to shift the focus of the historical study of Siamese modernization away from the national level and direct it towards a non-governmental modernizing elite. The purpose of this article is to describe the modernizing activities and role of the American Presbyterian Mission station in Nan Province, Siam, in the period 1895 to 1934, that is, from the founding of the station until the retirement of its premier modernizer, the Rev. Hugh Taylor.

Nan Province is located in the northern region of present-day Thailand. In 1895 Nan was still a semi-autonomous state owing allegiance to Siam. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the *chao muang* (local ruler) of Nan was rapidly losing power as Siam carried out a policy of centralization that turned the state into a province. As early as 1906, the *chao muang* had already lost most of his effective ruling power, though the hereditary office of *chao muang* was to survive until 1931.⁵ In the years from 1895 to 1934, Nan was one of the most remote and least touched by modernization of all of

¹John King Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), p. 178.

²George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (New York, 1946), pp. 37-51.

³In this article, the noun "Siam" and the adjective "Thai" will be used throughout to refer to Thailand and its inhabitants during the period covered in the article.

⁴"Modernization" is used here to describe the processes of social change in which a traditional society is confronted with new ideas and technologies, primarily Western in origin, and changes as a result of that confrontation.

⁵See Tej Bunnag, *The Provincial Administration of Siam 1892-1915* (Kuala Lumpur, 1977); James Ansil Ramsay, "Modernization and Centralization in Northern Thailand, 1875-1910", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* VII, 1 (Mar. 1976): 16-32; Michael Vickery, "Thai Regional Elites and the Reforms of King Chulalongkorn", *Journal of Asian Studies* XXIX, 4 (Aug. 1970): 876.

Siam's provinces. Sociological studies of the province even in the late 1950s still portrayed a relatively isolated populace only beginning to emerge in the modern world.⁶ Because the province was so isolated, the early missionaries found it to be both very conservative culturally and very poor economically.⁷

American missionary contact with Nan first began in 1872 when the Rev. Daniel McGilvary, pioneer missionary of northern Siam, visited the city. A second trip in 1890 resulted in his proposing that a mission station be established at Nan.⁸ In 1893, the old *chao muang*, a man of strong anti-foreign feelings, died, and the missionaries took what they felt to be a good opportunity to open the Nan Station.⁹ Dr. and Mrs. S.C. Peoples founded the new station in 1895. It was quickly discovered that the station faced three serious limitations: first of all, the station would be continually underfinanced and understaffed; secondly, because of its isolation, travel to and from the station would entail considerable time and energy; and, finally, the American missionaries found Nan to be a physically and mentally difficult place in which to live.¹⁰ It was not until some twenty years after 1895 that the small Nan Station, usually staffed by two to six missionaries, became stable. The heyday of the station came in the short period of 1915 to 1921 when its staff generally numbered nine missionaries for five of those seven years. By 1922 the station was in decline both staff-wise and financially, and the Great Depression further weakened its position.¹¹

In considering the modernizing influence of the Nan Station, we must keep in mind the fact that the missionaries in Nan were always few in number, slim on financial resources, and working under conditions in which health was precarious and loneliness often acute. The station experienced frequent shifts of personnel and furloughs from Nan came sooner and were longer than was often expected. Under these conditions it was difficult for the station to maintain a consistent, effective programme.

I

In developing the thesis that the American missionaries in Nan played a significant part in provincial modernization, we will fix attention on three facets of their work: medical, educational, and technological. In these three areas we find the missionaries having impact beyond the immediate circle of the incipient Christian community, impact that in one form or another reached nearly every corner of the province.

⁶Laurence C. Judd, *Chao Rai Thai: Dry Rice Farmers in Northern Thailand* (Bangkok, 1977).

⁷See Lillian Johnson Curtis, *The Laos of North Siam* (New York, 1903), p. 324; and "Report for Boys' School of Nan 1910-1911", photocopy, Research Papers of Maen Pongudom, RG 026/79 (f) at the Manuscript Division, Payap College (hereafter cited as Maen Research); the original is at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, USA.

⁸Hugh Taylor, "The Narrative of Nan", *Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam 1828-1928*, ed. George Bradley McFarland (Bangkok, 1928), p. 146; Lucy Starling, *Dawn Over Temple Roofs* (New York, 1960), p. 75.

⁹Dr. S.C. Peoples to Robert E. Speer, 29 Aug. 1896, microfilm, Records of the Board of Foreign Missions, Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (hereafter cited as Board), 13. At the Manuscript Division, Payap College; the original is at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, USA.

¹⁰Peoples to Speer, 15 May 1894, Board, 11; John H. Freeman, Report, 29 Aug. 1896, Board, 13; Robert Irwin to Dear Friends, 28 July 1899, Board, 15; *Laos News* VI, 3 (Aug. 1909): 61.

¹¹Hugh Taylor, "A Missionary in Siam", unpublished manuscript (San Francisco, 1947), p. 281. The Papers of Paul A. Eakin, RG 017/80 at the Manuscript Division, Payap College.

Medical Modernization

Even before beginning work at Nan, Dr. Peoples, founder of the station, predicted that "medicine will be a very important feature of the work there".¹² So it was. Normally the station was staffed with one doctor although there were a number of periods of several months duration when no doctor was present.¹³ Available statistics suggest that the growth of station medical work was rapid and persistent. In 1896 roughly 1,000 people were treated or came for medicines. By 1899 the figure rose to 1,800, and in 1911 it climbed to the unusually high figure of 4,500. In 1923 some 3,000 people were treated and/or received drugs. In 1926 the mission doctor was on the field only eight months but still treated or distributed drugs to about 1,000 people. In 1932 the number was 3,650, and the 1933 count was 2,770 for only seven months.¹⁴

The Nan Station was the primary agent in bringing both Western medicines and health practices into the province. The sale and distribution of drugs was one of the most important elements of its work. In the first full year of the station, one missionary was kept busy full-time dispensing drugs six days a week.¹⁵ From those early days, the drug dispensary became so essential that by 1914 a small branch dispensary was set up in the city market.¹⁶ One major reason for the success of medicine distribution was that the station charged little or nothing for their drugs in cases where people could not afford to pay. Thus, the medicines were available to even the poorest segments of the population.¹⁷

The station doctors were working with a population infested with a multitude of debilitating diseases. As late as 1929 nearly all of the patients that came in had malaria, hookworm, or other ailments as well as the particular disease that finally brought them to the doctor.¹⁸ The mission doctors found that hookworm alone infested over 90 per cent of the population.¹⁹ In order to deal with the vast health problems of a large, widely scattered population, the mission doctors introduced a varied range of medicines and treatments, and one of their continuing priorities was combating the serious, always-present diseases of smallpox, malaria, and hookworm, as well as malnutrition. They distributed medicines, trained rural vaccination teams, conducted investigative research, and cooperated with local and provincial authorities.²⁰

Both the extent and the creativity of missionary medicine may be seen by the work done in the treatment of hookworm in the province. Dr. Beach of the Nan Station conducted what may have been the earliest research into hookworm carried out in Siam. Certainly his research was among the earliest done. In 1914, he began to investigate why Nan schoolboys seemed so lazy. He discovered the cause to be hookworm and labelled it as a "pernicious, devitalizing malady" that was "Siam's greatest enemy". Dr. Beach and other members of the station began to carry out extensive treatments that included

¹²Peoples to Speer, 16 Aug. 1894, Board, 11.

¹³See Nan Folder, Papers of Paul A. Eakin, RG 017/80 at the Manuscript Division, Payap College.

¹⁴These figures taken from annual reports published in *Laos News* and *Siam Outlook*.

¹⁵Robert Irwin to Speer, 14 Feb. 1896, Board, 13; and "Annual Report of Muang Nan Station for the year ending Oct. 31, 1896", Board, 22.

¹⁶*Laos News* XI, 3 (July 1914): 107.

¹⁷Taylor, "A Missionary", p. 164.

¹⁸*Siam Outlook* VI, 10 (Apr. 1929): 332.

¹⁹W.H. Beach, "Hookworm in Nan Province", *Laos News* XI, 2 (Apr. 1914): 59-61.

²⁰Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 83-84; *Laos News* VI, 1 (Feb. 1909): 11; Carle C. Zimmerman, *Siam Rural Economic Survey 1930-1931* (Bangkok, 1931), pp. 235-36; "Nan Station Report 1910-1911", Maen Research; and *Siam Outlook*, Annual Reports Issue (Jan. 1926): 101.

schoolchildren and local military units. As late as 1929 the station was still working to eradicate hookworm.²¹ Two facts stand out: first of all, the Rockefeller Institute began its very extensive hookworm programme only in 1917, some three years after Beach's research in Nan; and, secondly, Dr. Beach is reported to have had contacts with the Rockefeller Institute about his 1914 investigations.²² It may be speculated that Dr. Beach of Nan played a role in implementing hookworm research and treatment in the whole nation. At the very least, we may say that Nan Province received significant hookworm treatment several years before a national programme was begun. Evidence regarding smallpox was a measure of the station's medical work. In 1909 Dr. Peoples and six vaccinators vaccinated some 1,500 children in a period of seven weeks. In 1913 and again in 1928, Dr. Beach led vaccinating teams into rural areas to overcome smallpox epidemics. These high points punctuated a continuing programme of vaccination carried out both in Nan and in the rural areas.²³

In addition to constant efforts in the areas of hookworm, smallpox, malaria, and malnutrition, the station also worked with leprosy victims, taught general and personal hygiene, and trained rural medical-evangelist teams.²⁴ The work of Dr. Peoples in 1910 summarizes the variety and extent of station medical work. Even though he was absent from the station for almost six months, he performed seven major operations, assisted a newly arrived team of government doctors in suppressing a cholera epidemic, and cared for a total of 32 inpatients and 4,654 outpatients.²⁵

Although medical work centred on Nan city itself, the doctors engaged in rural itineration and supported other activities that helped to spread station medical work into rural areas. All of the missionaries had some rudimentary medical skills and carried drugs with them. The reach of mission medicine was further extended through the employment of evangelists with some basic medical training, who travelled the countryside in teams. In some cases, rural Christian leaders were trained by the medical evangelists and provided with simpler drugs and remedies for their villages.²⁶

Educational Modernization

During the first 15 years of the station, several attempts were made to open a school, but as Lucy Starling, herself a teacher at Nan, commented, some new missionary would come to Nan, open a school, and then within a few months become ill and have to leave. The school would be suspended until someone new came to start the process again. A somewhat permanent school was established in 1907, but it did not really take root until the arrival of the Rev. and Mrs. M.B. Palmer in 1910. The following year Eula Van Vranken, a trained educator like Palmer, moved to Nan and opened the Girls' School.²⁷

²¹W.H. Beach, "Hookworm"; W.H. Beach, "Siam's Greatest Enemy", *Laos News* XIV, 3 (July 1917): 92-97; *Siam Outlook* VI, 10 (Apr. 1929): 332.

²²Virginia Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam* (New York, 1941), p. 708; W.H. Beach, "Hookworm", pp. 60-61.

²³*Laos News* VI, 1 (Feb. 1909): 1; Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 83-84; "Annual Report of the Laos Mission for the Year ending Sept. 30, 1913", Records of the American Presbyterian Mission, RG 001/78(a) at the Manuscript Division, Payap College.

²⁴Taylor, "A Missionary", p. 93.

²⁵Dr. S.C. Peoples, "Nan Station", *Laos News* VIII, 1 (Jan. 1911): 19-20.

²⁶See *Siam Outlook* VI, 3 (Jan. 1927): 48-49; "Station Reports of the Laos Mission for the Year Closing Nov. 30th, 1899", Board, 16; *Laos News* X, 3 (Apr. 1913): 54; and Hugh Taylor, "Reaping where others have sown", *Laos News* VI, 4 (Nov. 1909): 117.

²⁷Starling, *Dawn*, p. 99; and *Laos News* VI, 1 (Feb. 1909): 18-19.

The two Christian schools began the school year in 1911 with a total of just over 100 students and quickly established themselves as the quality schools in town. A higher percentage of their students passed government examinations than the local government schools themselves.²⁸ The two schools flourished under the leadership of Van Vranken and the Palmers and under the guidance of several successors. The school buildings were improved over the years as was the quality of teaching staff and equipment. By 1931 the two schools numbered 215 students in ten grades.²⁹ In the meantime, two village Christian schools were opened after 1917, and by 1926 these schools had 51 students.³⁰

The nature of education in the Christian schools differed from either the numerically predominant local schools or the central government schools. The two schools in Nan were overwhelmingly Christian in make-up and strongly emphasized religious and moral education even while using the government curriculum.³¹ The teaching methods used by the missionaries were quite different, and their aim of education was to encourage the children "to think", the concept being strongly oriented to the virtues of thrift, industriousness, and initiative.³² This differing aim led to educational innovations that came to government schools only later if at all. Of first importance in this regard was women's education. At a time when, aside from missionary schools, it was extremely unusual to find girls in school, the Nan Station introduced formal girls' education into the province. Girls' School graduates, thus, were the best educated group of women in Nan and soon became a source of teachers for other schools.³³ The concern for women's education was also extended to include older Christian women who could not read, and women's literacy became a major goal of the station.³⁴ Vocational education was another innovation. At various times both schools had active programmes that included gardening, domestic arts, husbandry, and mechanical arts.³⁵

As in medicine, so in education the missionaries sought to extend their work into rural areas. In the first instance, graduates of the Christian schools became teachers and headmasters in rural areas. At one point, three of the major government schools in the northern part of the province were headed by Boys' School graduates.³⁶ The station also engaged in the distribution of both northern Thai (Thai Yuan) dialect and central Thai dialect literature that included Bibles, Scripture portions, tracts, and even periodicals. Although methods and frequency of delivery varied, the literature did reach a large audience and was even used by local non-Christians to teach reading in village situations. Rural work also included an effort forcefully sponsored by Dr. Peoples to spread literacy

²⁸ *Laos News* VIII, 2 (Apr. 1911): 33; "Report for Boys' School of Nan 1910-1911", Maen Research.

²⁹ Starling, *Dawn*, p. 99; *Siam Outlook* Annual Reports Issue (Jan. 1929): 2-3; *Siam Outlook* VIII, 1 (Jan. 1932): 35-36.

³⁰ *Laos News* XIV, 2 (May 1917): 39; *Siam Outlook* VI, 3 (Jan. 1927): 41-50.

³¹ "Report for Boys' School of Nan 1910-1911", Maen Research; "Report Nan Girls' School 1910-1911", Maen Research.

³² See M.B. Palmer, "Nan Boys' School", *Laos News* VIII, 4 (Oct. 1911): 136-38, Kenneth Parry Landon, *Thailand in Transition* (Chicago, 1939), pp. 125, 251; "Report Nan Girls' School 1910-1911", Maen Research.

³³ Walter F. Vella, *Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and The Development of Thai Nationalism* (Honolulu, 1978), pp. 158-59; *Laos News* IX, 3 (July 1912): 79-80.

³⁴ Taylor, "A Missionary", p. 366; *Laos News* XIII, 4 (Oct. 1916): 87.

³⁵ *Siam Outlook* III, 3 (Jan. 1924): 63; VIII, 1 (Jan. 1932): 35; and IX, 1 (Jan. 1933): 40. D. Irene Taylor, "The Law of the Jungle Changes", *Siam Outlook* III, 1 (July 1923): 267.

³⁶ Taylor, "A Missionary", p. 379.

among hilltribe peoples in the Nan area including even the sending of a few tribal children to the Nan Christian schools.³⁷

The educational influences of the station extended into language and culture as well. Because the missionaries were native English language speakers they were able to provide instruction in that language, instruction that was sought after by the local political elite. English was for them a means by which to gain access to Western knowledge.³⁸ The missionaries introduced not only Western language but also Western music into the province. Music, particularly religious music, was a regular part of the schools' curriculum. Western instruments were imported and instructions in their use were given. Numerous musical programmes were put on, one such event being attended by over 1,500 people.³⁹ The influence of this music was such that on the death of the *chao muang* in 1918 when the Nan Christian community representatives went to pay their respects, they were asked to sing a hymn before the coffin, assembled priests, and family. This was seen as a great honour, and it is significant that its vehicle was musical.⁴⁰

Technological Modernization

The Nan Station missionaries were so oriented to the use of Western technology that they frequently saw the solutions to their problems in terms of technology, and while they did not see their primary task as being in the realm of technological innovations they quite readily used such innovations as the means to an end. The list of Western technological devices and techniques introduced by the station was long and impressive. Most of those items or skills were first picked up during furloughs in the United States where missionaries like the Rev. Hugh Taylor were always looking for and receptive to new ideas.⁴¹ After introducing such new ideas, they sought to train local people in their use.⁴²

In the development of a permanent station, a number of buildings were required, all of which were constructed along Western lines using Western building techniques and materials. Thus, such things as stained glass windows, fireplaces, dining rooms, and full-length mirrors were introduced to the occasional amusement of the people who generally had never seen such things.⁴³ In the process of all of this construction, Taylor introduced a complete brick-making yard, which included the second successful brick-making machine in northern Siam.⁴⁴ Taylor was also the one who devised a successful technique for digging clear-water wells in an area where such was considered impossible. He solved the lighting problems of the schools and station homes with the first acetylene gas plant and lighting system in the north. And he also introduced refrigeration into the province with the use of an ammonia gas device called an "icy ball" that effectively made ice and kept food fresh.⁴⁵

³⁷ *Laos News* IV, 4 (Oct. 1907): 107-8; *Siam Outlook* VIII, 1 (Jan. 1932): 36; "Nan Station Report 1911-1912" and "Out-District Evangelistic Work — Nan Province, Sept. 1916", Maen Research.

³⁸ See David K. Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn* (New Haven, 1969), p. 270; *Laos News* IV, 2 (Apr. 1907): 35.

³⁹ See Satien Thamornpak, *tan acharn em. bee. palmer kab krungtheb khristian withayalai kaw. saw. 1920-1938* (Acharn M.B. Palmer and Bangkok Christian College 1920-1938) (Bangkok, n.d.), p. 37; Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 382, 441-42; and *Laos News* IX, 1 (Jan. 1912): 14.

⁴⁰ *Laos News* XV, 1 (Jan. 1918): 42-43; Starling, *Dawn*, pp. 103-4.

⁴¹ Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 370-71, 295-96.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 259ff; *Laos News* X, 3 (July 1913): 50.

⁴³ Starling, *Dawn*, pp. 77, 107; Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 263-64; *Siam Outlook* I, 1 (July 1921): 20.

⁴⁴ *Laos News* XI, 1 (Jan. 1914): 8; Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 295-96.

⁴⁵ Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 264-66, 298-301, 419-20; *Laos News* XI, 3 (July 1914): 105.

Modern transportation in Nan also had its beginnings with Hugh Taylor since it was he who introduced both the motorcycle (*circa* 1917) and the automobile (1927) into the province. After Taylor brought the first car to Nan, the *chao muang* immediately went off to Bangkok to buy one for himself. Not long thereafter the first motor road in Nan city was built to accommodate these vehicles, and in due time the first road into the province was built from Prae.⁴⁶

A rapid-fire list of other Western technological devices introduced into Nan by the Presbyterian missionaries, often for the first time, includes barbed wire, nails, crayons, a Victrola phonograph, a mimeograph machine, sewing machines, an electric generator and lights, a "Kodak" camera, and a motion picture camera and projector.⁴⁷ Thus in a forty-year period, when Nan Province was only just beginning to emerge from traditional society, the missionaries were showing themselves to be committed and active modernizers.

II

The American Presbyterian missionaries in Nan engaged in a remarkable assortment of modernizing activities which meant using techniques and devices imported from the West. It might well be said that, as far as Nan was concerned, everything that the missionaries did was different and had some new twist to it. However, the fact that the missionaries were engaged in these activities and importing these ideas and devices does not mean very much unless we are able to establish the impact that all of this actually had on modernization in Nan Province.

Such inquiry begins with consideration of the status of the missionaries in Nan society. Lucien Hanks has noted that Thai society is hierarchical in nature and one in which people establish a patron-client relationship in nearly every human "liaison". Patrons of standing have both an immediate circle of clients (an entourage) and an extended circle (the clients of the patron's entourage).⁴⁸ The missionaries in Nan found their place in this society by establishing themselves as important patrons and taking their entourage and circle from the young Christian community.⁴⁹ They were accepted as the equals of the provincial elite, and virtually every segment of the population acknowledged their status.

This elite status was important for modernization in Nan. Descriptions of Nan and northern Siam in general from the 1880s down to the 1950s portray a society that was marked by all of the usual components of a traditional society: conservative elite, simple technology, inefficient production, chronic illness, short life spans, and widespread

⁴⁶*Laos News* XIV, 4 (Oct. 1917): 124. Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 396-97. *Siam Outlook* VI, 9 (Oct. 1928): 304; and XI, 1 (Jan. 1935): 29.

⁴⁷Starling, *Dawn*, pp. 79-80, 95, 99; Homer G. Weisbecker, "Touring in Tiger Country", *Siam Outlook* VI, 11 (July 1929): 362; "Annual Report of Muang Nan Station for the year ending Oct. 31, 1896", Board, 22; "Report of Nan Girls' School 1910-1911", Maen Research; Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 372, 405-406, 421-22; Lucy Starling, "Nan Notes", *Laos News* XI, 2 (Apr. 1914): 63-64.

⁴⁸Lucien M. Hanks, "The Thai Social Order as Entourage and Circle", *Change and Persistence in Thai Society*, ed. G. William Skinner and A. Thomas Kirsch (Ithaca, 1975), pp. 197-218.

⁴⁹See Taylor, "A Missionary", p. 246, for a description of missionary relations with "domestic staff". The widespread use of the titles *paw kru* (father teacher) and *maa kru* (mother teacher) for the missionaries in general and *paw liang* (father benefactor) for mission doctors is one measure of their high status in society. See *Siam Outlook* Annual Reports Issue (Jan. 1926): 99; and XI, 1 (Jan. 1935): 29. Curtis, *The Laos of North Siam*, p. 123n.

illiteracy.⁵⁰ In the process of modernization from traditional society, elite groups play a great role, and modernization does not become possible without the participation of some elite groups.⁵¹ Had the missionaries not held an elite status, their influence in Nan would have been considerably less, the power of their advocacy of modernization weakened, and the results of their cooperation with government less productive.

From the first days in Nan, the work of the missionaries was linked to the issue of modernization. In a fashion strikingly similar to events in Bangkok less than fifty years earlier, missionary work in Nan only became a real possibility with the death of an old, anti-foreign ruler and the coming to power of a man more friendly to new ideas.⁵² The elite status of the missionaries and the importance of their work in Nan for provincial modernization are underscored by the relationship between missionaries and both the local royal family and the local central government officials.

Cordial relations between missionaries and the local elite were reported from the earliest days when Dr. Peoples made a preliminary visit to Nan in 1894 right down to the last years of the last *chao muang*. That the missionaries received unusual deference and acknowledged status was symbolized in 1906 when the *chao muang* went out of the city to receive Dr. Peoples who was just returning from furlough. In 1911 the *chao muang* attended a farewell party for the Taylors who were leaving on furlough. The intimacy of missionary relations with the local elite was such that when Taylor got that first car in running order, he and his family immediately drove off to the palace and invited the old *chao muang* for a ride. In 1928 at the dedication of the new hospital, this same *chao muang* gave a "glowing tribute" to the medical work of the station.⁵³

If relations with the local royalty were cordial, the relationship between the Nan missionaries and the central government both nationally and locally took on the aspect of an alliance. It seems to have been obligatory for touring officials to stop at the station and admire the educational and medical work it was doing. Especially noted were visits by members of the highest circles of Bangkok royalty. These visits invariably ended with expressions of satisfaction and praise for the work of the station and with generous gifts to further the work.⁵⁴

These visits underscored the nature of the modernizing alliance which was openly acknowledged by both missionaries and government. Prince Vajiravudh noted in a 1906 visit to Chiang Mai that the missionaries had been "a great help" to Siam especially in education and medicine. Later, when Vajiravudh became king, a delegation of northern missionaries went to Bangkok to pay their respects and at that time declared their admiration of the modernizing skills of the late King Chulalongkorn.⁵⁵

This government-missionary alliance found due expression at the local level in Nan

⁵⁰George M. Foster, *Traditional Societies and Technological Change*, 2nd ed., (Boston, 1973), p. 1. cf. Carl Alfred Bock, *Temples and Elephants* (London, 1884); Curtis, *The Laos of North Siam*; William Clifton Dodd, *The Thai Race* (Cedar Rapids, 1923); Zimmerman, *Siam Rural Economic Survey*; Judd, *Chao Rai Thai*.

⁵¹Robert H. Lauer, *Perspectives on Social Change*, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1977), pp. 260-61.

⁵²Peoples to Speer, 30 Apr. 1894, Board, 11; see also Daniel McGilvary, *A Half-Century Among the Siamese and the Lao: An Autobiography* (New York, 1912), p. 163; Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 70-74.

⁵³Peoples to Speer, 30 Apr. 1894, Board, 11. *Laos News* IV, 1 (Jan. 1907): 9; and VIII, 2 (Apr. 1911): 41. *Siam Outlook* Annual Reports Issue (Jan. 1929): 2. Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 396-97.

⁵⁴*Laos News* II, 2 (Apr. 1905): 6-7; and XV, 1 (Jan. 1918): 26. "Nan Station Report 1910-1911", Maen Research. Starling, *Dawn*, p. 107.

⁵⁵*Laos News* III, 1 (Jan. 1906): 26; and VIII, 1 (Jan. 1911): 29-31. Rev. Donald McCluer, "A Visit to the Palace of the King of Siam", *Laos News* VIII, 2 (Apr. 1911): 59-62.

Province, most notably in the field of medicine where the government was trying to expand health services,⁵⁶ as well as in other fields. Between 1903 and 1910, Dr. Peoples had official charge of government medical work for army and government personnel in the province. His work included both general health care and the training of government vaccinators.⁵⁷ In the years after 1910, local officials continued to depend on missionary doctors, especially in periods of crisis such as the outbreak of beri beri in a distant village. The extensive mission hookworm treatment programme was another example of how the government called upon mission help, as that programme was extended to include local soldiers.⁵⁸ The missionaries themselves were not slow to admit that this alliance with the government was a financial boon that helped make it possible for them to distribute free drugs to others and that it was also very helpful in adding to the influence of the missionaries.⁵⁹

The government-missionary alliance was implemented in the field of education as well. Both the local royal family and government officials studied English and other Western subjects at the Christian schools. And even as late as the 1930s, some of them were still sending their children to Christian schools in preference to government schools. This was a practice of long standing based on the fact that the Christian schools were perceived as giving a better education.⁶⁰ Something of an apex was reached in 1910 when the Boys' School had eight to ten special students studying English, the students being government officials and included the government judge.⁶¹

In line with the government policy of extending education into every province,⁶² the local officials in Nan proposed in 1908 and again in 1911 that the Nan missionaries take over government education in the province and run it as they saw fit within the guidelines of the government curriculum. In 1908 such an agreement was being formulated and failed only because the missionary involved had family illness and left Nan.⁶³ Relations between the mission schools and government officials remained friendly, and they regularly exchanged ideas.⁶⁴

The import of these relationships, both formal and informal, with the various levels of government officials underscores both the perception that the missionaries had attained an elite status in the province and their strong links to modernization. The modernizing activities and the potential of those activities were recognized, well-received, and actively supported by local officialdom as well as by the national government. The government of the province sought to involve itself in cooperation with the missionaries. As we turn to an evaluation of the influence of the Nan Station on provincial modernization, it is necessary to keep in mind the close working relationship between the missionary and the government, a relationship that gave to the missionary a considerable influence.

⁵⁶Bunnag, *Provincial Administration*, p. 182.

⁵⁷*Laos News* I, 1 (Jan. 1904): 13-14; and VI, 1 (Feb. 1909): 11. Peoples, "Nan Station".

⁵⁸"Nan Station Report 1910-1911", Maen Research; Taylor, "A Missionary", p. 320.

⁵⁹*Laos News* II, 1 (Jan. 1905): 19.

⁶⁰Kate N. Fleeson to Benj. Labaree, 6 Aug. 1897, Board, 13; M.B. Palmer, "Activities in Nan", *Laos News* IX, 4 (Oct. 1912): 126; Starling, *Dawn*, p. 101; *Siam Outlook* III, 3 (Jan. 1924): 63.

⁶¹Peoples, "Nan Station".

⁶²See Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform*; Vella, *Chaiyoi*, pp. 106ff.

⁶³*Laos News* V, 1 (Jan. 1908): 7; and V, 2 (Apr. 1908): 34. David Park, "Opening of the Boys' Christian High School of Nan", *Laos News* IV, 3 (July 1911): 83-85.

⁶⁴See Park, "Opening"; *Laos News* XIII, 3 (July 1916): 61.

III

The American Presbyterian missionaries in Nan exerted strong influence for modernization as a result of their alliance with other elite groups. This influence was not confined to people in high places but also found its way into every part of the province and every level of society. We must underline again the relative nature of this influence limited as it was by the size of the province, the slowness of communications, the limited resources of the missionaries, and the late development of modernization in Nan. For all of that, we will argue that the influence of the Nan Station on modernization was considerable.

Medically, the impact of the station was at first limited by a suspicious attitude on the part of the people. They trusted local doctors and medicines and either would not go to the missionary doctor or did so only in extremity.⁶⁵ Thus, one measure of the impact of the station's medical work was the degree to which it could win acceptance of Western medicine. By this measure its work was highly successful. The meagre resources of the station were strained to their utmost to meet medical demands almost from the beginning. Statistics cited earlier bear out the impression of the missionaries themselves that considerable progress was being made in the introduction of Western medicine into the province. By 1922 it could be said that the people of Nan had shown "more accustomedness and readiness to accept foreign medicines than before".⁶⁶

That this was the case may be seen from statistics and observations gathered in 1931 by C.C. Zimmerman, which showed that nationally about one per cent of the Thai people made some use of Western medicine. Zimmerman found that, despite this low percentage, Siam's population was growing, and he concluded that such growth "could only be explained by the fact that a little Western medicine, even though applied crudely, has a cumulative effect in restraining the death-rate from all diseases by building up the bodies of the people".⁶⁷ The population of Nan increased from about 150,000 in the years before World War II;⁶⁸ thus we find that in 1932, a year after the Zimmerman report came out, some two per cent or more (3,650 people) received either medical treatment or drugs directly from the station. In the year 1911, the percentage must have been close to three per cent (4,500 people). Figures cited earlier in this article suggest that an average figure of about two per cent per year is a reasonable approximation of how many people were availing themselves of Western medicine in Nan Province. These figures do not seem to include those people treated in rural areas. We must assume, then, that in actuality, much more than two per cent had received station medical assistance. The one per cent figure cited by Zimmerman indicated that only that number had ever made use of Western medicine. The Nan Station statistics strongly suggest that a higher percentage of people in that province did at one time or another make some use of Western medicine through the agency of the station.

It may be concluded that the people of Nan Province were making use of Western

⁶⁵W.H. Beach, "Air Castles, Ideals, and Stern Realities", *Siam Outlook* (Apr. 1930): 395-96; Kenneth E. Wells, "History of Protestant Work in Thailand 1828-1966", rev. unpublished manuscript (Bangkok, 1970), ch. vii, p. 4.

⁶⁶*Siam Outlook* II, 2 (1922): 196-97; also see Dr. Chas. H. Crooks, "A Brief Survey of Medical Work in North Siam from Its Inception to the Present Time", *Laos News* XIV, 3 (July 1917): 99.

⁶⁷Zimmerman, *Siam Rural Economic Survey*, pp. 233, 236.

⁶⁸Official figures for 1919-1920 put the population of Nan Province at 164,525; see *Statistical Yearbook of the Kingdom of Siam*, Bangkok: Ministry of Finance, B.E. 2470 (1927-28).

medicine at a rate significantly higher than the nation as a whole, and this despite the isolation and supposed conservatism of the region. Missionary medicine was present both intensively and extensively and was making a major contribution to improving the health care given in the province. We have already noted that two marks of a traditional society are chronic illness and short life span. The testimony of Zimmerman and the evidence of the Nan Station's medical work lead us to the conclusion that the station was making headway in dealing with these two problems and in the process was able to change traditional attitudes towards medicine. Because of missionary medical work, Nan Province was far more modern medically than the nation as a whole.

The impact of the station's educational programme was limited in a way quite different from medicine: where medically the station sought to expand its work as broadly as possible, in education the missionaries purposely kept the Nan schools almost exclusively Christian so that they would be an "undisturbed" training ground for Christian children.⁶⁹ In the early years, the schools grew quickly to an enrolment of 120 pupils in 1911. After 1911 growth became more measured so that by 1931 the two schools enrolled 215 students, a growth generally parallel to that of the Christian community at large.⁷⁰ Even so, the four Christian schools of the 1920s had come to be nearly equal numerically to the central government schools in the province. The Christian schools numbered about 250 students in 1927 as opposed to 300 to 350 in central government schools and 6,000 in the low-grade local schools.⁷¹

Where missionary medicine had wide impact, the educational impact of the station was more concentrated. Its modernizing impact was focused first on the local Christian community and, secondly, on the modernizing elite of the province. Thus, its influence reached the general populace through the mediation of the Christians, who became an important source of educators in the province, and local government officials who made use of its facilities and its teaching ideas. The evidence suggests that the greatest direct impact of the missionaries on education was in the areas of literacy and music, particularly the former. At the very least, the station, by conducting a programme of literature distribution, was providing the tools for modernization in the area of literacy. To what extent its literature was actually used cannot be determined. Perhaps it should be further emphasized that as educators the Christian schools were nearly numerically equal to the central government schools in the province and were qualitatively acknowledged superior.

In summary, missionary education, in spite of its self-imposed limitations, had an impact on the province at several levels: it educated a not inconsequential number of students; it continued to be attractive and useful to the political elite and their children; it provided educational leadership and the tools for literacy in rural areas; and it promoted women's education years before it became a major national concern. On the whole, the Nan Station introduced into the province educational concerns and styles quite different from those of a traditional society. As in medicine, the station was an acknowledged leader in the drive for modernization and provided significant assistance in the development of modern education in Nan.

The technological impact of the station is much more difficult to assess since it is nearly

⁶⁹"Report for Boys' School of Nan 1910-1911", Maen Research; *Laos News* IX, 1 (Jan. 1912): 6.

⁷⁰"Nan Station Report 1910-1911", Maen Research; *Siam Outlook* VIII, 1 (Jan. 1932): 35-36.

⁷¹*Siam Outlook* VI, 3 (Jan. 1927): 49-50; government and local school figures were calculated from Nan Province census figures and Monthon Maharashtra school enrolment figures in *Statistical Yearbook of the Kingdom of Siam*.

impossible to establish direct causal relationships between missionary-imported technologies and the later development of those or similar technologies in the province. It is not possible, for example, to link Taylor's acetylene gas lighting system to the generating of electrical power in contemporary Nan or his "icy ball" to the sale of refrigerators. Even in transportation, it is impossible to assert that modern motor transportation developed in Nan because Taylor brought the first car into the province. In all of this, modernization in the technological sense was moving towards Nan regardless of what Hugh Taylor did or did not do.

If the missionaries were not the cause of provincial technological modernization, they were certainly very early contributors to the larger historical process of modernization. When that process was still nothing more than a trickle, the missionaries were engaged in varied activities of technological significance. The larger importance of those activities was the role they played in opening the minds of the people of the province to new experiences. The missionary imparted a sense of strangeness that was beyond common experience. Their buildings and their manners attracted crowds of curious people. For most of those people it was their first encounter with the non-Asian world.⁷² The missionaries toured extensively, covering nearly every corner of the province and were often the first Westerners seen in particular villages. As they ranged across the province, they brought many people to their first encounter with the West and its ways. Missionary women and children excited particular attraction as crowds of pressing people came to touch them, pinch them, and pull their hair to see if they were real.⁷³

It was specifically the purpose of itinerant missionaries to call attention to themselves, and they used a number of techniques, including sending Christian converts ahead to new villages, to make sure that they would attract crowds. One of the most effective techniques they used was to take along such attractive baubles of Western technology as a sciopticon, a gramophone, an organ, a movie projector, or a combination of these things. Large crowds of people invariably gathered quickly and showed great interest in these items.⁷⁴ Reports of these encounters catch the drama of people confronted with something new, something attractive, and something entirely beyond their experience. The missionaries brought significant numbers of people in Nan Province to their first encounter with the changes that were beginning to take place throughout the north.

Since traditional village people do not leave records useful for measuring the extent of this impact, we can only surmise from missionary reports that describe time and again the excitement of people upon meeting Western technological toys for the first time that the impact of these experiences was important. The missionaries were virtually in the forefront in bringing the first tremors of modernization into extensive areas of the province. The modernizing impact of the Nan Station, then, may be described in a second way. Not only did it introduce specific modernizing changes such as improved health care and women's education, but it also acted as an agent in preparing the province for what modernizing changes, even those originating from other sources, were coming. The modernizing impact of the Nan Station was both actual and symbolic: it actually caused some changes; and, it visibly symbolized others.

We may summarize the modernizing impact of the American Presbyterian Mission

⁷²"Report of Nan Station for 1898", Board, 22; "Annual Report of Muang Nan Station for the year ending Oct. 31, 1896", Board, 22.

⁷³David Park to Fellow-workers, 27 Feb. 1902, Board, 272; Starling, "Nan Notes", pp. 62-63.

⁷⁴*Laos News* II, 4 (Oct. 1905): 101-102; and Taylor, "A Missionary", pp. 256-59, 273.

station in Nan by noting again that the station was committed in a profound sense to Western technology. The station carried out an impressive array of medical, technological, and educational activities that were clearly modernizing and highly visible. The station was on good terms with and able to cooperate with the local elite who were similarly committed to bring about changes. The station carried out extensive itineration in rural areas, thus further establishing itself as a widely visible presence. In short, the missionaries of the Nan Station had a substantial modernizing impact on the province. That impact was impressive in its innovativeness and in its geographical extent. The missionaries were one of the major forces for modernization in Nan Province.

IV

The missionaries themselves were not unaware of their "civilizing" role in the development of Nan Province.⁷⁵ Nor were they slow to realize that "Westernization" was not an unmixed blessing.⁷⁶ Viewing the role of the missionaries in "civilizing" Nan from the perspective of medical developments, Hugh Taylor wrote, "The missionary's part has always been to reveal the need and the way to meet it. Then there has always come the necessary response from the Central Government to the welfare of the people."⁷⁷ This statement serves to describe the role of the missionaries in Nan as being one of advocating changes and then working as partners with government in the total modernization process.

As *advocates*⁷⁸ of modernizing social changes, the missionaries in both word and deed displayed a concern that touched nearly every facet of life. Their advocacy was first and foremost religious, but in their drive to bring about religious change they advocated many other changes as well, changes that grew out of their technological commitment. There was also, as seen in the statement by Taylor, a humanitarian concern for the welfare of people, which expressed itself in the introduction of Western medicine. In that advocacy, the missionaries in Nan also acted as *transmitters*⁷⁹ of certain socio-cultural items from Western, primarily American, culture to Nan provincial culture. The basis of their advocacy for change was not simply their religious beliefs but also their cultural orientation and experiences.

The effectiveness of the Nan Station in advocating modernizing changes and acting as cultural transmitters of changes was significantly linked to their status in society as an *elite* that was able to function in partnership with the governing elite of the province. One of the significant effects of the missionary presence was that the missionaries could and did support government modernizing activities while involving the government in other modernizing activities initiated through the station. One of the most significant testimonies to the effectiveness of the missionary impact on modernization in Nan was the active desire of the government to involve the missionaries in its own medical and educational schemes.

The modernizing role of the American Presbyterian Mission in Nan may be described, then, as the interplay between four role models: modernizing elite, modernization

⁷⁵See *Laos News X*, 4 (Oct. 1913): 9; Rev. Henry White, "The Aim and Value of Mission Enterprise", *Laos News VIII*, 1 (Jan. 1911): 14-17.

⁷⁶Taylor, "A Missionary", p. 331.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 330.

⁷⁸See Richard T. LaPierre, *Social Change* (New York, 1965), pp. 130ff.

⁷⁹See Lauer, *Perspectives*, p. 259.

advocate, modernizing partner, and cultural transmitter. Out of the nexus of these intertwined roles, we may draw three important insights relevant to the historical processes of modernization in Siam. First of all, the study of missionary roles in modernization in Nan strongly suggests that the modernizing experiences of the Arabs and the Chinese with respect to missionaries was repeated in Siam. One study of one province does not prove that the missionaries had the same impact as they did in other places. But it lends credence to that possibility. The events in Nan suggest that the missionaries in Siam did have an important role in the development of modernization. Secondly, that role did not end with the passing of missionary influence over the King. The missionaries played a continuing role even after the passing from the scene of the first generation of missionary greats such as Dan Beach Bradley and Dr. Samuel R. House. Thus, any reasonably complete study of the modernization of Siam will have to include consideration of the role of the missionaries throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Decline of prominence at the national level should not necessarily be equated with a loss of importance in modernization. A third insight suggested by the missionary modernizing role in Nan Province is that modernization at the provincial level did not happen simply because the powers-that-were in Bangkok ordered it to be so. The notion that the transformation of Thai society "was accomplished largely through action from above" requires serious re-examination and modification.⁸⁰ For example, the case of medical modernization in Nan is particularly instructive at this point as it demonstrates that significant changes took place because a non-governmental, provincial agency was present and was both willing and able to pool its resources with the government. Medical modernization depended at least as much upon the local representatives of the American Presbyterian Mission as it did on central government policies. Certainly, further studies into regional, provincial, and local forces for modernization are called for.

In summary, six statements may be made on the basis of the evidence presented in this article: first of all, the members of the Nan Station were an elite group in provincial society; secondly, they had access to and worked in cooperation with the ruling elite of the province; thirdly, they were concerned with and strongly advocated modernizing changes in Nan; fourthly, they had a set of ideas and the tools with which to effect some of the changes they advocated; fifthly, because of their high visibility and their different ways, the missionaries were able to function also as symbols of modernizing changes; and, finally, because of all of this, the Nan Station of the American Presbyterian Mission played a significant role over an extended period of time in the processes of modernization in Nan Province, Siam.

⁸⁰Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform*, p. 376.