

KING MONGKUT'S INTERACTIONS WITH CHRISTIANITY  
AND THE FAILURE OF EARLY PROTESTANT MISSIONARY  
EFFORTS TO CONVERT THE SIAMESE

BY

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BA, Simon Fraser University, 1994

MCS, Regent College, 2008

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

with a concentration in

CHURCH HISTORY

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Vancouver, British Columbia  
April 2009  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Thailand, formerly known as Siam, has proven resistant to Christianity. Despite faithful work from Catholic missionaries since the 1500s, and from Protestant missionaries since 1828, the number of Thai who have become Christians is minimal.

This thesis will examine the first forty years of Protestant missionary work in Siam, from 1828 to 1868. One of the prominent figures in Siam at this time was Mongkut, who became king in 1851, and reigned until his death in 1868. Because of his prominence in the society, Mongkut is one of the few Siamese of that time whose interactions with missionaries can be traced over an extended period. This paper will investigate his relationship to Christianity, and it will be seen that while Mongkut had a cautiously open attitude to western influences and was eager to accept certain elements of western civilization, he emphatically rejected Christianity throughout his life, as did most of the Siamese that the missionaries encountered.

The thesis will then investigate considerations which help explain the failure of the missionary efforts to convert the Siamese, examining both factors which were outside the control of the missionaries and those which were within their control. Finally, an attempt will be made to apply what we have learned to contemporary situations.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to some of the people who have helped me as I worked on this project. While in no way responsible for any errors or omissions in it, this thesis would not have happened without them.

First, my thesis supervisor, Dr. Donald Lewis, allowed me to choose a topic that I was interested in, rather than trying to steer me to one which he wanted me to examine. I am grateful for the freedom and encouragement that he gave me to pursue my passion.

Second, the Inter-Library Loan department of the University of British Columbia Libraries patiently and persistently tracked down microfilms of old letters, copies of old journals, and books in Thai. They amazed me in their ability to secure (almost) whatever I asked for, and without their work, and the generosity of the many libraries who shared their rare resources, I would not have been able to complete this thesis.

My interest in Siam/Thailand came from having had the privilege of living there for almost three years, and I would like to acknowledge my deep debt to the Thai people and the missionaries who taught me the language and culture, and shared their lives with me while I grew to love the nation.

Finally, this thesis could not have been written without the love and support of my wife, Marian. Through my time studying Mongkut, I have often been reminded of the words of Proverbs 12.4a in the Thai Bible: ภรรยาดีเป็นมงกุฎของสามีตน.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Introductory Matters**

##### *Statement of Purpose*

In 1865, Adele Fielde left the United States to travel to Siam, where she would join her fiancé, Cyrus Chilcott. They had planned to spend their lives together as missionaries, working for the conversion of the Siamese to Christianity. When Fielde arrived in Bangkok, she discovered that Chilcott had died about the time she had embarked. She wrote home expressing her grief:

I have journeyed seven weary months over tempestuous seas and in strange lands to meet my beloved, and I have found his grave with the grass upon it seven months old. I have come to my house; it is left unto me desolate. While I stood holding out my hand for a cup of happiness, one of fearful bitterness was pressed violently to my lips. I looked joyfully toward Providence, and it turned upon me a face of inexpressible darkness.<sup>1</sup>

While her experience was unique, many other missionaries came to Siam in the mid-nineteenth century, expecting happiness and looking to Providence with joyful anticipation. Most found darkness, disappointment, and desolation, for despite great

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1. Letter written 30 July 1866, as printed in the *Missionary Magazine* (Boston: Board of Managers of the Baptist General Convention, December 1866), 465.

opportunities and much effort, these early Protestant missionaries largely failed in their efforts to convert the Siamese to Christianity.

In 1871, a missionary surveyed the history of Protestant missions to Siam and concluded that it would be accurate to say that “there is scarcely any other field, in which modern missions have been established, where the introduction of the gospel has met with so little opposition as in Siam proper .... It is equally just to say that there is scarcely any other field which has been so barren of results.”<sup>2</sup> Other observers agree that the missionaries to Siam encountered less opposition, and met less success, than missionaries to most other places.<sup>3</sup>

In 1855, Dan Beach Bradley surveyed the missionary efforts in Siam since the first Protestant missionaries arrived in 1828, and the missionary doctor mentioned that “there have been 63 different male and female missionaries connected with the several Protestant Missions in Siam.”<sup>4</sup> Sir John Bowring, a British diplomat writing at about the same time, describes the results of this number of dedicated workers by stating that “it is doubtful whether there are ten professing Protestant Christians among the Siamese at the present moment.”<sup>5</sup> If anything, Bowring’s numbers are more optimistic than other writers who survey the period, one of whom states that thirty-one years went by from the time

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2. Noah A. McDonald, *Siam: Its Government, Manners, Customs, &c* (Philadelphia: Alfred Martien, 1871), 173.

3. Richard L. Popp, “American Missionaries and the Introduction of Western Science and Medicine in Thailand, 1830–1900,” *Missiology* 13, no. 2 (April 1985): 147.

4. Dan Beach Bradley, *Journals* (Unpublished manuscript, 1832–1870; Archived at Oberlin College; microfilmed on eighteen microfilm reels), 18 July 1855.

5. John Bowring, *The Kingdom and People of Siam; With a Narrative of the Mission to that Country in 1855* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1857), 1:336.



the first missionary arrived “until the first enduring convert from among the Siamese was gained.”<sup>6</sup>

This lack of evangelistic success among the Thai has continued up to the present. According to the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, only 1.3% of Thailand’s 62 million people would call themselves Christian, and many of these are ethnically non-Thai.<sup>7</sup> Many observers would place the number lower than this, and popular accounts often state that less than 0.5% of the population of Thailand is Christian.<sup>8</sup>

The present thesis will investigate the early Protestant evangelistic efforts in Siam to understand some of the factors that may have contributed to the missionaries’ failure to convert the Siamese to Christianity. To help understand the missionary methods, the life of one of the only Siamese people of the time whose interactions with Christianity can be traced over an extended period will be explored. This person is known to the western world as Mongkut.

Mongkut was born into the Siamese royal family on 18 October 1804. After the death of his father (King Rama II), Mongkut spent twenty-six years as a Buddhist monk during the reign of his half brother, King Rama III (r. 1824–1851). During this period, Mongkut embraced western learning and science while rejecting Christianity and

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6. George Haws Feltus, *Samuel Reynolds House of Siam: Pioneer Medical Missionary, 1847–1876* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924), 156. Compare: “The twenty-two Congregational or American Board missionaries, in a period of eighteen years, 1831–1849, made not a single Thai convert. The Presbyterians worked from August 1840 to August 5, 1859 before they baptized the first Thai convert.” Kenneth E. Wells, *History of Protestant Work in Thailand 1828–1958* (Bangkok: Church of Christ in Thailand, 1958), 2. Wells points out that the Baptists had more success, but mostly among the Chinese people in Siam.

7. David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1:733–735.

8. See China Williams and others, *Thailand*, 12th ed. (N.p.: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 60.

reforming Siamese Buddhism, purging it of superstitious beliefs and correcting monastic abuses.

Mongkut left the monastery in 1851 to become the fourth king in the present dynasty. As king, Mongkut continued his policy of selective interaction with the western world, which resulted in Siam's continued independence at a time when several western powers were acquiring colonial possessions in Asia.<sup>9</sup> Siam had followed a policy of isolationism, but realizing that the nation would need to have increasing interactions with the outside world, Mongkut attempted to build relationships with the West which were favourable to the kingdom. Thai people are proud that they are the only Southeast Asian country never to have been colonized by a western power, and this was largely due to Mongkut's wise interactions with the West, and by his skillful balancing of British and French interests.<sup>10</sup>

Mongkut profoundly influenced the course of Siamese history, especially in respect to the nation's interactions with the West.<sup>11</sup> He set the path that Siam continued to

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9. Southeast Asian nations which became subject to colonial rule in this period include Cambodia, which became a French protectorate in 1863, and Burma, which was partially annexed by Britain in 1826 and 1852, before being taken completely in 1885. During these years Britain also humiliated the most powerful Asian country by defeating China in the Opium War (1839–1842) and the Arrow Incident (1856). Mongkut was well aware of the colonial acquisitions that were happening around him. See Seni Pramoj and Kukrit Pramoj, *A King of Siam Speaks* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1987), 89; and Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39.

10. See Abbot Low Moffat, *Mongkut, the King of Siam* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1961), 102; Susan Morgan, *Bombay Anna: The Real Story and Remarkable Adventures of the 'King and I' Governess* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 95; and John Blofeld, *King Maha Mongkut of Siam* (Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1972), 8. Siam's independence was also due to France and Britain realizing the value of having a buffer state between their colonial possessions. Chaiyan Rajchagool disputes both Siam's status as a buffer state and the ability of the Siamese to play off rivalries between western powers, but is in a minority here. *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy: Foundations of the Modern Thai State from Feudalism to Peripheral Capitalism* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994), 34–40.

11. See R. Lingat, "La Vie Religieuse du Roi Mongkut," in 1904–1929, Vol. 1 of *Siam Society Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Publication: Selected Articles from The Siam Society Journal* (Bangkok: Siam Society, 1954), 18–37; David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale

follow, and his policies were maintained (and advanced) by his son, King Rama V (Chulalongkorn).<sup>12</sup> The reign of Mongkut (1851–1868) was the start of the modernization of Siam, and he has been seen as the watershed between old Siam and modern Thailand. George Bacon, an early western chronicler of Siam, praised Mongkut by writing in 1892 that “in some respects the most conspicuous name in the history of the civilization of Siam will always be that of the king under whose enlightened and liberal administration of government the kingdom was thrown open to foreign intercourse, and the commerce, the science, and even the religion of the western world accepted if not invited.”<sup>13</sup>

Throughout his life, Mongkut had extensive contact with Christianity, primarily through his relationships with American missionaries in Bangkok. Because of his prominence, missionaries wrote about their interactions with him, which allows us to trace his interactions with the missionaries throughout his life. Mongkut also left writings of his own (in Thai and in English) which reveal what he thought about the religion that the missionaries brought to Siam. Therefore, studying Mongkut’s interactions with Christianity provides an opening to observe the efforts of the missionaries to Siam, and the Siamese reaction to them, so that we can explore reasons for the failure of early Protestant attempts to convert the Siamese.

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University Press, 1984), 181–190.

12. See Malcolm Smith, *A Physician at the Court of Siam* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1982; first published in 1947), 34. While Chulalongkorn’s accomplishments should not be minimized, there is some truth in the claim that he “merely completed the tasks for which his father had carefully educated him after initiating the remedial work with his own brain and hands.” Blofeld, *Maha Mongkut*, 51.

13. George B. Bacon, ed., *Siam: The Land of the White Elephant as it Was and Is*, rev. Frederick Wells Williams (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1892), 104.

This thesis will examine factors which may have contributed to this failure which were within the control of missionaries, such as their sense of superiority, their rationalism, their unecumenical attitude, their criticisms of Buddhism and the monarchy, and their cultural insensitivity. We will then look at considerations which were outside the control of the missionaries, including both the intertwining of culture and religion, and such things as the unfamiliar physical setting, the precarious health of the missionaries, the difficult language, and the lack of resources. Finally, characteristics of the Siamese which made conversion to Christianity unlikely will be discussed, including cultural differences which hindered communication, their intellectual difficulties with Christianity, their sense of superiority, and a lack of felt needs.

The thesis will conclude by making some comments about the legacy of the early missionaries to Siam, and by suggesting some lessons that can be learned for contemporary efforts to share the gospel, both in Thailand and in other settings.

### ***Importance of the Subject***

The history of Christianity in Thailand has not been thoroughly studied. While there are three standard works published on the history of Protestant missions in Thailand, the most recent is twenty-seven years old.<sup>14</sup> Of specific periods in Thai Christian history, only the Catholic work under the reign of King Narai (r. 1656–1688)

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14. George Bradley McFarland, ed., *Historical Sketch of Protestant Missions in Siam, 1828–1928* (Bangkok: Bangkok Times Press, 1928); Wells, *Protestant Work in Thailand* (1958); and Alex G. Smith, *Siamese Gold: A History of Church Growth in Thailand: An Interpretive Analysis, 1816–1982* (Bangkok: Kanok Bannasan, 1982).

has been studied in any detail.<sup>15</sup> The proposed study is a historical thesis, and the primary significance of it will be that it will add to our understanding of the history of Christianity in Thailand.

However, the thesis should be interesting to a wider audience because of the missiological and methodological issues it will raise. Missionaries in the colonial period have been criticized for packaging western civilization with Christianity and forcing their audience to accept (or reject) the entire package. The story of Mongkut offers the example of a person who accepted elements of the civilization without accepting the religion, and who led his country in doing the same. Since Siam was the only Southeast Asian country not colonized by Christian nations, it provides an interesting case study in the relationship between Christianity, colonialism, and western civilization.

Further, this thesis raises questions about the methodology of the missionaries, including their divisive attitudes, their antagonistic style of interreligious dialogue, and their assumptions about the Siamese and the course of Christian history. The intention of this thesis is not to find someone to blame for the failure of efforts to convert the Siamese, but to learn what we can from this failure for our own interactions with people of differing religious and cultural backgrounds.

### ***Previous Research***

Although Thai history is not widely studied, Mongkut has received more attention than most Siamese monarchs. This is largely due to the portrayals of him on Broadway

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15. See Michael Smithies and Luigi Bressan, *Siam and the Vatican in the Seventeenth Century* (Bangkok: River Books, 2001); and Luang Sitsayamkan, *The Greek Favourite of the King of Siam* (Singapore: Donald Moore Press, 1967).

and in Hollywood that originated in the writings of Anna Leonowens. Leonowens taught English to members of Mongkut's family for five years in the 1860s, and she later wrote about her time in Siam in a series of articles and books.<sup>16</sup> In the 1940s, an American missionary named Margaret Landon consolidated Leonowens's stories in her book, *Anna and the King of Siam*.<sup>17</sup> This was later made into a Broadway musical (*The King and I*) and several movies (*The King and I*; *Anna and the King*). Unfortunately for western understanding of the Siamese ruler, Leonowens was not a historian, and each of the highly influential adaptations of her stories has taken them further from the truth.

Many of the other English accounts of the life of Mongkut were written to correct the false impressions given by these portrayals of him. Because the authors often wrote out of a desire to defend the king, they tended to overcompensate by being uncritical of Mongkut. Jason Roussos notes that the three main studies of Mongkut in English, those of John Blofeld, Abbot Low Moffat, and A. B. Griswold, "can be considered eulogies rather than objective biographical studies."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, few balanced studies about this influential Siamese leader exist in English.

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16. The most important of which are Anna Harriette Leonowens, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court: Being Recollections of Six Years in the Royal Palace at Bangkok* (Boston: Fields, Osgood & Co., 1870), and Anna Harriette Leonowens, *Siamese Harem Life* (New York: Dutton, 1953; first published in 1873).

17. Margaret Landon, *Anna and the King of Siam* (New York: John Day Company, 1943).

18. Jason E. S. Roussos, "King Mahha Mongkut (Rama IV) (Reigned 1851–1868): A Glimpse at His Reign and the Role Which Anna Leonowens Played in It," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan (Tokyo)*, *Fourth Series*, 9 (1994): 65–66. As examples of the eulogizing style, Blofeld states that Mongkut was "one of the most talented and learned men Asia has ever produced and one of the most likeable characters in history," and comments that "even a severely objective writer is bound to find difficulty in avoiding superlatives when writing of King Mongkut, for he was in so many ways a superlative ruler and a superlative human being." Blofeld, *Maha Mongkut*, xiii; *ibid.*, 97.

Relatively little has been published about the early missionaries to Siam.<sup>19</sup> Despite their striking failure to convert the Siamese, these Christians were important in introducing western medicine, education, and printing to Siam, and because of this, there has been some study of their influence in these areas.<sup>20</sup> Despite the close relationships several missionaries had with Mongkut, there are no major studies investigating their interactions.

Non-missionary foreigners, including diplomats such as Sir John Bowring and Townsend Harris, had a role in shaping Mongkut's perception of western civilization, and there has been some study of these relationships in the context of his foreign policy.<sup>21</sup> Despite a debatable influence on Siamese life, Anna Leonowens has been extensively studied, largely due to the drama of her stories, and the shocking finding that much of her own life story was fabricated.<sup>22</sup>

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19. They do play a prominent role in the three standard works on the history of Christianity in Thailand which were mentioned earlier: George McFarland, *Historical Sketch*; Wells, *Protestant Work in Thailand*; and Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*. There are also books about individual missionaries, including Dr. Dan Beach Bradley (Donald Lord, *Mo Bradley and Thailand* [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969]) and Samuel House (Feltus, *Samuel Reynolds House*).

20. See Joseph Nguyen-Van-Khoi, "A Study of the Impact of Christian Missionaries on Education in Thailand, 1662–1910" (PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 1972), and Popp, "Introduction of Western Science," 147–157.

21. See Manich Jumsai, *King Mongkut of Thailand and the British: The Model of a Great Friendship*, 3rd ed. (Bangkok: Chalermit, 1991).

22. While scholars had long known that Leonowens dealt imaginatively with her time in Siam, it was only when W. S. Bristowe published *Louis and the King of Siam* (New York: Thai-American Publishers, 1976) that it became known that Leonowens had lied about most of the details about her past. For more information, see Bristowe, *Louis and the King*, 23–31; and Susan Morgan, *Bombay Anna*.

## ***Method and Sources***

As mentioned above, many of the secondary sources in English on the life of Mongkut are of limited value due to their uncritical positive regard for the monarch. This is even more pronounced when the Thai secondary sources are considered. While there are some valuable studies of this period in Thai, most tend to avoid any negative comments about Mongkut.<sup>23</sup> In his survey of past studies on Mongkut, Jason Roussos notes that “Thai historians’ statements range from the quite uncritical ... [to studies which are] good illustrations of Thai hyperbole and apotheosis of their hero-king.”<sup>24</sup> This exaggeratedly positive view of Mongkut is due both to the continuing deep respect Thai people have for him, and to the kingdom’s *lèse majesté* laws.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the lack of scholarly secondary sources, there are a large number of source materials available for the study of religion in the time of Mongkut, and much of the work in preparation for this thesis was done by analysing these materials. The primary sources used include published accounts of Siamese life, private diaries, missionary reports, periodicals, Mongkut’s correspondence, and court documents.

The most accessible of these are the published accounts of western observers.

Many of the westerners involved in Siamese life at this time published accounts of their

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23. An example of a valuable Thai work is Saat Chaiwan, *Kansueksa prawatisat priapthiap ngan thammathut khong Roman Khatholik kap Brotestaen nai Prathet Thai* [A comparative historical study of Roman Catholic and Protestant missions in Thailand] (Bangkok: Suriyaban Publishers, 1976).

24. Roussos, “King Mahha Mongkut,” 66.

25. *Lèse majesté* (a crime of “harming the ruler”) makes it illegal to speak badly of the Thai monarchy. Because of these laws, there is some government censorship, as well as much self-censorship, of those writing about Thai royalty. For more information, see David E. Streckfuss, “The Poetics of Subversion: Civil Liberty and *Lèse Majesté* in the Modern Thai State” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1998), 135–183; or David E. Streckfuss, “Kings in the Age of Nations: The Paradox of *Lèse Majesté* as Political Crime in Thailand,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 3 (July 1995): 445–475.



impressions, including Bowring, Harris, Leonowens, and Pallegoix.<sup>26</sup> While a valuable source of first hand information, most of the published accounts of Siamese life were by people with limited experience of the language and culture, “mere cursory travelers, whose knowledge of the countries through which they passed, or at which they touched, must necessarily have been limited, and the chief object of many of them appears to have been to make a readable book, oftentimes at the expense of truth.”<sup>27</sup> While this greatly limits the usefulness of these accounts, they do give an overview of Siamese life, and sometimes provide information that more experienced observers would not comment on because they had become accustomed to the situation.

There are also extensive missionary diaries from this period, and many of these are available to the researcher.<sup>28</sup> These are valuable in giving the missionary perspective on Mongkut and the Siamese, although the limits of missionary understanding of Siamese

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26. Bowring, *Kingdom and People*; Townsend Harris, *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris: First American Consul and Minister to Japan*, rev. ed. (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959; first published in 1930); Leonowens, *English Governess*; and Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix, *Description of the Thai Kingdom or Siam: Thailand Under King Mongkut*, trans. Walter E. J. Tips (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2000; originally published as *Description du Royaume Thai ou Siam*, 2 vols., Paris: Mission de Siam, 1854).

27. McDonald, *Siam*, 10–11; see also Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 22 September 1863. Pallegoix is an exception, having served as a Catholic missionary in Siam for decades before publishing his work. It should also be noted that Bowring asked Dr. Bradley, an experienced missionary, for help in writing his book. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 25 June 1855.

28. George Haws Feltus has transcribed extensive selections from the diaries of Jesse Caswell, the Hemenways, and Dan Beach Bradley. George Haws Feltus, *Abstract Missionary Journal of Rev. Jesse Caswell, Missionary in Siam, 1839–1848 under the ABCFM and the AMA* (Troy, NY: 1931); George Haws Feltus, *Abstract Missionary Journals of Rev. Asa Hemenway and of his wife Lucia Hunt Hemenway, Missionaries to Siam, 1839–1850 under the ABCFM* (Troy, NY: 1930); George Haws Feltus, *Abstract of the Journal of Rev. Dan Beach Bradley, M. D., Medical Missionary in Siam, 1835–1873* (Troy, NY: 1930). The complete journals of Dr. Bradley are kept at Oberlin College, but have been microfilmed for several other libraries.

culture needs to be remembered.<sup>29</sup> The problem of selectivity is also an issue, as missionaries wrote about what they were interested in, which is not always what the historian wishes they were interested in. While Jesse Caswell taught English for several years to Mongkut, Caswell's journals mention little of the experience.<sup>30</sup> The problem of selectivity is compounded when the diaries are edited, as the editor inevitably chooses what he or she believes to be important or interesting. The editor of several missionary journals of the period repeatedly claims that he attempted to be objective in his selections, and that "nothing has been omitted that has historical significance," but he highlights the problem of selectivity by mentioning that he considered descriptions of Dr. Bradley's affection for his family (something that would interest many people) as too private to be included.<sup>31</sup> Finally, missionaries were not disinterested observers of the religious situation in Siam, and their biases are often observed in their journals, and need to be remembered even when they are not apparent.<sup>32</sup>

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29. "An important reason why western language materials on Thailand are of limited value as sources for study is that few western residents took the time needed to learn Thai really well, and even fewer took an interest in Thai history, literature, and art." Constance M. Wilson, "State and Society in the Reign of King Mongkut, 1851–1860: Thailand on the Eve of Modernization" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1971), 22.

30. See Feltus, *Journal of Caswell*, i; Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 19. Similarly you would not know from reading Pallegoix's work how close a relationship he had with Mongkut.

31. For claims of objectivity, see Feltus, *Journal of Caswell*, ii; see also Feltus, *Journal of Bradley*, preface; and Feltus, *Journals of Hemenways*, ii. For the statement about Bradley's family life, see Feltus, *Journal of Bradley*, IV.

32. On the use of "ego documents" such as diaries as sources, see Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 20–21; and W. H. McDowell, *Historical Research: A Guide* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), 57–58. On western bias in general, see Wilson, "State and Society," 19–20, and on Protestant or Catholic bias, see Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, xxix.

There are also numerous missionary reports and letters, and these too are valuable sources when used carefully.<sup>33</sup> As with missionary diaries, the researcher must be aware of the selectivity and bias in these documents. Additionally, with the material the missionary sent home to their supervisors or supporters, there were natural motives to justify their existence in the country by highlighting both the great needs of the country and the good things that were happening as a result of missionary activity.<sup>34</sup> This tendency was noted in the period by some of the missionaries, including Noah McDonald, who explained why he did not write home more often:

[Some of the world] reproach us missionaries here in the east for sending home too glowing accounts of our operations. When these accounts come back and are read by those here in a different occupation from us they are not realized as strictly true and the writers are charged with making false representations of their work. What makes it worse too the charge is oftentimes too just. ... In my opinion the fewer of such reports that are published the better.<sup>35</sup>

Additionally, sometimes the editors of the magazines which printed missionary accounts were not comfortable in publishing negative information, and would selectively omit parts of the letters and reports that they did print.<sup>36</sup>

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33. Examples of this category are included in *Siam Letters* [Letters from various missionaries, 1840–1876] (Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, Microfilmed by Scholarly Resources of Wilmington, DE; Microfilm roll no. 181–182); the *Missionary Herald* (Boston: [American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions], 1830–1869); and the *Missionary Magazine*.

34. See Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Opening China: Karl F. A. Gutzlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827–1852* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 9, 123. William L. Bradley remarks that this is true of missionary diaries as well, as many of them were made to be sent home for publication. “The White Man’s Burden,” *Asian Studies* 12, no. 1 (April 1974): 185; see also Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 18 June 1840.

35. Noah McDonald, 10 May 1866, in *Siam Letters*, 3:25.

36. For example, someone bracketed parts of letters from William Buell and Mary Mattoon, and marked “omit” next to these sections. *Siam Letters*, 1:9, 2:213. The *Missionary Herald* abridges letters of the missionaries by saying such things as: “our brethren next speak of other sins which are prevalent among the Siamese. But the picture is too dark to be transferred to the pages of the Herald.” March 1846, 92.

The western perspective is also given in periodicals published in Siam from this era which included the *Bangkok Recorder*, the *Bangkok Calendar*, and the *Siam Repository*. As these were the product of missionaries, they share some of the weaknesses of other missionary sources (such as bias, selectivity, and limited understanding of the culture).<sup>37</sup> However, because Mongkut himself contributed to these periodicals (usually by responding to missionary articles with which he disagreed), they can be a valuable source of information about Mongkut's thoughts about Christianity.

While primary Thai source materials are not readily available in North America, laws, sermons, letters, and histories published from the reign of King Mongkut were consulted in the preparation of this thesis.<sup>38</sup> These sources have the advantage of being Mongkut's (or Siamese) understandings of the situation and provide a useful balance to the missionary accounts.<sup>39</sup> However, because Christianity was not Mongkut's primary interest, there is little in these Thai language sources about Christianity.<sup>40</sup>

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37. The *Bangkok Recorder*, *Siamese Recorder*, and *Bangkok Calendar* were put out mainly by Dr. Dan Bradley. Samuel Smith was responsible for the *Siamese Weekly Advertiser* and the *Siam Repository*.

38. For example, Mongkut, *Prachum prakat Ratchakan Thi 4* [Collected proclamations of the Fourth Reign] (Bangkok: Munnithi Toyota Prathet Thai, 2004); Mongkut, *Mahamakut ratchanutsarani* [Buddhist sermons of Mongkut] (Bangkok: Mahamakut Ratchawitthayalai, 1968); and Mongkut, [*Selected documents of the Fourth Reign*] compiled by Constance M. Wilson (Bangkok: 1851–1868; Microform).

39. This is not to say that Siamese accounts are unbiased, just that they will not generally share the biases of the western writers. On Thai bias with regard to Mongkut, see Paul M. Handley, *The King Never Smiles: A Biography of Thailand's Bhumibol Adulyadej* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 421.

40. Mongkut was most likely to discuss Christianity with westerners, with whom he tended to correspond in their languages.

## *Limitations*

This thesis will not attempt an exhaustive account of missionary activity in Siam in this period, nor will it provide a detailed account of the life of either Mongkut or the early missionaries. These are valuable projects, and while some work has been done on each, much more could profitably be done.<sup>41</sup> There are, however, no major works which specifically investigate the reasons for the failure of early Protestant missionary attempts to convert the Siamese, and that is the focus of this thesis.

In order to understand the missionary methods of this period and the effect that they had on a specific Siamese person, two of the chapters in the present work are an investigation of the interaction between Mongkut and Christianity. In current historiography, writing on the influence of kings has fallen out of favour. This thesis is very much centred on the Siamese king, not because he was the only person that mattered in Siam in this period, but because his prominence affords us the ability to study his relationship to Christianity over time.<sup>42</sup> There simply are very few Siamese persons in this period for whom we have enough documentary evidence to examine their prolonged interaction with western religious teachers.

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41. For accounts of missionary activity in Siam, see the works listed in footnote 14. As mentioned above, none of the biographies of Mongkut in English are completely satisfactory, but those by Abbot Low Moffat, John Blofeld, and A. B. Griswold are the standard works. For biographies of specific missionaries, see Lord, *Mo Bradley*, or Feltus, *Samuel Reynolds House*. Perhaps the best way to get a feel for the interior life of the missionaries is by reading the abstracts of missionary journals edited by George Haws Feltus. William Bradley also attempts to portray the psychology of a missionary to Siam of this period by writing in the persona of Dr. Dan Bradley. William L. Bradley, *Siam Then: The Foreign Colony in Bangkok Before and After Anna* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981).

42. It should also be remembered that Mongkut's influence in the country was profound throughout his life. While he was not the entire story of Siam in this period, he was an important part of it. See B. J. Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand 1767–1942* (St. Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1983), ix; Wyatt, *Short History*, xiv.

Two other limitations of this thesis should be pointed out. Few of the works about Christianity in Thailand manage to combine the accounts of Protestants and Catholics, and this study will also not do this adequately, as it will focus on Protestant interactions with Mongkut. The Catholic work in Siam during this period was largely by the Société des Missions Étrangères of Paris, and Siamese fears of French imperialism made Mongkut keep his distance from the predominantly French Catholics.<sup>43</sup> Because of this, Roman Catholics had less influence on Mongkut than did the Protestants. However, Bishop Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix was an important friend to Mongkut, and their relationship will be explored in this paper.

It should also be acknowledged that men figure prominently in this telling of the story. This is partly because the thesis centres on Mongkut, and ministry across genders was rare in nineteenth-century Siam. It is also partly because of the nature of the source documents. Jessie Lutz, writing of missions to China in this period, comments on the invisibility of missionary women by pointing out that they “did not ordinarily send reports to the home board, and they did not participate in general assemblies of missionaries or in the formal deliberations of the ruling bodies of denominations or congregations.”<sup>44</sup> While at least one female missionary (Lucia Hemenway) recorded her experiences in Siam in a journal, and while there are letters from female missionaries in the collections available, it is true that women are under-represented in the journals,

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43. Teerawat Bhumichitr, *Phra Chomklao, Roi du Siam: Etude de l'émergence de langlophilie et de la francophobie au Siam du XIXe siècle* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1993), 12. Because of the close connection between France and Catholicism in Siam, much of the literature about the Catholic Church in Siam is in French, a language in which I am not sufficiently proficient to adequately address the topic.

44. Lutz, *Opening China*, 60.

letters, and reports of the early missions to Siam.<sup>45</sup> This under-representation is unfortunate as the women were vital for the functioning of missionary homes, and thus for the physical and mental health of the missionary men.<sup>46</sup> Female missionaries to Siam also did important work outside of the home, and writers of the period sometimes realized the importance of this ministry, or hinted at the missionary work of the women.<sup>47</sup> This thesis will draw attention to the role of missionary women in the education of Mongkut's wives and children, but it does not adequately reflect the important role that women played in early missions to Siam.

### ***Terminology***

Several of the terms used in this project require further explanation. The first is the name of the country over which Mongkut was king. To westerners, the nation was known as Siam before 1939 (as well as between 1945 and 1948) but since then, it has been known as Thailand. In this thesis, "Siam" is used to refer to the country before the

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45. Feltus, *Journals of Hemenways*; *Siam Letters*, 2:79, 2:213, 2:236; *Missionary Magazine*, September 1838, 226; *Missionary Magazine*, December 1866, 465; *Missionary Magazine*, March 1869, 80–81; *Missionary Magazine*, April 1870, 105.

46. On the importance of the home for missions, see Dana L. Robert, "The 'Christian Home' as a Cornerstone of Anglo-American Missionary Thought and Practice," in *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706–1914*, ed. Dana L. Robert (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 134–165. See also Feltus, *Journals of Hemenways*, v; Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 43.

47. Dr. Bradley commented that his first wife "is indeed my 'right-hand man.'" Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 5 May 1836. Dr. Bradley also writes about his second wife taking charge of religious services, preaching, and going up country to distribute tracts. For examples, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 6 February 1858, 8–10 November 1858, 5 December 1858, 13 December 1858, 24 September 1859, 25 September 1859, and 14 July 1861.

1940s, and “Thailand” to refer to it either primarily in the present, or in general terms. The adjectives “Siamese” and “Thai” are used similarly.<sup>48</sup>

The capital of Thailand is called Bangkok by westerners. Thai people usually refer to the city as Krungthep, which is an abbreviation of the city’s full name, *Krungthep Mahanakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthalayuttaya Mahadilokphop Noppharat Ratchathani Burirom Udom Ratchaniwet Mahasathan Amon Phiman Awadan Sathit Sakkathattiya Witsanukam Prasit*.<sup>49</sup> As most of the primary and secondary sources used refer to the capital as Bangkok, this thesis will do the same.

Not only are the names used to refer to the country and the capital problematic, but so is the name used to refer to the monarch in this study, for the Siamese used different names and titles to refer to Mongkut at different points in his life.<sup>50</sup> As a child, he was commonly known as *Thun Kramom Fa Phraong Yai*, often abbreviated as *Thun Kramom Yai*.<sup>51</sup> As a youth, he was given the name *Chao Fa Mongkut*, and often referred to as *Chao Fa Yai*, to distinguish him from his younger brother, *Chao Fa Noi*.<sup>52</sup> As a Buddhist

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48. For discussion about the country’s name, see Preecha Juntanamalaga, “Thai or Siam?” *Names: Journal of the American Name Society* 36, no. 1–2 (March–June 1988): 69–84; and Pridi Phanomyong, *Thai rue Sayam* [Thai or Siam] (Nonthaburi, Thailand: Santithaam, n.d.).

49. Krungthep means “city of angels.” The entire name is interpreted to mean “the city as great as the city of the angels, the place of the emerald Buddha, a city which cannot be defeated, beautiful, wealthy and prosperous, the royal city filled with nine types of gems, and joy-inspiring, with many grand palaces, the celestial abode of the royal manifestation [Avatar] who comes down, [the city] which Indra gave Vishnukan to bring about.” Translation mine; see Thanakit, *Phraratchaprawat Maharat Thai* [The royal history of Great Thai Kings] (Bangkok: Piramit, 2000), 200.

50. For a description of several of these names, see a letter from Mongkut to Mr. Eddy of 14 July 1858, in Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 12–13.

51. Damrong Rajanubhab [Damrong Ratchanuphap], *Rueang Phrachomklao* [About Mongkut] ([Bangkok]: Rongphim Tiranasan, 1957), 2.

52. Ibid., 2–3. *Chao Fa Mongkut* was an abbreviation of a much longer formal title. *Chao Fa* was the title used for a prince of a certain ranking. Mongkut’s personal name (Mongkut) translates as “crown.” *Yai* and *Noi* are adjectives which mean greater and lesser (or big and small, old or young). Foreigners



monk, he was referred to as *Vajirayan* or as *Makuto Bhikkhu*.<sup>53</sup> While he was king, the Siamese would generally refer to Mongkut as *Phrabat Somdet Phrachomklao Chao Yu Hua*, or *Phrachomklao* for short, and this is still the way most Thai people refer to him.<sup>54</sup> However, westerners generally called him Mongkut, and this is how the king would sign his own name when he would write foreigners.<sup>55</sup> For the sake of clarity, this term will be used to refer to him throughout his life.

Finally, while there is no universally accepted way to transliterate Thai words, the Royal Institute system of 1999 has been used throughout this work unless the Thai words are well known in another spelling.<sup>56</sup> Thai authors in the bibliography have been alphabetized according to the English transliteration of their first name.

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sometimes just refer to Chao Fa, and do not always differentiate between the brothers.

53. Makuto is the Pali equivalent of Mongkut, and Bhikkhu is a Pali word for a monk. Robert Caesar Childers, *A Dictionary of the Pali Language* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., n.d.). Vajirayan is the common transliteration of Mongkut's name as a monk, although in the system used in this thesis, it would be rendered as Wachirayan.

54. Translation of Thai royal titles is difficult, partly because English does not have enough equivalent honorifics. *Phrabat Somdet* and *Chao Yu Hua* are common honorifics for royalty (so the equivalent would be "His Royal Majesty" or "His Highness"). *Phrachomklao* translates as Supreme/Highest Head. Blofield claims that "if one speaks of King Mongkut to a Thai, he generally supposes that one is referring to Rama VI, who also bore that name among many others." *Maha Mongkut*, 37.

55. Teerawat Bhumichitr after discussing the different things which Mongkut was called, claims that Mongkut preferred his friends call him Chao Fa Mongkut. *Roi du Siam*, 59.

56. For a summary of six of the main transliteration systems of Thai, see Nitaya Kanchanawan, "Romanization, Transliteration, and Transcription for the Globalization of the Thai Language," *The Journal of the Royal Institute of Thailand* 31, no. 3 (July–September 2006): 832–840. The Royal Institute system is given in Ratchabanthiditayasathan [The Royal Institute], "Lakken kanthot akson Thai ben akson roman baep thai siang"[Principles of romanization for Thai Script by transcription method], 1999, [http://www.royin.go.th/upload/246/FileUpload/416\\_2157.pdf](http://www.royin.go.th/upload/246/FileUpload/416_2157.pdf) (accessed 21 January 2009).

## **Before Mongkut: The Context**

### ***Background of Siam***

Thailand is a nation of 513,115 square kilometres located in Southeast Asia, bordered by Malaysia on the south, Cambodia on the east, Laos on the north and east, and by Burma on the north and west.<sup>57</sup> Historically, Siam was a much smaller area in what is today considered Central Thailand, surrounded by a number of semi-autonomous tributary states, such as those centred in Chiang Mai, Phrae, Nan (now part of North Thailand), Ligore (now an area in Southern Thailand), Korat (now in Northeast Thailand), as well as Laos and Cambodia (now independent countries).<sup>58</sup> Chaiyan Rajchagool argues that treating Siam in this period as a nation state is anachronistic, since “in the mid-nineteenth-century Siam was a conglomerate of petty states and principalities and did not exist as a single political entity.”<sup>59</sup> Since all the early missionaries were centred in Bangkok, our survey will focus on the capital.<sup>60</sup>

Bangkok was the centre of missionary activity in Siam, and while estimates of the number of people in Bangkok vary, most foreigners of the period estimated the population of the capital at around four hundred thousand.<sup>61</sup> This number included

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57. Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 733.

58. The system of suzerainty in the Early Bangkok period is described in Wyatt, *Short History*, 158–160. The area controlled by Siam fluctuated depending on their relationships with the neighboring powers, especially their two main rivals, the Cambodians/Khmer, and the Burmese.

59. Chaiyan Rajchagool, *Thai Absolute Monarchy*, xiii, 2; see also Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *History of Thailand*, 47. For a discussion of how the idea of the Thai nation was created, see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

60. The missionaries only made brief excursions up-country until a mission station was opened at Petchaburi in 1861.

61. Lord gives 60,000 as the lower limits of estimates in the time of Bradley. *Mo Bradley*, 24.

significant ethnic minorities, including Burmese, Mon/Peguan (a people group from Southern Burma), Laotian, Annamese (Vietnamese), and Khmer (Cambodian).<sup>62</sup>

Especially prominent were the Chinese, who may not have been a minority.<sup>63</sup> While the size of the Chinese population could be exaggerated, they were a sizeable population in Bangkok, and were important for missions.<sup>64</sup> Many missions saw Siam as a stepping stone or a training ground for China, which at times was closed to Christian workers.<sup>65</sup>

When opportunities arose to enter China, many of the missionaries to Siam proceeded to leave for the place where their hearts had been all along.<sup>66</sup> Others came to Siam intending

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Leonowens gives an estimate of one million in her 1870 book *The English Governess*, 135. Other estimates from the middle of the nineteenth century include 350,000 in 1852 (Frederick Arthur Neale, *Narrative of a Residence at the Capital of the Kingdom of Siam; With a Description of the Manners, Customs, and Laws of the Modern Siamese* [London: National Illustrated Library, 1852], 30); 400,000 in 1871 (McDonald, *Siam*, 31); 401,300 in 1830 (*Missionary Herald*, July 1830); 404,000 in 1854 (Pallegoix, *Description of the Thai Kingdom*, 29); and “not less and probably more than” 500,000 (William Buell, 10 December 1841, in *Siam Letters*, 1:11). B. J. Terwiel advances a lower number (230,000–410,000 in all Central Thailand under Bangkok’s control), commenting that “a mean figure derived from a large number of suspect figures is itself equally suspect.” B. J. Terwiel, *Through Traveller’s Eyes: An Approach to Early Nineteenth-Century Thai History* (Bangkok: Editions Duang Kamol [DK Book House], 1989), 231, 251.

62. Of the 404,000 people that Pallegoix estimates live in Bangkok, he believes that only 120,000 are ethnically Siamese. *Description of the Thai Kingdom*, 29.

63. Pallegoix states that the Chinese make up one-third of the total population of Siam, and estimates them as approximately half the population of Bangkok. *Description of the Thai Kingdom*, 27, 29. Terwiel states that “there were some regions [in Siam] where Chinese settlement reached such proportions that its culture appeared to dominate,” and he lists Bangkok as one of the five main Chinese centres. *Through Traveller’s Eyes*, 254.

64. On the exaggerated impact of the Chinese, see a letter King Mongkut wrote in 1857, in which he affirmed foreigners’ knowledge of Siam, except for four common misconceptions, one of which was that “nine parts out of ten of the local population are Chinese.” Seni Pramoj and Kukrit Pramoj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 212.

65. Alex G. Smith, “A History of Baptist Missions in Thailand” (MDiv thesis, Western Evangelical Seminary, 1980), 6, 37. Feltus mentions that this was true both of the Baptists and the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions. *Samuel Reynolds House*, 38. This valuing of Siam for the sake of China was not unique to Protestants; Nguyen-Van-Khoi notes that early Catholic missions treated it in the same way. “Education in Thailand,” 64.

66. David Abeel, *Journal of a Residence in China, and the Neighboring Countries, From 1829 to 1833* (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1834), 207; Feltus, *Samuel Reynolds House*, 39. A partial list of missionaries to Siam who went on to work in China includes Karl Gutzlaff, William and Theodosia Dean,

to go to China, and only reluctantly settled to work with the Siamese.<sup>67</sup> Because of this concern for the Chinese, the missionaries in Siam were divided into two distinct teams, one working with the Siamese, and the other working with the Chinese in Siam. This thesis is concerned with the ethnic Siamese, who showed less interest in Christianity than the ethnic Chinese.<sup>68</sup>

Socially, Siam was a highly stratified society.<sup>69</sup> As Akin Rabibhadana explains, the “relationship of superordination-subordination pervaded the whole society in every level from the top to bottom. It was, and perhaps still is, the key relationship in the structure of the society.”<sup>70</sup> People’s position on the social scale was measured by *sakdina*, ‘dignity marks’ used to quantify people’s social status which were correlated to the number of people under a person on the scale.<sup>71</sup> On the top of this complicated system

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Stephen Johnson, Lyman and Rebecca Peet, Josiah and Eliza Goddard, Andrew and Mrs. Morse, and William Ashmore. In addition, Patrick and Mrs. Carden and William and Anna Lisle left Siam to work in Hong Kong. For more information about individual missionaries, see Appendix A.

67. Dan Beach Bradley, who went on to spend almost all of the next 38 years in Siam, wrote in his journal in 1835 that “it was in my heart to labor as a missionary among the Chinese when I first gave myself to the A.B.C.F.M. It has been my ardent desire ever since and I cannot relinquish it.” Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 30 January 1835. See also his reminiscences in the *Bangkok Calendar* (Bangkok: Press of the American Missionary Association, 1866), 82.

68. In 1892, Bacon noted that “the religious success of the Protestant missionaries, which has not been over-encouraging, has also been in the first place, and largely, among the Chinese residents.” *Land of the White Elephant*, 271. Montgomery explores some of the sociological reasons that might be behind the increased receptivity of minority groups to changing religions, which he calls an “Asian pattern.” See Robert L. Montgomery, *The Diffusion of Religions: A Sociological Perspective* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 117–120; and Robert L. Montgomery, *The Lopsided Spread of Christianity: Toward an Understanding of the Diffusion of Religions* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 8.

69. The following paragraphs are a simplified and selective discussion of the complicated social setting in mid-nineteenth-century Siam. For more details, the work of both Akin Rabibhadana and Constance Wilson should be consulted.

70. Akin Rabibhadana, *The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782–1873* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1969), 92–93.

71. Ibid., 22–23, 91; Terwiel, *History of Modern Thailand*, 11–17.

was the king, who had a position so high that his “sakdina was never stipulated in figures because it was infinite.”<sup>72</sup>

In theory, the king was “an absolute monarch who wielded all powers, executive, judicial and legislative.”<sup>73</sup> Indeed, westerners of the time frequently commented on his powers, writing such things as: “The king is an absolute despot. No hereditary aristocracy or legislative assemblies control his will. There is an aristocracy or nobility it is true, but their power is felt only as instruments in carrying out the will of the king. The people exist for the monarch, and not the monarch for the people.”<sup>74</sup> More recent accounts, however, have noted that the king “was much less absolute in reality than in theory.”<sup>75</sup> There were powerful clans (especially the Bunnak family) who helped Mongkut acquire the throne, and he felt gratitude and a sense of debt to them. While he theoretically wielded absolute power, the king was usually careful to use that power in a way that would not be challenged by these powerful families of the nobility.<sup>76</sup>

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72. Akin Rabibhadana, *Thai Society*, 77.

73. Ibid., 40; McDonald, *Siam*, 16. Leonowens comments that “in Siam, the king — Maha Mongkut especially — is not merely enthroned, he is enshrined. To the nobility, he is omnipotence, and to the rabble mystery.” *English Governess*, 99. Attachak Sattayanurak reports Mongkut’s belief that he was the “heart of the kingdom.” “The Intellectual Aspects of Strong Kingship in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 88, no.1–2 (2000): 85.

74. McDonald, *Siam*, 34.

75. A. B. Griswold, *King Mongkut of Siam* (New York: The Asia Society, 1961), 8. Seni and Kukrit Pramoj agree that “the interesting feature of Siam’s absolute monarchy is that it was never at any time taken to be perfectly absolute.” *King of Siam Speaks*, 26.

76. Akin Rabibhadana, *Thai Society*, 147; Wyatt, *Short History*, 187–188. Attachak Sattayanurak discusses the role of “shared power” in the ascension of Mongkut, and how Mongkut’s view of his role did not include much space for such shared power. “Intellectual Origins of Strong Kingship (Part 2),” *Journal of the Siam Society* 89, no.1–2 (2001): 12.

### ***Background of Christianity in Siam***

Siam has had a lengthy exposure to Christianity. Alex Smith notes that it is possible that “the Nestorian Christians had very early missions to the Thai,” noting references to Christians in Siam in 525 and in 800.<sup>77</sup> Likewise, Catholic historian Luigi Bressan notes sources that indicate “the existence of a small community of Christians in Siam, probably Armenians or Nestorians, long before the 1513 arrival of the Portuguese.”<sup>78</sup> However, the story of modern missions to Siam starts with the Portuguese.

When the Portuguese arrived in Siam for trade, they also gave the Siamese exposure to Roman Catholicism.<sup>79</sup> In 1555, the first two Portuguese missionaries arrived, Jerome de la Croix and Sebastien Conto, and while they were martyred in the 1560s, they were soon followed by others.<sup>80</sup> In 1607, the first Jesuit missionary (Balthasar Sequeira) visited Siam, and he was soon followed by other Jesuits who chose to live in Siam, some of whom had a significant impact on Siamese life.<sup>81</sup>

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77. Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, 13.

78. Luigi Bressan, *A Meeting of Worlds: The Interaction of Christian Missionaries and Thai Culture*, ed. James Gallagher (Bangkok: Assumption University Press, 2000), 1.

79. The story of Catholic missions in Siam is an interesting one, but most of it is outside the scope of this paper. This brief survey of the history of Catholic missions in Siam will focus on what affected Siamese attitudes to Christianity at the time of Mongkut. For more information, see Saat Chaiwan, *Priapthiap*; Bressan, *Meeting of Worlds*; or Pallegoix, *Description of the Thai Kingdom*.

80. Jerome de la Croix died on 26 January 1566, and Sebastien Conto on 11 February 1569. Saat Chaiwan, *Priapthiap*, 60. Pallegoix claims Francis Xavier was really the first modern missionary to Siam, since he worked for a time in Malacca, which was then dependant on Siam. Pallegoix, *Description of the Thai Kingdom*, 303; Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 1:345.

81. Father Thomas de Valguarnera not only started the first documented Catholic school in Siam, he was also the “official architect of the Royal House,” and improved defences in Ayutthaya, Bangkok, and Lopburi. Bressan, *Meeting of Worlds*, 2–3.

The French Fathers arrived in 1662, and France quickly became the dominant missionary nation in Siam, with the Société des Missions Étrangères of Paris becoming the most prominent sodality. As part of the work of the French missionaries, a seminary was established in Ayutthaya for the peoples of Southeast Asia in 1664 or 1665. While the seminary was in Siam, the majority of students were from other countries, and instruction was given in Latin.<sup>82</sup>

At this time, Siam was ruled by a strong leader known as King Narai the Great (r. 1656–1688). Narai fostered a relationship with France, and had a Greek born French Catholic (Constantine Phaulkon) as one of his closest advisors. Phaulkon was a devout Catholic with dreams of converting the king (and then the country) to Christianity.<sup>83</sup> There are different interpretations of what happened after Narai's death; some people think that Phaulkon attempted a takeover of the kingdom, and others suggest that Siamese leaders jealous of Phaulkon's power used Narai's death as an opportunity to eliminate their rival.<sup>84</sup> All agree that upon the death of Narai, there was an uproar which resulted in the execution of Phaulkon, and government pressure on Catholics in the kingdom.<sup>85</sup> Alex Smith notes that the incident had significant consequences: "the anti-Christian repercussions reverberated down through the succeeding decades. That episode remained

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82. Saat Chaiwan claims that from the start of the seminary to the beginning of the twentieth century, over 90% of the students were from countries other than Siam. *Priaphthiap*, 245.

83. Wyatt, *Short History*, 113.

84. Already in 1892, Bacon noted that "it seems to be growing every year more difficult to form positive opinions concerning the various characters with whom history makes us acquainted, and we have here a sufficiently wide choice between two opposite estimates of poor Phaulkon." *Land of the White Elephant*, 63. For more on Phaulkon, see Sitsayamkan, *Greek Favourite*; or Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 2:385–410.

85. See Wyatt, *Short History*, 117.

long in the astute minds of Siamese leadership and became a hurdle of hesitance towards Protestant missions also.”<sup>86</sup>

Following this setback, Catholic missionaries continued to work, but with few results. In 1775, during the time of Taksin, the Catholics refused to swear the normal oath of allegiance to the king, which further reinforced the idea that Christianity was a religion that was not supportive of the Siamese government.<sup>87</sup> In response, missionaries were briefly expelled from the country in the 1780s.<sup>88</sup>

Writing in 1854, Bishop Pallegoix summarizes Catholic missionary history in Siam by admitting that “although the Christian religion has been preached in Siam for two hundred years, it has not made great progress.”<sup>89</sup> Of the people in Siam who were Catholics, most were not ethnically Siamese, but were Cambodian or Vietnamese.<sup>90</sup> Add to this the impression gained during the reigns of Narai and Taksin that Christianity was not supportive of the government, and the result of a lengthy history of Catholic work in Siam was that at the start of Protestant missions, Christianity was seen as a foreign religion with little relevance to the Siamese.

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86. Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, 9.

87. Terwiel, *History of Modern Thailand*, 53–55; Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 359–370.

88. Walter Armstrong Graham [Pinya, pseud.], *A Brief History of the French Catholic Mission in Siam* (Bangkok: Wo Hing, 1903), 44–46. Graham notes that in 1782 they were allowed to return.

89. Pallegoix, *Description of the Thai Kingdom*, 415.

90. Saat Chaiwan, *Priapthiap*, 122. See also Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, 9.



## CHAPTER TWO

### MONK MONGKUT: CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE AND BUDDHIST REFORM

#### Overview of the Period (1804–1851)

##### *Mongkut*

Thailand has a proud and lengthy history, which awaits a full and adequate treatment in English.<sup>1</sup> In 1767, Ayutthaya, then capital of Siam, was sacked by the Burmese, and the Siamese responded by moving their capital to Thonburi. Here they started to rebuild their country under the leadership of a charismatic person named Taksin. Shortly after the capital's move to Thonburi, Mongkut's grandfather took part in a coup against Taksin, and became king, reigning as King Ramathibodi.<sup>2</sup> The king proceeded to move the capital across the river from Thonburi to Bangkok. Mongkut was born in the reign of his grandfather, on 18 October 1804. Just before Mongkut turned

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1. The best English sources are Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *History of Thailand*; and Wyatt, *Short History*.

2. The naming of Siamese in this period provides a challenge, as people did not use surnames and were commonly referred to by their title (so a change in position would essentially be a name change). Mongkut's grandfather was named Thongduang. He was often referred to as Chaophraya Chakri (a position he held before he became king), and Chakri became the name of the dynasty he started. When he became king, Thongduang was referred to as King Ramathibodi, but after his death he was given the name Phra Phutthayotfa Chulalok. In 1916, it was decided to refer to the kings in the Chakri dynasty by the number of their reign (e.g., Rama I, Rama II). For this reason, the present thesis will usually refer to Mongkut's grandfather as Rama I. Wyatt, *Short History*, 145; Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *History of Thailand*, 27, 278; see also Thanakit, *Maharat Thai*, 184.

five, King Rama I died. He was succeeded by one of his sons, Rama II (r. 1809–1824), Mongkut's father.<sup>3</sup>

Little is known of Mongkut's life during the reign of Rama II, but as the eldest son of a full queen, he received "all the ranks and honours usually associated with the Heir Apparent," and the nineteenth-century missionary Dan Bradley commented that his education would "have been the best that could have been had in the kingdom at the time."<sup>4</sup> Mongkut would have received training in Siamese and Pali (the language of the sacred texts of Buddhism), literature, poetry, history, war, and ceremonial protocol.<sup>5</sup> He would also have been religiously trained and given some experience of government.<sup>6</sup>

Dynastic succession in Siam was not a simple matter of primogeniture, and this was illustrated upon the death of Rama II in 1824. Mongkut had a strong claim to the throne, but as he was young and relatively inexperienced in state-craft, the crown went to

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3. King Rama II's name before he became king was Itsarasunthon, and he reigned as Phra Phutthaloetla Naphalai. Wyatt, *Short History*, 161. Rama II is known more for his poetry than for the political achievements of his reign. Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 1; Wyatt, *Short History*, 161, 166.

4. Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 1; Dan Bradley in the *Bangkok Calendar*, 1869, 120.

5. Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 1–2.

6. Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj mention that although Mongkut was "not conspicuous in public affairs," he did take part in state ceremonies. *Ibid.*, 2. For an example of a diplomatic mission the 12-year-old Mongkut went on, see Damrong Rajanubhab, *Rueang Phrachomklao*, 7; Teerawat Bhumichitr, *Roi du Siam*, 37.

an older half-brother who was born of a lower status mother.<sup>7</sup> The older brother became Rama III, while Mongkut became a Buddhist monk.<sup>8</sup>

Mongkut was twenty years old when he entered the Sangha (the monastic order of Siam), and he remained a monk for the next twenty-six years. The monastery was a place of safety and security for Mongkut, and he worked hard as a monk. He soon advanced up the hierarchy of the Sangha, quickly was recognized as an expert in Pali, and eventually became the abbot of an important monastery and the founder of a reformed school of Buddhism.<sup>9</sup> Mongkut's position as a monk was sufficiently high that missionaries sometimes inaccurately referred to him as "the high priest," or even the "Siamese pope."<sup>10</sup> Jesse Caswell, who knew Mongkut better than most missionaries, reminded people that "it should be constantly borne in mind that Chau Fa [Mongkut] is only the head priest of a wat [temple] and not the high priest of the kingdom."<sup>11</sup>

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7. See Wilson, "State and Society," 219. Mongkut was not the only other one with a strong claim to the throne, and Mongkut's younger brother (Chao Fa Noi) was occasionally called the "rightful heir of the throne." Charles [Karl] Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832, & 1833, with Notices of Siam, Corea, and the Loo-Choo Islands* (London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, 1834), 26–27.

8. Mongkut entered the monastery about two weeks before Rama II died. Damrong Rajanubhab, *Rueang Phrachomklao*, 10. Westerners generally saw Rama III's ascension as a usurpation of the throne: "This person [Mongkut] was the rightful heir to the throne from whom it was usurped by his brother, consequently it is said that he has taken a vow of perpetual priesthood that he may be saved the humility of bowing down to whom he shall ever feel to be his inferior." Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 7 April 1836; see also Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 235. However, this fails to understand the flexibility of the rules of succession in Siam in that period. Wyatt, *Short History*, 167.

9. Mongkut was ordained at Wat Mahathadu, where he had previously been a novice. Almost immediately, he transferred to Wat Samorai (now known as Wat Ratchathiwat). He later went back to Mahathadu for about three years, before returning to Wat Samorai in 1829. Finally, in 1836 he moved to Wat Boworaniwet, where he became abbot and remained until he became king.

10. *Missionary Magazine*, August 1836, 194; Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 11 September 1835, 15 September 1835, and 22 November 1846.

11. Letter from Jesse Caswell, 1 July 1843, in the *Missionary Herald*, June 1844, 199.

Caswell went on to remind people of Mongkut's connection to the royal family: "He, however, has in reality, much more authority than common head priests, on account of his being of the royal family."<sup>12</sup> Because of Mongkut's official position in the Sangha and his connection to the royal family, he was involved in at least one diplomatic mission with westerners in the period while he was a monk. In 1835, several westerners shot some birds for sport on temple grounds, and since the killing of animals is against the principles of Siamese Buddhism, some monks got in a scuffle with the westerners, and assaulted the shooter.<sup>13</sup> The westerners felt greatly wronged and threatened to bring the full power of the West against Siam unless the monks were brought to justice.<sup>14</sup> The king refused to try the case, and turned it over to Mongkut who sentenced the monks to sit in the sun all day and perform some menial work, and then forbade all monks from touching westerners.<sup>15</sup> Though this did not satisfy all the westerners, it diffused a potentially explosive situation.<sup>16</sup>

Mongkut's extended time in the monastery offered him an unusual and important training period for his time as king. As a monk, Mongkut was free to travel, to study, and to meet a large number of people he otherwise would not have been able to.<sup>17</sup> As the

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12. Ibid.

13. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 8 September 1835.

14. One of the people involved (Mr. Hunter) called for the death of the head priest of the monastery, and the expulsion of all the other monks from the Sangha. He threatened that "if it be not granted he will send for foreign aid and establish English laws in Siam." Ibid., 9 September 1835.

15. Ibid., 11 September 1835; *Missionary Magazine*, August 1836, 194.

16. A very similar incident involving westerners shooting animals on temple grounds and being assaulted by monks occurred in 1857; see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 29 November 1857.

17. Damrong Rajanubhab, *Rueang Phrachomklao*, 13; Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 4–5; Wyatt, *Short History*, 182.

Siamese people got to know Mongkut, they grew to both love and respect him.<sup>18</sup>

Buddhist monastic life also gave Mongkut an opportunity to excel in an environment where his status as royalty did not imply automatic obedience from others.<sup>19</sup>

Physically, Mongkut was described in 1839 by Robert Davenport: “for a Siamese he is quite tall, of a slender make, and of a much lighter complexion than his brother Chau Fa Noi.”<sup>20</sup> Mongkut lost his teeth while he was young, and had a replacement made of sapanwood.<sup>21</sup> While he was a monk, he suffered a stroke of one of his facial nerves which partially paralyzed his face, leaving him with a lop-sided smile for the rest of his life. Though he called on missionary doctors to investigate, they were unable to help him.<sup>22</sup>

Another description of Mongkut is provided by one of his English biographers, John Blofeld:

Built rather sparsely, the King was about five foot eight inches tall, that is to say rather above the average for a Siamese of his generation, and he is described as having an erect, commanding figure. The few extant photographs vary a good deal .... In some of them, he appears decidedly

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18. Gutzlaff wrote that Chow Fa Noi “is beloved by the whole nation ... but his elder brother, Chow-fa-yay [Mongkut], who is just now a priest, is still more beloved.” *Journal of Three Voyages*, 26–27. The *Missionary Magazine* notes that “Chau fa yai is so much revered that nobody dares controvert what he advances.” October 1836, 233.

19. Too much, however, can be made of the “democratic” nature of the Sangha of this time. See Seni Pramoj and Kukrit Pramoj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 3; Moffat, *Mongkut*, 11. Mongkut’s high status and potential as a future king gave him a privileged status and freedom to speak his mind in the monastery that others did not have. Craig James Reynolds, “The Buddhist Monkhoo in Nineteenth Century Thailand” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1973), 66–69; *Missionary Herald*, June 1844, 199.

20. From a letter of Robert Davenport of 15 November 1839, printed in the *Missionary Magazine*, October 1840, 242. Leonowens states that Mongkut was “of middle stature.” *English Governess*, 246; although see Blofeld, *Maha Mongkut*, 45.

21. Leonowens, *English Governess*, 246.

22. See Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 23 April 1836.

good-looking, in others, downright ugly, though all of them reveal a pair of remarkably expressive eyes with a warmly appealing expression. His eyes were undoubtedly his best feature; his mouth was rather large and drooped on one side as the result of an illness suffered in middle age, and his right ear was slightly deformed for a reason not given.<sup>23</sup>

The *Bangkok Calendar* of 1869 adds to the physical description of Mongkut by sketching some of his personality traits:

The physical movements of His Majesty were usually quick and nervous. His memory was very retentive, his mind extremely active and unquestionably of a superior order. He was very sensitive to praise, and probably equally so to every thing that crossed his natural pride. His temper was quickly kindled into a flame, and was seldom slow in abating. The love of esteem was a very prominent characteristic of H. M.'s life.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Missions***

Protestant missions in Siam were getting started in this period, and it was a time for laying the foundations of future ministry which saw high missionary turnover, struggles with health, and attempts to acquire the difficult Siamese language. The first Protestant missions to the Siamese were done by Anne Hasseltine Judson, who ministered to Siamese prisoners of war in Burma and translated a catechism, a tract, and the Gospel of Matthew into Siamese from 1816 to 1818.<sup>25</sup> The first Protestant missionaries resident in Siam were Karl Gutzlaff and Jacob Tomlin, who arrived in 1828. Gutzlaff and Tomlin

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23. Blofeld, *Maha Mongkut*, 45. Not everyone was complimentary to Mongkut. A visitor to Siam in 1867 described Mongkut in the context of his family by commenting on the contrast “between these little Asiatic cherubs [the king’s children] and the old king, whose flattened face was set in a gold pointed crown, and whose skeleton limbs trembled beneath gaudy robes and innumerable precious stones. His Siamese majesty, aged sixty-three, is perfectly hideous, and very like a monkey.” Marquis of Beauvoir (Ludovic Hebert), *A Week in Siam, January 1867* (Bangkok: Siam Society, 1986; originally published as *Voyage autour du Monde* [Paris]: Plon, 1870), 53.

24. *Bangkok Calendar*, 1869, 138.

25. Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, 12.

were followed by David Abeel, and while none of the three stayed long, they focussed on what would become two of the key mission activities for the next several decades: literature production and literature distribution.<sup>26</sup> Despite having an imperfect grasp of the Siamese language, the three missionaries translated the Bible, compiled an English-Siamese dictionary, and met large numbers of people.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, they met such large numbers of people that Gutzlaff “described numerous instances when he was almost mobbed by individuals trying to get their hands on the free printed texts.”<sup>28</sup> These large gatherings attracted the attention of the government, and the missionaries were almost expelled from Siam before being advised to “imitate the ‘quiet Padres [Catholic priests].’”<sup>29</sup>

These three early missionaries “stimulated a growing curiosity about the West and the sources of its power and wealth” in the people they met.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps more importantly,

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26. Tomlin arrived on 23 August 1828, and left on 14 May 1829. He returned to Siam on 30 June 1831, and left on 7 January 1832. Gutzlaff arrived at the same time as Tomlin first did, and left Siam on 18 June 1831. Abeel arrived shortly after Gutzlaff left and stayed for approximately six months. He later returned in May 1832 for another six months. See Kennon Breazeale, “English Missionaries Among the Thai,” in *Anuson Walter Vella*, ed. Ronald D. Renard (Honolulu: Southeast Asia Papers, 1986), 208–213.

27. Alex Smith mentions that “their method of translation followed this pattern: Mr. Hing, a Chinese, read a portion from the Chinese Bible; he then expressed it in his imperfect Siamese, and Mr. Hon, a Burmese, rephrased it in somewhat better Siamese and wrote it down.” *Siamese Gold*, 15. It is perhaps not surprising that “the translation left much to be desired, as was pointed out by the Thai king, to whom he [Gutzlaff] sent a copy.” Lutz, *Opening China*, 53–54. According to Tomlin, the king complained that he could “neither find head nor tail” in the missionary literature. J. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals and Letters, Written During Eleven Years’ Residence and Travels amongst the Chinese, Siamese, Javanese, Khassias, and Other Eastern Nations* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1844), 161.

28. Lutz, *Opening China*, 45. She adds: “He soon learned that seeming agreement without public confrontation did not imply a willingness to substitute Christianity for their own religious beliefs and practices. He also discovered that the possession of books brought social prestige, whether one read them or not; also, the paper itself could be put to all manner of uses.”

29. *Bangkok Calendar*, 1866, 66 (from a Summary of Protestant Work written by Rev. C. Robinson in 1841).

30. Lutz, *Opening China*, 47.

they stimulated a curiosity in the West about Siam. They published journals about their time in the country, and before they left the field, they sent out a request for reinforcements.<sup>31</sup> The American Baptist Board was the first to respond, transferring John Taylor Jones and his wife from Burma to Siam in March 1833. Missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM), and reinforcements from the American Baptist Board joined the Joneses. From 1833 through 1837, fourteen missionaries (men and women) came to Thailand. In the next five years (1838–1842), another twenty-four joined them (sixteen from the ABCFM), followed by several years without any new missionaries, as the ABCFM debated whether to withdraw from the field. Of the forty-two missionaries who arrived in the first sixteen years, only eight would end up spending more than ten years in the country, and twelve were in Siam less than three years.<sup>32</sup> Those who remained in Siam long enough to grasp enough of the language to communicate were often disabled by sickness or by caring for spouses or children who were dying.

Following the example of Gutzlaff, the production and distribution of Christian literature played a large role in the missionary methods of this period. In many ways this seemed ideal to the new missionaries—a large number of the Siamese were literate, and

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31. See Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages*; Tomlin, *Missionary Journals and Letters*; and David Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*. The request for reinforcements was sent on the boat which carried the Siamese twins to America. Arthur Judson Brown, “Siam,” in *The Nearer and Farther East: Outline Studies of Moslem Lands and of Siam, Burma and Korea*, by Samuel M. Zwemer and Arthur Judson Brown (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), 181.

32. Those lasting more than ten years were Dan Bradley and his wife Emily, J. T. Jones, Charles Robinson and his wife, William Dean and his wife, and Mrs. Slafter. Of those who lasted less than three years, several lasted only months, such as Nathan Benham, who arrived in Siam on 1 March 1840 and drowned on 6 April 1840, and Stephen Johnson’s second wife, who arrived in Siam in May 1841 and died at the beginning of July in the same year from an inflammation of the brain.



this was a way for missionaries with relatively limited language to scatter the seed of the gospel widely in hopes that it would grow.<sup>33</sup> Indeed the distribution of literature soon acquired a prominence above that of preaching; when challenged about the importance of oral proclamation in 1841, Bradley concluded that the missionaries on the field “spend comparatively very little time in preaching or preparing to preach orally.”<sup>34</sup>

However, despite a large amount of printing and distribution of materials in this period, little results were seen.<sup>35</sup> The missionaries reported in 1837 that “the eagerness of the people to receive our books is by no means a certain evidence that they are desirous to learn their contents. A view of this fact has induced us to take a different course and instead of throwing our books broad cast to the people, we distribute them with great care and discrimination.”<sup>36</sup> The missionaries observed the tracts and books they had toiled over being used as cigar wrappers or kites, ripped up to make ornaments, or offered to

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33. It may seem strange that missionaries with relatively poor language ability would be involved in the writing of tracts and books. Dr. Bradley explained the process: the missionary would dictate in their broken Siamese what they wanted to say, a Siamese assistant would write it down, and the missionary would then check it. Bradley concludes, “thus we were enabled to write in quite tolerable Siamese long before we could speak the language well.” *Bangkok Calendar*, 1873, 102; compare Damrong in George McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, 3.

34. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 26 December 1841.

35. “In 1842 the A.B.C.F.M. in Thailand reported to America saying that from the beginning of its mission 4,365,960 pages of literature had been printed and 26,788 copies of tracts and books were distributed. Yet there was ‘no evidence of any of the Siamese having, through them, been brought to a saving knowledge of the truth.’” Maen Pongudom, “Apologetic and Missionary Proclamation: Exemplified by American Presbyterian Missionaries to Thailand (1828–1978), Early Church Apologists: Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, A Thai Buddhist Monk-Apologist” (PhD diss., University of Otago, New Zealand, 1979), 116.

36. Given in the *Missionary Herald*, November 1838, 414. A later report adds: “In a great number of instances we doubt not the same number of sheets of white paper would be as eagerly sought. It cannot be for the contents of the books, for they know not what they are.” Report of the Siam Mission for 1838 as given in the *Missionary Herald*, August 1839, 300.

idols.<sup>37</sup> Increasingly the large amounts of time and resources spent on translating, printing, and distributing literature were questioned.<sup>38</sup>

Medical missions were also prominent in this period. Ministering to people's health concerns had been part of the missionary effort since the start of Protestant missions to Siam, but with the arrival of Dr. Bradley in 1835 the medical work increased in importance.<sup>39</sup> Dr. Bradley started a dispensary, treated patients, helped with childbirths, fought smallpox, introduced blood transfusions, performed surgeries (including amputations), and pioneered the use of anaesthetics.<sup>40</sup> In his dispensary, Dr. Bradley (and others after him) treated numerous people, including "about 3500 different individuals" in the first year.<sup>41</sup> The missionaries sought to capitalize on this audience by preaching to them, putting scriptures on the back of prescriptions, or forcing them to sit through religious services before receiving their medicines.<sup>42</sup> The medical work of the missionaries was valued both by the general population and by the government. Often the missionary doctors were called to the palace to attend on members of the royal family

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37. See a letter from Charles Robinson dated 30 July 1835 as printed in the *Missionary Herald*, May 1836, 177; Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 19 August 1837 and 13 February 1859.

38. Part of this may have been based on different philosophies of ministry between individuals and mission organizations. Bradley was a strong supporter of printing and literature distribution, and he noted disagreements with others (especially J. T. Jones) about this in his *Journals*, 1 March 1837, 27 July 1837, and 22 August 1838.

39. Abeel, *Journal of a Residence*, 227. When Bradley was asked why he came to Siam, he answered, "to heal the sick among the people and to do all the good I could." Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 20 July 1835.

40. Wilson, "Siam and Society," 231; Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 92.

41. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 5 August 1836. Shortly after Bradley opened the clinic, he reported on a single day's work: "More than 100 patients. It is truly an arduous work to prescribe for so many in the limited time of 3 hours." *Ibid.*, 16 September 1835.

42. See *ibid.*, 24 January 1836, 10 July 1836, 31 July 1836; Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 75; Feltus, *Journal of Bradley*, 13 February 1836.

who were ill, and royal support was given for programs of inoculation and teaching about obstetrics.<sup>43</sup> As an expression of their appreciation for the medical work, the government offered to provide a site and the building materials for a western hospital in Bangkok in 1855, but the missionaries did not capitalize on this opportunity.<sup>44</sup>

Along with medicine, the missionaries brought other sciences, and the teaching of science was a missionary method much in use at this time.<sup>45</sup> While acknowledging that “it is not, indeed, the province of Christianity directly to teach the sciences,” the workers in Siam believed that “it is no less true, that every system of pagan faith has for its very foundation and support that, which true science proves to be utterly false.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, from the earliest days of the mission, western science was part of what the missionaries brought to Siam.<sup>47</sup> The missionaries exhibited globes and an orrery, as well as electricity generating machines to the public.<sup>48</sup> In the 1840s, one of the missionaries of the ABCFM, Jesse Caswell, started a regular series of talks about scientific matters, speaking three nights a week on such topics as “the waxing and waning of the moon, eclipses of the sun

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43. Despite the work with officials, Bradley never met King Rama II. Wilson, “State and Society,” 234. The work among those of high rank was taken on with mixed feelings. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 16 May 1836, 16 January 1837.

44. Terwiel, *History of Modern Thailand*, 175–176; Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 30 January 1857.

45. This was not a new missionary activity in Siam. Catholic missionaries did a lot of scientific teaching during the time of Narai, and a book from 1693 “advised missionaries to show to the Siamese ‘their errors in sciences, especially in mathematics and anatomy’ in order to win them to God.” Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 12.

46. American Board in their Review of 1834–1843, in *Siam Letters*, 1:28.

47. In 1834, J. T. Jones had completed an “Elementary Catechism of Geography and Astronomy in Siamese.” Eliza G. Jones, *Memoir of Mrs. Eliza G. Jones, Missionary to Burmah and Siam* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication and Sunday School Society, 1842), 107.

48. See *Missionary Magazine*, March 1838, 49. An orrery is a model of the solar system.

and moon, earthquakes, evidences of the spherical form of the earth, different lengths of the days and nights in different latitudes, and cause of wind.”<sup>49</sup> The Presbyterian Dr. Samuel House would later do similar talks, giving lessons on “anatomy with digestion of food, effects of alcohol on the stomach, or astronomy with eclipse of the moon, phases of the moon, reaction to the tides, ... the weight of the atmosphere, the barometre [*sic*], the oxy-hydrogen blow pipe, carbon and carbonic gas, electromagnetic telegraph, electricity, etc.”<sup>50</sup> Both Caswell and House explained that their goal in teaching science was evangelism by showing the Siamese “the great proof of the existence and wisdom of the Creator.”<sup>51</sup> Mongkut was noted as being present at several of the science demonstrations, and he took an active part in encouraging other Siamese to learn more about western knowledge.<sup>52</sup>

Despite much work, especially in the areas of literature production and distribution, medicine, and science, there was little response to the gospel in this period. This was a time of planting for the mission, and the missionaries who sacrificed and worked did not see much harvest.

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49. Letter from Jesse Caswell of 1 July 1841, printed in the *Missionary Herald*, April 1842, 147.

50. Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 232–233.

51. House, 12 September 1847, as given in Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 233. See also the letter from Jesse Caswell of 1 July 1841, printed in the *Missionary Herald*, April 1842, 147.

52. *Missionary Magazine*, March 1838, 49; see also Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 5 June 1841 and 19 June 1841 for Mongkut’s participation in experiments with electricity, and Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 26 January 1843 for Mongkut’s acceptance of western astronomy.

## **Mongkut's Interactions with Christians**

### ***Bishop Pallegoix***

A visitor to the Assumption University Chapel in Bangkok is able to see an unusual sight—a stained glass portrait of a Buddhist king in a Christian church.<sup>53</sup> Paired with Mongkut's picture is one of the Roman Catholic Vicar Apostolic of Siam, Bishop Pallegoix. It is appropriate that the two are pictured together, for Pallegoix was both a good friend of, and an important influence on, Mongkut.<sup>54</sup>

Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix was born in Combertault, France on 24 October 1805. He was ordained as priest in May 1828, and left for Siam in August of that year, arriving in 1830.<sup>55</sup> Pallegoix was appointed Bishop of Mallos in 1838, and continued to live in Siam until his death in 1862.<sup>56</sup> Pallegoix also worked on a multilingual dictionary (Siamese, Latin, French, and English), and a book introducing Siam to the western world.

Mongkut and Pallegoix became neighbours shortly after Pallegoix's arrival in the country. While Mongkut was a monk at Wat Samorai (from Pallegoix's arrival in 1830 until 1836), Bishop Pallegoix was located nearby in the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Bishop Pallegoix "spoke fluent Thai, and the two scholars happily embarked

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53. For a picture of this, see Bressan, *Meeting of Worlds*, 136.

54. "Bishop Pallegoix was Mongkut's first important contact with western thought and knowledge." Moffat, *Mongkut*, 15.

55. Dan Bradley says that Pallegoix arrived in 1839, but this is an error. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 18 June 1862; Pallegoix, *Description of the Thai Kingdom*, 400.

56. Pallegoix travelled to France and Rome between 1853 and 1855 to meet with the pope and the French Emperor.

upon an exchange of knowledge.”<sup>57</sup> Pallegoix taught Mongkut Latin, French, and science, while Mongkut taught Pallegoix Pali in return.<sup>58</sup>

More than just an educational relationship, Mongkut and Pallegoix developed a friendship.<sup>59</sup> Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj report that “the visits between the two friends were frequent and at all hours. In the cool of the evening they would walk together along the river’s bank, deeply engaged in conversation, and when it grew too dark, they would both retire to either one’s quarters, there to continue their discussion far into the night.”<sup>60</sup> After Mongkut became king, Bishop Pallegoix remained friends with him, and when Pallegoix passed away, Mongkut “did not forget his old friend and not only ordered a royal palanquin to be used for the funeral but he also joined the mourning by ordering all flags in the kingdom to fly at half mast.”<sup>61</sup>

Mongkut testified often to his close friendship with Pallegoix.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps the clearest example is a letter to Pope Pius IX, where Mongkut reported that “before His ascension to the throne Siam [i.e., Mongkut] was on terms of close and affectionate friendship with one Father Juan Baptist [Pallegoix].”<sup>63</sup> Mongkut added that “such

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57. Blofeld, *Maha Mongkut*, 28.

58. Lingat, “La Vie Religieuse,” 31; Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 129; Teerawat Bhumichitr, *Roi du Siam*, 68.

59. Moffat describes them as “close friends” and Blofeld mentions the “very warm friendship” between them. Moffat, *Mongkut*, 15; Blofeld, *Maha Mongkut*, 29. See also Saat Chaiwan, *Priapthiap*, 123, 165.

60. Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 8.

61. Kirti Bunchua, “History of the Church in Thailand,” in *Asia and Christianity*, ed. M. D. David (Bombay: Himalaya Publishing House, 1985), 73.

62. See Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 2:273.

63. Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 179. The Thai letter is given in Mongkut,

relations were happily continued even after the ascension of Siam to the throne, being further strengthened by constant visits paid by the Bishop to the former.”<sup>64</sup>

Mongkut also demonstrated the influence of Pallegoix. In 1858, he met some French religious sisters, and one of them later recounted how the Siamese monarch proposed a toast “to the Catholic religion and to Jesus, Saviour of the world. He asked the sisters to speak Latin and to prove his knowledge of that language, he recited the formula of the sign of the cross .... Then he touched the crucifix attached to our rosary, and said that he knew well our religion.”<sup>65</sup>

### *Jesse Caswell*

Mongkut was also acquainted with Protestant missionaries from their first entrance into the country. When Gutzlaff left Siam in 1831, he already “knew Mongkut as a prominent member of the progressive generation.”<sup>66</sup> Mongkut was familiar with the Baptist J. T. Jones, who reported in 1834 that “I have had two protracted interviews [with him], in which the principles of our faith and of western science were the main topics.”<sup>67</sup> Throughout this period, Mongkut also had a number of meetings with Dr. Bradley.<sup>68</sup>

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*Phraratcha hattha lekha Phrabat Somdet Phra Chomklao Chao Yu Hua* [Royal correspondence of King Mongkut] (Bangkok: Khuru Sapha, 1963), 3:188.

64. Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 179.

65. Teerawat Bhumichitr, *Roi du Siam*, 68; my translation. See also Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, 16.

66. Reynolds, “Buddhist Monkhood,” 84. See also Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 58.

67. Letter of 31 December 1834, printed in the *Missionary Magazine*, August 1835, 341.

68. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 7 April 1836, 23 April 1836, 17 December 1839, 5 June 1841, 19 June 1841, 26 January 1843, 25 March 1851. Mongkut’s relationship with Bradley will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

However, Mongkut's closest relationship with a Protestant missionary during this period was with Jesse Caswell.<sup>69</sup> Caswell was born in Vermont near the start of the nineteenth century. He was converted in 1831, and entered Andover Theological Seminary three years later, before transferring to Lane Theological Seminary in Ohio. Caswell graduated in 1837, and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister the following year. On 14 April 1839, he married Anna Hemenway at the same time that Anna's brother, Asa, married Lucia Hunt. In July of that year, the Hemenways and the Caswells left for Siam, where they arrived in 1840 as missionaries of the ABCFM. Because of doctrinal disagreements with the other ABCFM missionaries, Caswell and his wife (along with the Bradleys) transferred to the American Missionary Association in 1848, shortly before Caswell's death on 25 September 1848.

Mongkut had sought out Dan Bradley to be his English teacher at the end of 1839.<sup>70</sup> Bradley agreed to teach him five nights a week, although for some reason this did not work out.<sup>71</sup> Mongkut then sought out Caswell in 1845, and asked him to teach him English, in exchange offering a place to distribute tracts and preach near his temple, as well as opportunities to talk to the monks in the monastery.<sup>72</sup> Despite serious misgivings

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69. Saat Chaiwan, *Priapthiap*, 198; William L. Bradley, "Prince Mongkut and Jesse Caswell," *Journal of the Siam Society* 54, no. 1 (1966): 32.

70. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 17 December 1839. Damrong Rajanubhab suggests that Mongkut's desire to study English with Caswell came from watching Britain's defeat of China in the Opium War of 1842. *Rueang Phrachomklao*, 34–35. However, while a growing knowledge of Britain's power and interests in Asia might have played a factor in Mongkut's plans, the Opium War does not explain Mongkut's earlier desire to study with Bradley.

71. Moffat, *Mongkut*, 20. It is unclear how long Bradley taught Mongkut. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 2 October 1868; William Bradley, *Siam Then*, 48.

72. Feltus, *Journal of Caswell*, v; see also the Letter from the Mission of 1 July 1845 as printed in the *Missionary Herald* for February 1846, 48.



about devoting so much of his time to teaching English, Caswell was persuaded by the opportunity to spread the gospel within the Buddhist monastery.<sup>73</sup> This tutoring arrangement lasted for 18 months, from July 1845 to December 1846.<sup>74</sup>

Mongkut proved an avid pupil, surpassing the expectations of his teacher, who wrote after three months that “Chau Fa himself is indefatigable in his efforts to acquire the English. He has missed but one lesson during the whole three months that I have taught. I devote from 9 to 11 A.M. to teaching; the first hour to the young men, the last to Chau Fa.”<sup>75</sup> Mongkut’s interest did not diminish, and in March 1846 Caswell remarked that “Chau Fa Yai himself is much more persevering than I expected him to be. ... Chau Fa Yai never misses a lesson, and plies me with so many questions, that I am commonly obliged to tear myself away from him.”<sup>76</sup>

As part of his English lessons, Mongkut was exposed to Christianity, and he read the Bible often and “with interest.”<sup>77</sup> Mongkut also practiced his translation ability by working on a publication from the American Tract Society (presumably into Siamese), as

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73. “My hopes in respect to the results of this new attempt at teaching English, are not at all sanguine; and I should not feel at liberty to engage in it, except in consideration of the room allowed me for preaching.” Letter from Jesse Caswell of 4 July 1845, printed in the *Missionary Herald*, March 1846, 93.

74. Mongkut was not the only pupil, and Caswell started with a class of sixteen to eighteen men. William Bradley, “Mongkut and Caswell,” 35. Strangely, Seni Pramoj and Kukrit Pramoj ignore Caswell and insist that Mongkut’s English was “almost entirely self-taught,” except for “some occasional advice from American missionaries.” *King of Siam Speaks*, 9.

75. William Bradley, “Mongkut and Caswell,” 37.

76. Letter from Jesse Caswell of 26 July 1846, printed in the *Missionary Herald*, March 1846, 93.

77. Feltus, *Journal of Caswell*, 31 (10 September 1845). In October 1845, Caswell reported that Mongkut “chooses to spend most of his time in reading the bible.” William Bradley, “Mongkut and Caswell,” 38.

well as translating the Lord's Prayer into Pali.<sup>78</sup> Mongkut's relationship with Caswell also allowed him to explore Christianity in a less formal manner. Their studies frequently "opened the way for conversation on religion," and some of these discussions are recorded in Caswell's journals.<sup>79</sup> Mongkut also visited the Protestant missionaries during this period, observing both devotions (scripture reading) and prayer meetings in their homes, borrowing books from them, and asking them questions about the specialized English used in their religious services.<sup>80</sup>

Caswell stopped his English classes at the end of 1846, but he maintained a good relationship with Mongkut.<sup>81</sup> When Caswell died in 1848, Mongkut attended the funeral, and he long remembered his tutor with affection.<sup>82</sup> When presented with a daguerreotype of Caswell six years after his death, he

evinced great respect for his deceased teacher, and said with much emotion that he had, as it were, come to life again. He called upon his body servants, many of whom knew well the dear departed man, to see him whom they all loved. He then inquired minutely after the welfare of Mrs. Caswell and each one of her children whom he called by name.<sup>83</sup>

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78. *Missionary Herald*, September 1846, 321.

79. Feltus, *Journal of Caswell*, 32 (11 October 1845). An example is when Mongkut asks why, if Christianity is true, God would have allowed Buddha and Mohammed to delude so many people. Caswell "remarked that we can know but little of God's reason for doing this or that, ... [but] he may have suffered these religions to prevail so as to display his power in removing them." Ibid., 32.

80. Feltus, *Journals of Hemenways*, 29 (14 December 1849); Feltus, *Samuel Reynolds House*, 51.

81. Caswell stopped teaching at the temple because "the tract house needed a preacher; and this was a better place for such an exercise." *Missionary Herald*, July 1847, 248.

82. Feltus, *Journals of Hemenways*, 21 (26 September 1848).

83. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 1 July 1854.

Mongkut showed his gratitude to his former teacher in tangible ways as well. After he became king, he built a monument to Caswell, and sent two sizeable monetary gifts to Mrs. Caswell in America.<sup>84</sup>

### **Mongkut's Response**

#### ***Acceptance of Western Learning***

Mongkut's friendship with the missionaries is noteworthy, especially since it appears that he sought them out. During the reign of King Rama III, there was a small group of Siamese who were interested in western life, and Mongkut and his brother, Chao Fa Noi, were prominent members of this group. The friendship of Mongkut with missionaries is even more remarkable when the official government attitude of isolationism and periodic hostility to foreigners is taken into account.

Many of the missionaries did not understand the significance of Mongkut, and often confused him with his brother who was also called Chao Fa. Those who realized Mongkut's importance were enthused about his interest, thinking that he might soon convert to Christianity, but as Dan Bradley's biographer comments, Mongkut's "interest in the missionaries was their knowledge of western science and the English language which was the key to that science."<sup>85</sup>

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84. Feltus, *Journal of Caswell*, v. For more on the monument, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 31 July 1861, 22 May 1862, 7 August 1863; for more about the gifts, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 21 December 1861, 13 February 1864.

85. Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 155. Manich Jumsai mentions that "Prince Mongkut was only using it [English lessons with Caswell] as a stepping stone towards world knowledge." *Great Friendship*, 23–24.

Mongkut had “perhaps the greatest intellectual curiosity of all the Thai nobility,” and missionaries testified that he had “a strong love of truth.”<sup>86</sup> Because of this, the *Bangkok Recorder* comments that each passing year “was a joyful witness of his progress in literature and the arts and sciences by which he became signally well prepared to rule both the church and the state of the Siamese.”<sup>87</sup> While not an expert in any one field of learning apart from his Buddhist studies, Mongkut acquired some proficiency in history, archaeology, astronomy, and mathematics.<sup>88</sup> During this time he also acquired a “fair knowledge” of many languages, such as Annamite, Burmese, Cambodian, English, Hindi, Lao, Latin, Malay, and Peguan (in addition to Pali, Sanskrit, and Siamese).<sup>89</sup> In a striking manner, Mongkut accepted much of western learning, and his death came as a result of a scientific expedition to validate his knowledge of western astronomy and mathematics.<sup>90</sup>

Dr. Bradley hoped for the conversion of Mongkut, but he seems to have accurately understood the situation when he commented in 1846 that “there is too much reason to fear that he [Mongkut] and his party have no other object as he says than to

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86. William Bradley, “Mongkut and Caswell,” 30, 37.

87. *Bangkok Recorder* (Bangkok: Press of the American Missionary Association, 15 November 1865), 1.21.208.

88. Terwiel, *History of Modern Thailand*, 194; Bacon, *Land of the White Elephant*, 105.

89. Blofeld, *Maha Mongkut*, 9; see also Moffat, *Mongkut*, 14. Comments on Mongkut’s ability in English vary, as does the quality of his written English (see the examples in Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj, *King of Siam Speaks*). He generally managed to communicate, although he seldom spoke as a native speaker would (see *Bangkok Recorder*, 1 November 1865, 1.20.200). His spoken English may have been hindered by a speech impediment (see *Siam Weekly Advertiser* [Bangkok: Smith’s Place, 11 November 1869], 1.13).

90. Mrs. G. B. McFarland in George McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, 65; Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 25 September 1868. Mongkut caught malaria on an expedition to Southern Thailand to observe an eclipse which he had predicted on the basis of western science.

acquire the English language and get hold of foreign science.”<sup>91</sup> Samuel House confirms this, relating how Mongkut told him that “the sciences I receive, astronomy, geology, chemistry,—these I receive; the Christian religion I do not receive.”<sup>92</sup>

### ***Rejection of Christianity***

Mongkut’s rejection of western religion was as striking as his acceptance of western learning.<sup>93</sup> Mongkut realized that missionaries wished him to convert to Christianity—both for his own sake, and for the influence that he would then exert over his countrymen.<sup>94</sup> When Mongkut realized that the missionaries were drawing the wrong conclusions from his studying under Caswell, he sent a letter to Captain Brown asking Brown to explain that he had no desire to abandon his religion. Bradley was shown the letter, and relates in his journal:

What was singular about the letter was that he should take so much pains to tell Capt B that Br [Brother] C seems to be thinking that he, (Chowfah) and his new party in the priesthood are seeking to become christianized and therefore they are wishing to study the English language. He flatly

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91. Feltus, *Journal of Bradley*, 106 (28 November 1846).

92. Samuel R. House, “History of the Missions in Siam and Laos,” in *Siam and Laos, as Seen by Our American Missionaries* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1884), 391.

93. There are hints occasionally that Mongkut was sympathetic to Christianity, mostly from overly-optimistic missionary writings. However, Saat Chaiwan relates a story that Mongkut was asking so many questions about Christianity that Rama III forbade him from having further contact with the Catholic missionaries. *Priapthiap*, 124; see also Terwiel, *History of Modern Thailand*, 141–142. Kenneth Latourette mentions that Mongkut thought of creating a Buddhist-Christian fusion before becoming king, but offers no support for this claim. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Great Century in Northern Africa and Asia, A.D. 1800–A. D. 1914*, vol. 6 of *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1944), 242.

94. “If I were converted to it [Christianity] then afterward many more of noblemen & people of this country might be converted & introduced to Christianity very soon & easily .... The people might follow me like in the account of Sandawed [Sandwich] Island &c.” Letter from Mongkut to Mr. and Mrs. Eddy of 18 November 1849, as given in Seni Pramoj and Kukrit Pramoj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 16.

denies that he has any wish to abandon Buddhism [*sic*] and requests that if Mr. Caswell does not yet understand this that Capt B will give him to understand it.<sup>95</sup>

This was not an isolated incident, for despite generally polite and harmonious interactions with missionaries about the subject of religion, Mongkut did not hide his feelings (although their perspective sometimes made them refuse to accept his words).

Bradley in a note from his journal from 1847 mentions that when Mongkut felt that

the Missionaries were regarding him as in a fair way to become a christian, that he came out openly, signifying that he had not the most distant thought of such a change, and requesting that they would so inform all their friends both here and abroad. In a letter to one of the Missionaries he said, 'You must not think that any of my party will ever become Christians. We will not embrace what we think is a foolish religion.'<sup>96</sup>

On another occasion, Mongkut "expressed an opinion that it as likely the Buddhists should convert the Christians, as the Christians the Buddhists."<sup>97</sup> Mongkut had intellectual problems with Christianity, and stated that "what you [Christians] teach us to do is admirable, but what you teach us to believe is foolish."<sup>98</sup>

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95. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 28 November 1846. In an impressive display of optimism, Bradley continues, "on the other hand it may after all be a fact that the prince is laboring under some strong convictions of sin and folly derived from the word of God and the preaching of Br. Caswell which he is too proud or from some political motives is afraid to confess."

96. *Bangkok Calendar*, 29 August 1868, 123, referring to a journal entry from 18 September 1847. Bradley again interprets this clear statement in a way that makes it seem Mongkut was attracted to Christianity. He explains that at this time Mongkut realized that he had a chance to become king, and therefore "deemed it necessary to make such a demonstration" distancing himself from foreign missionaries. Ibid.

97. Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 1:377.

98. Donald C. Lord, "The King and the Apostle: Mongkut, Bradley, and the American Missionaries," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (Summer 1967): 332. Blofeld comments that "the Abbot's feeling about Christianity was that, ethically speaking, Christ was worthy of the deepest veneration, but that the theological aspect of the religion was nonsensical." *Maha Mongkut*, 32.

As the missionaries refused to accept Mongkut's claims about his lack of interest in conversion, his statements got more and more plain. At times, Mongkut's patience seems to have been tested by the missionaries, and he spoke bluntly. In 1842, Bradley mentions that he "had occasion to visit Choufah yai a few days since. I took occasion to talk with him on the religion of Jesus. I never heard him rail as he did then. It was horrid blasphemy."<sup>99</sup> These blunt statements increased towards the end of the reign of King Rama III.<sup>100</sup> In 1848, Mongkut wrote to the editor of the *Bangkok Calendar*, wishing to

have added to the description of myself in the English almanac 'and hates the Bible most of all'; we will not embrace Christianity, because we think it a foolish religion. Though you should baptise all in Siam I will never be baptised. ... You think that we are near the Christian religion; you will find my disciples will abuse your God and Jesus.<sup>101</sup>

In a letter to a couple in New York in 1849, Mongkut also speaks plainly: "But the wiseman like myself and other learned [people of Siam] have had known that the religion of Christ was but ancient superstition of the Jew who were near of Barburious [*sic*]."<sup>102</sup> He goes on to say that Siamese scholars do not wonder if Jesus is the "real son of God or saviour of mankind. Merely they concluded that he was one of liar to the same ignorant nation where he has met with his birth."<sup>103</sup>

After Mongkut died, Dr. Bradley published a tribute to him, in which he wrote:

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99. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 15 August 1842.

100. This can either be seen as Mongkut losing patience with the missionaries, or as Mongkut distancing himself from them in an effort to convince the government that he would be a good choice as the next king. See *Bangkok Calendar*, 29 August 1868, 123.

101. Feltus, *Samuel Reynolds House*, 52.

102. Letter from Mongkut to Mr. and Mrs. Eddy of 18 November 1849, in Seni Pramoj and Kukrit Pramoj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 15.

103. *Ibid.*, 17.

the Prince [Mongkut] was free to admit frequently that he had great respect for Christianity, and that he believed it would ultimately embrace all mankind. Still he maintained that it was the duty of [a] Buddhist to adhere to the religion of their fore-fathers even to the last plank of the wreck. Occasional discussions on religious subjects resulted, and some of them we know were close and sharp on both sides. But unhappily, at length, being unable to meet the arguments of his preceptor with any thing at all forcible from the armory of Buddhism, the Prince became more and more irritated, and finally expressed a desire to desist from the discussion altogether, which was of course granted by his amiable teacher. It was in the course of these discussions, when hardly pressed by the force of Bible truth, that the Prince made the fearful expression—I hate the Bible mostly; and with much sadness do we make the remark, that it was at this stage of resistance to the strivings of the Spirit of God in his soul, when he became prepared to treat the subject of the christian religion with more of the air of ridicule than seriousness whenever in all his subsequent life he happened to fall into a discussion with any of the Protestant missionaries on the subject.<sup>104</sup>

Mongkut's son expressed concern that this tribute made it appear that during the period of his studies with Caswell, Mongkut was "quite inclined to become a Christian, which ... was far from being a fact."<sup>105</sup> Bradley admitted that this was not the case—Mongkut had made his rejection of Christianity clear.

### ***Reform of Buddhism***

This is not to say that Christianity had no effect on the religious feelings of Mongkut, for missionary criticisms of Buddhism may have helped stimulate Mongkut's reforms of Siamese Buddhism.<sup>106</sup> Terwiel notes that Pallegoix's discussions with

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104. *Bangkok Calendar*, 1869, 122. "I hate the Bible mostly" is also given in Leonowens, *English Governess*, 240. Bradley again tries to put a positive spin on Mongkut's relationship to Christianity by concluding: "But he [Mongkut] never seems to have relapsed into utter carelessness with regard to Christ, and many a time, even within a few months of his death did he evince that he was 'ill at ease' in his own mind on the subject of religion." *Bangkok Calendar*, 1869, 122.

105. Feltus, *Journal of Bradley*, 283 (29 January 1869).

106. Walter F. Vella, *Siam Under Rama III, 1824–1851* (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin



Mongkut had an unforeseen result: “Mongkut appears often to have been forced to admit that some of the beliefs and practices of the average Buddhist were incompatible with the new scientific facts brought from the West,” and that this conflict between the Buddhist system and modern science led him to become “intent upon sifting out a mass of accretions and superstitions from what he sincerely believed to be the deep true core of Buddhism.”<sup>107</sup>

Those who have studied Mongkut’s relationship with the Protestant missionaries make the same point, as A. B. Griswold comments: “The missionaries’ arguments, indeed, had an excellent effect, though not quite what they intended. By causing Buddhists to re-examine all sorts of beliefs that had previously been taken for granted, they speeded up the process of purging the Doctrine of its false accretions, and so helped to make it impregnable.”<sup>108</sup> Mary Lovina Cort even suggests that Mongkut “was a great admirer of Martin Luther,” and that as such he “set himself up also as a reformer of the Buddhist religion.”<sup>109</sup>

Mongkut’s reforms of Buddhism were so significant that Donald Lord claims that “as a priest, Mongkut had nearly as much effect upon Thailand as he did later as a king.”<sup>110</sup> Mongkut’s work resulted in a new sect of Buddhism (Thammayutika) which

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Incorporated, 1957), 38.

107. Terwiel, *History of Modern Thailand*, 141. See also Wilson, “State and Society,” 228.

108. Griswold, *Mongkut of Siam*, 25. See also Blofeld: “It is probably, however, that his contact with American missionaries highly critical of Buddhism strengthened his already objective approach, inspiring him to prune the Buddhist scriptures and study them in the light of criticism.” *Maha Mongkut*, 33.

109. Mary Lovina Cort, *Siam; or, The Heart of Farther India* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Company, 1886), 105.

110. Lord, “King and the Apostle,” 328–329. Chula Chakrabongse follows Griswold by claiming

became known both for their strict moral standards and their more liberal understanding of doctrine.<sup>111</sup> Mongkut's reforms did not merely create another subgrouping of Siamese Buddhism, however, but influenced all the national religion.<sup>112</sup> Thus, because of Mongkut's reforms, Buddhism grew stronger, more reasonable, and more resistant to the challenges of new religions like Christianity.<sup>113</sup>

The most obvious characteristic of Mongkut's reform of Buddhism was its rationalism, for "the very spirit of Siamese Buddhism was changed in the thammayut sect from a blind, unthinking faith to a faith that was above all rational. Monastic and textual reforms were undertaken to bring the Buddhist religion into accordance with the scientific thought that was emanating from the West."<sup>114</sup> S. J. Tambiah suggests that this was directly influenced by Mongkut's relationship with the missionaries, and with their criticisms of the fabulous in Buddhism: "This rationalism is in many ways a response to

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that Mongkut "created a new Buddhism while modestly thinking that he had merely revised the old doctrine." *Lords of Life: The Paternal Monarchy of Bangkok, 1782–1932* (London: Alvin Redman Limited, 1960), 181.

111. For missionary reports about the emergence of the new sect, see *Missionary Herald*, May 1844, 157; *Missionary Magazine*, September 1844, 273–274 (letter from J. T. Jones, written 17 October 1843); and William Bradley, "Mongkut and Caswell," 39 (letter of Jesse Caswell from 20 January 1846).

112. Lingat, "La Vie Religieuse," 29. Kenneth Wells notes that "the reforms and innovations which he [Mongkut] instituted and which still influence the Order today are many." *Thai Buddhism: Its Rites and Activities* (Bangkok: Privately published, 1960), 13. See also Seni Pramoj and Kukrit Pramoj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 8.

113. Sathuean Supphasophon, *Phraphutthasasana kap phramahakasat Thai* [Buddhism and Thai Kings] (Bangkok: Khlang Witthaya, 1962), 218–219; Lingat, "La Vie Religieuse," 29.

114. Vella, *Siam Under Rama III*, 41; Wells, *Thai Buddhism*, 12. Blofeld cautions that the secular rationalism of Mongkut's Buddhism should not be overstated: "It is certain that King Mongkut rid Siamese Buddhism of a good many unnecessary accretions, but there is no evidence to show that he rationalized Buddhism to the extent of purging it of all supernatural content." *Maha Mongkut*, 24.

the impact of Western ideas received in the form of a curious combination of science, technology, and the theology of the missionaries.”<sup>115</sup>

However, the reconciliation of religion with science was not the only feature of Mongkut’s purification of Buddhism. S. J. Tambiah sketches the key characteristics of the movement, and in addition to rationalism, lists scripturalism (a focus on the sacred texts of Buddhism, and a desire to separate the genuine scriptures from the spurious), intellectualism (an emphasis on doctrine, and a de-emphasis on ritual), euhemerism (a metaphorical reinterpretation of the supernatural aspects of the religion), sectarianism (a division in the community of faith), and popularization (an intentional carrying of the message of Buddhism to the public).<sup>116</sup> Tambiah concludes that

all these dimensions of revitalization in the mid-nineteenth century and later owe a major part of their stimulus to the confrontation with Christianity and its missionaries and with Western civilization in its Victorian and imperial form. This confrontation evoked a double-headed response that combined the resources of the traditional local religion with new weaponry borrowed from the challengers themselves.<sup>117</sup>

There are many similarities between the missionary version of Christianity and Mongkut’s version of Buddhism. Like Mongkut, the Protestant missionaries taught a religion that was characterized by rationalism, scripturalism, intellectualism, euhemerism, sectarianism, and popularization, and missionary practices may have had direct

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115. S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand Against a Historical Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 212. See also pages 213–214, where Tambiah refers to Mongkut’s “search for a Buddhism that would stand up to the canons of rationality of the West.”

116. *Ibid.*, 405–406. Tambiah also lists activism as a characteristic on page 215.

117. *Ibid.*, 406.

influences on the practices of Buddhist monks.<sup>118</sup> Manich Jumsai claims that this is true of missionary preaching, explaining that missionaries gave Mongkut “ideas how to preach in his own religion in the modern sense so as to keep up with the world, which could no longer be kept away from bare facts of truths by plunging them into mysticisms and legendary stories.”<sup>119</sup>

The assertion of missionary influence on Mongkut’s reform of Buddhism has been widespread, but is difficult to prove.<sup>120</sup> There appear to be no statements by Mongkut which affirm that his reform was stimulated by his contact with westerners. Instead we have a series of interesting correlations—the missionaries come in and preach understandable sermons, and when Mongkut reforms Buddhism, he introduces sermons intended to educate. Christianity comes in teaching western science and criticizing the fabulous and miraculous in Buddhism, and Mongkut eliminates much of the supernatural from his religion. There are also tantalizing hints that there may have been a relationship between the reform and the missionaries. In a letter of Mongkut’s from the 1840s, he mentions that the older group of Buddhists look down on his new sect because of the reform group’s connection to foreigners. However, although the language is ambiguous,

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118. Vella, *Siam Under Rama III*, 41.

119. Manich Jumsai, *Great Friendship*, 21; he explains the practice that Mongkut rejected as “reading out from the original sacred Pali language which put everybody to sleep.” See also Teerawat Bhumichitr, *Roi du Siam*, 104; Vella, *Siam Under Rama III*, 42. Vella also claims that Christianity’s influence can be seen in the exclusiveness of the Thammayut sect. *Ibid.*, 41.

120. For examples of such assertions, see Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 243, 292; Blofeld, *Maha Mongkut*, 34; Feltus, *Samuel Reynolds House*, 50; Tambiah, *World Conqueror*, 213; and Vella, *Siam Under Rama III*, 38.

this likely refers to Mon priests (who had a demonstrable influence on the history of the reform movement), and not to western missionaries.<sup>121</sup>

David Wyatt also reminds us that “the chief outlines of Mongkut’s intellectual development were in place before he first established contact with the American and French missionaries.”<sup>122</sup> Mongkut himself states that his interest in science predated the missionary arrival, and as he enjoyed pointing out, there was much that was (and is) fabulous and miraculous in Christianity.<sup>123</sup> It also should be emphasized that not all elements of the revitalization of Siamese Buddhism led by Mongkut can be connected to the missionaries, such as his concern about proper ordination, and his following of Mon practices.

Thus, while there are correlations between missionary religion and Mongkut’s emphases in his reform of Buddhism, we lack the evidence to conclusively say that missionary influence caused the reform of nineteenth-century Siamese Buddhism.<sup>124</sup> Perhaps all we can safely say is what Jesse Caswell reported in 1843 about Mongkut’s group (which he calls the liberal party): “Thus we see that the commencement of liberal views, as marked by the liberal party themselves, took place very soon after the visits of the first missionaries,—Gutzlaff, Tomlin, and Abeel,—to Siam. We see also that the rise

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121. See Reynolds, “Buddhist Monkhood,” 95.

122. Wyatt, *Short History*, 177.

123. A letter of Caswell’s relates how Mongkut explained that he believed in the spherical earth (as opposed to traditional Siamese geography) “before they [the American missionaries] came here.” William Bradley, “Mongkut and Caswell,” 38. For the fabulous in Christianity, see Blofeld, *Maha Mongkut*, 34. For an example of Mongkut’s criticisms of Christianity, see Feltus, *Journal of Caswell*, 31–32.

124. See Yoneo Ishii, *Sangha, State and Society: Thai Buddhism in History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 159–160.

and progress of these views are to be traced directly to Chau Fa [Mongkut].”<sup>125</sup>

Missionaries had prolonged contact with Mongkut, and his important reforms of Siamese Buddhism shared many of the emphases they brought with them.

Mongkut’s response to the missionaries while he was a monk was to accept the science and language they brought with them, to emphatically reject the religion they brought, and (possibly) to strengthen Buddhism by responding to their criticisms and selectively appropriating their methods.

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125. Printed in the *Missionary Herald*, June 1844, 199.

## CHAPTER THREE

### KING MONGKUT: DECIDING A NATION'S POLICIES

#### Overview of the Period (1851–1868)

##### *Mongkut*

Mongkut went from being a monk to a monarch upon the death of Rama III in 1851. When Mongkut became king, Siam was in a perilous state. The isolationist policies that had been the practice of the previous government were irritating powerful foreign nations who wanted to open diplomatic and trade relations with Siam. Other countries in the region could testify that if these foreign nations did not get what they wanted, they were prepared to take it by force.

From the start of his reign, Mongkut demonstrated a cautious openness towards western powers, and he invited both the missionary and merchant communities of Bangkok to his coronation.<sup>1</sup> The importance Mongkut placed on relations with western nations is demonstrated by the number of treaties he made, including treaties with Britain (1855), France (1856), USA (1856), Denmark (1858), the Hanseatic League (1858), Portugal (1859), the Netherlands (1860), Prussia (1862), Belgium (1868), Italy (1868), Sweden (1868), Norway (1868), Austria-Hungary (1869), and Spain (1870).<sup>2</sup> The

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1. Stephen Mattoon, 19 May 1851, in *Siam Letters*, 2:57.

2. Teerawat Bhumichitr, *Roi du Siam*, 150; Wilson, "State and Society," 362; and Seksan Prasertkul,

missionary impact on these treaties was profound, since the missionaries sometimes served as advisors or translators.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Missions***

Missionaries rejoiced at the ascension of Mongkut, and reported that God had heard their “prayers for a revolution without a civil war.”<sup>4</sup> The missionaries believed that not only would Mongkut’s ascension herald the beginning of a new political era in Siam, but also that it would mark the beginning of increased favour for the gospel, and that God would use Mongkut to be a “nursing father to his church.”<sup>5</sup> Samuel Smith expressed the missionaries’ optimism under the new king:

Our prospects of usefulness, as far as they can be affected by the feelings that the people entertain towards us, are as great now, if not greater, than at any period since the existence of the mission. Never was the missionary more respected, his society more courted, or his instructions more eagerly solicited. Both the new kings are personal friends of the missionaries, and

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“The Transformation of the Thai State and Economic Change (1855–1945)” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1989), 163.

3. On the work of missionaries on the treaties, see Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 2:23; Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 4 April 1856, November 1860; *Missionary Magazine*, July 1853, 267. Lord comments about Dr. Bradley’s official translation work for the king: “Since translation is a highly personal thing, Bradley’s influence upon the Thai government is incalculable.” “King and the Apostle,” 337. On some of the early treaties, the same missionaries served as advisors to both sides of the negotiations. See Donald C. Lord, “Missionaries, Thai, and Diplomats,” *The Pacific Historical Review* 35, no. 4 (November 1966): 420.

4. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 3 April 1851; Bradley comments that “this great revolution has taken place without the shedding of a drop of blood.” Seni Pramroj also talks of a “bloodless revolution” in his article, “King Mongkut as Legislator,” in *The Siam Society: Selected Articles from the Siam Society Journal* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1959), 4:223. The *Siam Weekly Advertiser* mentions that with Mongkut’s ascension, “the atmosphere of the Kingdom, without any violence, was as by magic changed.” 21 October 1869, 1.10.

5. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 5 April 1851; see also the entry for 3 April 1851. The phrase comes from Isaiah 49.23: “And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers ...” (KJV; see also Isaiah 60.16).



manifest the greatest anxiety to introduce the people to European customs and to have them taught the English language.<sup>6</sup>

Stephen Mattoon, writing a month later, was more cautious in his estimation of the help that could be expected from the new monarch:

... we hope that he will throw no obstacles in our way, though he should grant us no direct facilities in the prosecution of our work. Theretofore he has been friendly to us and to Europeans generally .... But he has given us no reason to believe that he has any love for the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus. He has even sometimes openly manifested the bitter enmity which reigns in his proud heart, against the humbling doctrines of the cross.<sup>7</sup>

The years from 1851 to 1868 were important ones for Siamese missions. While the missions had not experienced numerical success prior to this, they had settled into the country, spread the message of the gospel through literature and preaching, and gained some understanding of the culture. Mongkut's reign was a time to build on this foundation, by introducing new missions, new fields, and new methods.

By the time of Mongkut's ascension to the throne, a change was happening in the mission organizations active in Siam. Before Mongkut's reign, the two main missions in Siam were the ABCFM and the American Baptist Board. Doctrinal differences divided the ABCFM members in Bangkok, and the organization decided to cease their work in Siam and they pulled the last of their missionaries out of the country in 1849.<sup>8</sup> Bradley

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6. Letter from Samuel Smith, September 1851, as printed in the *Missionary Magazine*, March 1852, 72. The mention of both kings refers to the fact that when Mongkut became king, his full brother (Chao Fa Noi) became "Second King." Wyatt, *Short History*, 182; Wilson, "State and Society," 331.

7. Stephen Mattoon, 19 May 1851, in *Siam Letters*, 2:57. He concludes by reminding his readers that "God is able to make even his haughty spirit to submit to the claims of the gospel."

8. Financial difficulties and a lack of visible results also played a role in the decision. In this period the other missions were simultaneously considering abandoning Siam (partly because they each knew that other missions were working in the country). See the letter from William Buell of 21 December 1844 in *Siam Letters*, 1:44; *Missionary Magazine*, January 1846, 19–27; and Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 20 June 1846.

and Caswell, who were on the minority side of the doctrinal disagreement, remained in Siam but switched to the American Missionary Association. Dr. Caswell died shortly after the transfer, and though the AMA sent out two other families (the Lanes and the Silsbys), both families left the country after disagreements with Dr. Bradley, and the Siamese branch of the AMA became de facto the Bradley family mission.<sup>9</sup>

The Baptists continued their work in Siam in this period, but a lack of workers and resources meant that they were barely holding on to their foothold in the country. In 1861, Samuel Smith reviewed the Baptist work in Siam:

Our own mission was established in 1833, and from that time to the present there have been in all five male missionaries devoted to the Siamese. Dr. Jones lived and labored here eighteen years. His best time and energies were given to the translation of the Siamese New Testament, which he completed with great credit to himself. Mr. Davenport lived here ten years: his best energies were given to the printing department. Mr. Slafter did not live here two years. Mr. Chandler has been here seventeen years. He gave his best energies, while connected with the mission, to perfecting the printing office. I have been on the field ten years...<sup>10</sup>

The Baptists in Siam repeatedly plead for reinforcements, arguing that if the work in Siam was not supported, it would be in vain.<sup>11</sup> Their cries were for the most part left unanswered, and so the Baptist ministries in this period had limited success.

While the ABCFM had left the field, and the AMA and the Baptists were struggling to survive in Siam, Mongkut's reign saw the flourishing of another American

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9. Lord says that the only missionary to join the AMA in Siam after the departure of the Lanes and the Silsbys was Bradley's son, Cornelius, who would join the mission in 1871. Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 205. George and Eliza Graham were with the AMA in Siam from 1866 to 1873, but they served as printers and not missionaries. George McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, 317–328; Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 102.

10. Letter from Samuel Smith, 16 October 1860, as printed in the *Missionary Magazine*, March 1861, 68. The Baptist Mission had more missionaries than this, but the rest worked with the Chinese in Siam.

11. See *Missionary Magazine*, July 1842, 193; May 1846, 116.

mission, that of the Presbyterians. The Presbyterian Board had sent the Buells to Siam in 1840, but it was only in 1847 with the arrival of the Mattoons that the Presbyterian mission really took root. By the end of Mongkut's reign, the Presbyterians were numerically the strongest of the missions in Siam.<sup>12</sup>

Not only did this period see new mission organizations, there was also an opening of new mission fields. Before Mongkut's ascension, the missionaries in Siam had all lived and worked in Bangkok. While they occasionally took excursions to other areas of the country for their health or for tract distribution, Bangkok was their home. This started to change in this period, with the opening of new centres of ministry in Petchaburi (1861) and in Chiang Mai/Laos (1867).<sup>13</sup>

The primary methods used by missions in Mongkut's kingdom were also different, perhaps demonstrating the emphases of the new mission organization.<sup>14</sup> Tract distribution was still done, but the objections to it that were starting to be heard at the end of the reign of Rama III were accepted by more people.<sup>15</sup> Medicine was also still performed, and new missionary doctors (such as Dr. House) arrived in Siam, but the

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12. Lord notes that in 1840, when the Presbyterian mission entered Siam (although there had been Presbyterians earlier in the ABCFM), there were twenty-four missionaries with either the ABCFM or the Baptists. Twenty years later, the ABCFM were no longer in Siam, there were two missionaries with the AMA, three with the Baptists, and the field was dominated by the Presbyterian mission. Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 148.

13. Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, 58, 65.

14. Mary Cort mentions that "education has always been a pet scheme of the Presbyterian Church, and wherever you find such an organization, you will find that schools are planted and fostered." *Heart of Farther India*, 301.

15. See Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 29 October 1851.

medical work was no longer performed as enthusiastically or as extensively as it once had been.<sup>16</sup>

The increasingly dominant forms of missionary work in this period were education, journalism, and, to a lesser extent, diplomacy. Education had been part of missionary strategy in Siam from the beginning, but now there was an increased emphasis on the establishment of schools.<sup>17</sup> A missionary of the period, Jennie McFarland, described the hopes of those starting schools: “Christianity implies knowledge, and missionaries believe in school. ‘The Oriental mind is quick in childhood, but early stops its growth;’ then to civilize and Christianize such a people the most hopeful plan is to begin with the children.”<sup>18</sup> It was difficult to start missionary schools, however, for Siam had a good system of education for males through the local Buddhist temples, and most of the Siamese were content with this.<sup>19</sup> While there are occasional missionary complaints about the quality of teaching in these Buddhist temples, missionaries were usually impressed by the level of literacy among the Siamese.<sup>20</sup> There

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16. Bradley himself in this period looks to hand over much of his medical work, lamenting that he is spending so little time in preaching, but he could not find anyone to whom he could pass it. *Ibid.*, 6 March 1852. However, this is not a new development, as Bradley was earlier ambivalent about the time spent on medicine. *Ibid.*, 3 July 1838, and 13 May 1840.

17. Missionaries had established schools in Siam almost from the beginning, with Eliza Jones taking in two boys for a boarding school in 1834. Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, 19. On the early schools, see *Missionary Magazine*, July 1844, 205.

18. Jennie McFarland, “The Schools of Siam,” in *Siam and Laos, as Seen by Our American Missionaries* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1884), 213; Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 199.

19. For a description of the traditional educational work of the monasteries, see Ishii, *Sangha, State and Society*, 25–27.

20. Pallegoix is more negative about the success of the schools than most, claiming that only 10% of pupils in temples can read after seven or eight years. *Description of the Thai Kingdom*, 412; compare his slightly different numbers on page 114. However, in reports about tract distribution, the missionaries are regularly surprised at the number of people who can read with understanding, and Bradley suggested that

was some hunger to learn English, but few Siamese parents were willing to commit their children to boarding school for a long period of time to acquire the language.<sup>21</sup> Mongkut supported missionary schools, and sent twelve students to a missionary boarding school which opened in 1852, but despite this, the missionary schools struggled to attract and keep students.<sup>22</sup> Eventually many of the missionaries ended up paying their students (or the parents of their students) to study at their schools, often for years.<sup>23</sup>

Journalism took an increasing amount of missionary time in this period. Several of the missionaries (especially Dan Bradley and Samuel Smith) used the printing presses the missions had set up to print newspapers and almanacs—either for the westerners in Siam, or for the Siamese.<sup>24</sup> Motivations for participating in this were mixed. It was partly a way to financially support the other work the missionaries did, and partly to work for the good of Siam by educating and civilizing them.

Diplomacy, too, took missionary time and attention. Not only did the missionaries aid in translation and advising work in preparation for the treaties, they also did other

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almost 50% of the males and 16% of the females were literate. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 8 May 1838; see also 7 May 1838. The Annual Report of the Baptists for 1857 reported that “almost every male born in Siam, and many of the females can read.” *Missionary Magazine*, July 1857, 263.

21. Letters from William Ashmore, in the *Missionary Magazine*, April 1858, 101–102.

22. Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 213. Alex Smith notes that part of the resistance to the missionary schools may have been because most of the teaching was done by women. *Siamese Gold*, 37. Schools for Chinese children or Peguan children were slightly less difficult to start than ones for Siamese children.

23. Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 212–213; Letter from Frances Davenport of 30 December 1837 in the *Missionary Magazine*, September 1838, 226.

24. The *Bangkok Recorder*, *Siamese Recorder*, and *Bangkok Calendar* were put out mainly by Dr. Dan Bradley. Samuel Smith was responsible for the *Siamese Weekly Advertiser* and the *Siam Repository*. There were also other periodicals, including the *Bangkok Daily Advertiser*, the *Siam Weekly Monitor*, and the *Siam Times*.

diplomatic work for their country (and for Siam). The first American Consul in Siam was a missionary (Stephen Mattoon), and fellow missionaries such as John Hassett Chandler and Noah McDonald helped fill the position after him.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the new missions, the new fields, and the new methods, Mongkut's reign saw the same old results—very few Siamese chose to become Christians.

### **Mongkut's Interactions with Christians**

#### ***Dan Beach Bradley***

Dan Beach Bradley was born in New York on 18 July 1804, making him three months older than Mongkut. As a youth, Bradley determined that he would be a missionary doctor, and he graduated from New York Medical College in 1833. He married his first wife in June 1834, and less than a month later they embarked for Siam, where they arrived in July 1835. Dan Bradley is universally recognized as the dominant missionary for the thirty-five years that he served in Siam.<sup>26</sup> There is an abundance of written records of his time in the country, as he left copious journals and was involved in publishing.<sup>27</sup> Because of his length of service, his strong personality, and the written records he left behind, Bradley tends to overshadow the other missionaries in Siam, but

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25. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 29 May 1856, 27 July 1857; Harris, *Complete Journal*, 26 April 1856, 121; McDonald, *Siam*, xii.

26. Bradley's biographer mentions that people of his time used to call the period investigated by this thesis the "Bradley Era." Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 270. For assessments of Bradley's importance, see Nantachai Mejudhon, "Meekness: A New Approach to Christian Witness to the Thai People" (DMiss diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 1997), 118; William Bradley, "White Man's Burden," 186; and Lawrence Palmer Briggs, "The Auberet Versus Bradley Case at Bangkok, 1866–67," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (May 1947): 282.

27. Bradley left us approximately 12,500 pages of his journals, which were later edited down. Feltus, *Journal of Bradley*, first page of preface.

since he had a large amount of contact with Mongkut over an extended period, he necessarily plays a large part in our story. Bradley had strong moods, alternating between self-denigrating despair and triumphalistic exuberance, and his journals give us access to his thoughts, emotions, fears, and insecurities.<sup>28</sup> He was a hard person to live with, one who was frequently at the centre of controversy with fellow missionaries, western diplomats, Siamese authorities, and his audience.

Bradley's influence on Siam was profound, in both positive and negative ways. Nantachai Mejudhon comments that "Bradley's Christian witness in words always pushed people away from himself and from seeking God. His Christian witness in deeds, in contrast, drew many thousands closer to himself and Christ's love."<sup>29</sup> Bradley was active in printing and publishing, through the production of many tracts, translations, and works written in Thai, as well as being involved in the introduction of both English and Siamese language newspapers and almanacs into Bangkok.<sup>30</sup> Bradley's medical work was also extensive, and he was responsible for many of the medical innovations introduced in Siam, such as the first recorded surgery in Siam, the first amputation, the first cataract surgery, as well as attempts to introduce inoculation, vaccination, and western obstetrics

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28. "Unbalanced in many ways he must have been. We know of his strangeness because he committed his inner thoughts to the written word." William Bradley, "White Man's Burden," 189. There is a full length study of Bradley (Lord, *Mo Bradley*), but William Bradley's article is an excellent summary of some of the complexities of Bradley's personality. For examples of Bradley's mood swings, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 21 November 1836 and 22 November 1836, or 17 February 1838.

29. Nantachai Mejudhon, "Meekness," 119.

30. Bradley was the editor/publisher of the *Bangkok Calendar* (a yearly almanac published in 1848, and from 1859 to 1873), the *Bangkok Recorder* (a weekly paper in English published in 1844; this was re-started with Noah McDonald as the editor in 1865, but Bradley quickly took it over until its demise in 1866), and the *Siamese Recorder* (a paper in Siamese published from 1865 to 1866).

to the country.<sup>31</sup> Bradley also had influence in Siamese international relations, doing translation work and advising for both the Siamese and western governments.<sup>32</sup> Joseph Nguyen-Van-Khoi reminds us that despite his great successes in these many other fields, “Dr. Bradley spent most of his time teaching, preaching, discussing religion.”<sup>33</sup> In these areas, Bradley was also extremely influential, but in less positive ways, for Bradley offers some of the clearest examples of antagonistic, aggressive evangelism to the Siamese.

Bradley and Mongkut were contemporaries, and they knew each other for over thirty years. Bradley treated Mongkut as his doctor, attempted to teach him English, translated for him, preached to him, and prayed for him. The two also considered themselves friends. At one time, Mongkut publicly stated that “so far as he was concerned, he would have no objection that Dr. Bradley, his old friend and born the same year in which he himself was, should live within the palace walls.”<sup>34</sup> While Bradley never did live in the palace, he and Mongkut had a friendly familiarity that at times extended to playfulness, as the following entry from Bradley’s journal shows:

When I reminded him that this was the 64th anniversary of my birth and the 32 of my arrival in Bangkok he spoke of his own age being just 3 months younger than mine and wished to know who was the stronger! He was then sitting on the carpet close to me and I felt like taking him by the hand playfully and trying our strength, but was not quite bold enough for that. I do not think he would have been displeased as he was peculiarly gracious and familiar.<sup>35</sup>

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31. Wilson, “State and Society,” 231; Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 92.

32. See Lord, “King and the Apostle,” 237.

33. Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 179.

34. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 6 February 1852.

35. *Ibid.*, 18 July 1867.



While this arm-wrestling match never seems to have taken place, the king felt comfortable enough to tease and joke with the missionary.<sup>36</sup> This familiarity allowed Dr. Bradley to feel comfortable in criticizing the king, sometimes quite directly. When John Bowring's diplomatic mission arrived in 1855, Bradley commented that "the present King had disappointed them, but they did not like to officialize their grievances," but in later years Bradley would freely air his grievances, either directly to Mongkut, or by printing reprimands in his newspapers.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Missionary Women***

On 14 August 1851, Mongkut asked the three mission groups in Bangkok (the AMA, Presbyterians, and Baptists) if they would be able to provide women to teach the women of his palace western science and the English language. After consultation, the missions agreed, and for the next three years, Sarah Bradley, Mary Mattoon, and Sarah Jones each travelled to the palace twice a week to perform this duty.<sup>38</sup> Like Caswell before them, the missionaries expressed some hesitation about doing such secular work:

Being aside from their appropriate and chosen calling, this is by no means an attractive employment; but opportunity may be found to convey spiritual instruction to those with whom they are thus brought in contact,

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36. For Mongkut's teasing of Bradley, see *ibid.*, 25 January 1856. In terms of joking, Bradley's newspaper relates that "the King of Siam on reading from some European paper, that the Pope had lately suffered the loss of some precious jewels, in consequence of a thief having got possession of His Holiness' keys, exclaimed, What a man! professing to keep the keys of heaven and cannot even keep his own keys!" *Bangkok Recorder*, 28 June 1866, 2.25. The story may be apocryphal, but it demonstrates the perception that Mongkut is knowledgeable enough about Christianity to make jokes about it, and shows that Bradley felt comfortable to put such a joke in the mouth of the king.

37. Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 2:287. Criticisms of Mongkut will be discussed more fully in the next chapter in the section on "Attacking the King."

38. Mrs. G. B. McFarland, in George McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, 45; *Bangkok Calendar*, 1859, 48.

and some incidental advantage may also accrue to the missions from this sort of connection with the court.<sup>39</sup>

The women soon realized that the king's request gave them access to a group of women with whom they would otherwise have little contact.<sup>40</sup>

Gradually, the women's teaching became less about western culture, and more about Christianity. As Abbot Low Moffat puts it, "the opportunity to proselytize seemed heaven-sent" to the missionaries.<sup>41</sup> In the 1853 Annual Report of the Presbyterians, it is noted that the female missionaries' "labors have been of late months gradually assuming a more decidedly evangelical cast."<sup>42</sup> The following year, the Presbyterian Annual Report notes that "very little has been done in the English language during the year instruction having been chiefly imparted through the Siamese."<sup>43</sup> The Baptist Annual Report of that same year (1854) gives a summary of the palace work:

A marked and gratifying change has come over this department of instruction, which originated in the king's passion for the study of English, and was entered upon with misgivings, if not with reluctance. Biblical teaching, at first only incidentally attempted, has come to hold a prominent place. Several classes have been engaged in the study of sacred history and of the doctrines of Christianity, through the medium of the Siamese language.<sup>44</sup>

The following year, the *Missionary Magazine* stated that "no obstacle was opposed to the communication of Christian truth in any part of the palace. The teaching of English

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39. *Missionary Magazine*, July 1852, 262.

40. See the letter from Stephen Mattoon of 26 August 1851 in *Siam Letters*, 2:61.

41. Moffat, *Mongkut*, 164–165.

42. Written by Samuel House, 1 October 1853, in *Siam Letters*, 2:90.

43. Written by Samuel House, 1 October 1854, in *Siam Letters*, 2:101.

44. *Missionary Magazine*, July 1854, 297.

became quite a subordinate part of the labor, giving place chiefly to Biblical literature, ancient history, and the sacred Scriptures.”<sup>45</sup>

Historians have been critical of this work, noting that the class “degenerated into Bible discussions and the attack on polygamy” as “the Christian ladies spent more time working on the inmates’ souls than they did on their English grammar.”<sup>46</sup> Despite the assurance of one of the women that “we did not rudely intrude the tenets of our religion upon them, but always answered kind enquiries and freely gave our opinions,” most see this as a dishonest, religious bait-and-switch.<sup>47</sup> Even Alex Smith, who usually treats the missionaries’ activities favourably, admits that their tactics here were questionable.<sup>48</sup> Mongkut felt that the missionary wives were not doing the work they had been asked to do, and in 1854, without previous notice, the palace doors were closed to the missionary women.<sup>49</sup> This was during a period of hostility to missionaries, but when the hostility ended, Mongkut did not invite the missionary wives back.<sup>50</sup>

Eventually, the king looked for another teacher for his wives and children, and in doing so he commented on the work of the missionary women by writing that he feared his new teacher “in doing her education may endeavour to convert our Children to

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45. *Missionary Magazine*, July 1855, 297.

46. Manich Jumsai, *Great Friendship*, 55; Lord, “King and the Apostle,” 335.

47. Mary Mattoon, “Missionary Ladies in the King’s Palace,” in *Siam and Laos, as Seen by Our American Missionaries* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1884), 332. Morgan uses the word “shameless” to describe the practice of the missionary women. *Bombay Anna*, 90.

48. Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, 41.

49. Moffat, *Mongkut*, 165.

50. On 19 September 1856, Dr. Bradley wrote in his *Journals* that “Dr. House brought word from the king of Siam yesterday that he would [be] glad to have the ladies of the missions return to his palace to teach the English language to a class of young ladies,” but nothing materialized from this.

Christianity more than education for knowledge of English language and literature like American Missionaries and their wives have done here before.”<sup>51</sup> In his letter offering the position, Mongkut was quite explicit:

And we hope that in doing your education on us and on our children (whom English call inhabitants of benighted land) you will do your best endeavor for knowledge of English language, science, and literature, and not for conversion to Christianity; as the followers of Buddha are mostly aware of the powerfulness of truth and virtue, as well as the followers of Christ, and are desirous to have facility of English language and literature, more than new religions.<sup>52</sup>

The person Mongkut hired was Anna Leonowens.

### ***Anna Leonowens***

Anna Leonowens is the reason for much of the knowledge (or rather, the misinformation) about Mongkut in the western world.<sup>53</sup> While her own story is fascinating as a cultural phenomenon and a literary invention, this thesis is concerned with how her interactions with Mongkut may have affected his views on Christianity.<sup>54</sup>

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51. Morgan, *Bombay Anna*, 91; Landon, *Anna and the King of Siam*, 74. See also Leslie Smith Dow, *Anna Leonowens: A Life Beyond the King and I* (Lawrencetown Beach, NS: Pottersfield Press, 1991), 12. One of the missionary women who had taught in the palace commented on this condition: “She is restricted to teach English alone and is forbidden to teach anything of the christian religion. This in one sense I think is encouraging as showing that the king has not all confidence in the strength of the mountain of Buddhism.” Mary Mattoon, 17 July 1862, *Siam Letters*, 2:213.

52. Leonowens, *English Governess*, vi. He further commented “we need not have teacher of Christianity as they are abundant here.” Morgan, *Bombay Anna*, 91; see also Landon, *Anna and the King of Siam*, 74.

53. For some background information on Leonowens, see the “Previous Research” section of the first chapter of this thesis.

54. Because there are a lot of gaps in Leonowens’s story, there are widely different accounts of her life. Those interested in recent attempts to unravel her story should investigate the work of Susan Morgan, Leslie Smith Dow, and Susan Fulop Kepner, “Anna (and Margaret) and the King of Siam,” *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 10, no. 2 (1997): 1–32. For the perspective of a naïve hagiographer, the reader is encouraged to find John MacNaughton, *Mrs. Leonowens* (Montreal: Gazette Printing Company, [1915?]).

Leonowens's relationship to Christianity is a matter of dispute. Part of the difficulty is that much of our "knowledge" of Leonowens comes not from her own descriptions of her life, which are problematic in themselves, but from the somewhat creative writings of a Christian missionary (Margaret Landon) about her.<sup>55</sup> Leonowens, however, portrays herself as a Christian, and explicitly calls herself one, although she seems to equate this with her national identity rather than with a religious choice.<sup>56</sup> She prominently wears a large cross in the portrait that we have of her from midlife, and she attends church, although not as often as the missionaries would like.<sup>57</sup> She speaks as a Christian in her books, and converses with Mongkut about Christian subjects, although she does hold an unusually positive view of Buddhism for the time, stating that we ought "in thanking God for the light of Christianity, to thank him for its shadow too, which is Buddhism."<sup>58</sup>

Despite Margaret Landon's charming stories of Leonowens telling stories of Jesus to Mongkut's favourite child, there is little evidence that Leonowens worked to promote

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55. Margaret Landon's identification with Leonowens, and the suggestion that Landon remade Leonowens in her own image, is investigated by Susan Kepner, who describes the "transmogrification of the original Anna, through Margaret, into Margaret." "Anna and Margaret," 8.

56. "An English, that is a Christian, woman would rather be put to the torture, chained and dungeoned for life, or suffer a death the slowest and most painful you Siamese know, than be the wife of [Mongkut or the Phrakhleng]." Leonowens, *English Governess*, 21. The missionaries identify her as a Christian, see for example, *Bangkok Calendar*, 1869, 129.

57. See Morgan, *Bombay Anna*, 89. Photographs of many of the people discussed in this thesis (e.g., Mongkut, Chao Fa Noi, Bradley, Pallegoix, Bowring, Leonowens) are given in Poraminthra Krouethong, *Phrachomklao: Phrachao krung Sayam* [Mongkut: King of Siam; English title: King Mongkut: Photographs from the reign of King Mongkut] (Bangkok: Matichon, 2003). On Leonowens's church attendance, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 27 August 1865. Leonowens's granddaughter mentioned that Leonowens seldom went to church in her later life. Morgan, *Bombay Anna*, 125.

58. Leonowens, *English Governess*, 189. Kepner and Smith Dow both believe that Leonowens preferred Buddhism to Christianity. Kepner, "Anna and Margaret," 25; Smith Dow, *Anna Leonowens*, 44. For Leonowens's comments about Christianity and her interactions with Mongkut about Christianity, see Leonowens, *English Governess*, 13, 14, 21, 83, 196–199.

Christianity in the palace.<sup>59</sup> After Leonowens finished her service, Dr. Bradley reflected on her work:

One remarkable condition required of the lady who would occupy that position was, that she should not teach the Christian religion to the king's children, or to their mothers, or to any connected with them. ... We have good reason to conclude that she [Leonowens] perseveringly endeavored to be faithful in the observance of that peculiar condition on which she was appointed governess of the king's children.<sup>60</sup>

Bradley goes on to express his opinion that Leonowens could not remove all references to Christianity from her teaching:

But that was an exceedingly difficult, not to say an impossible requirement of a christian lady, and we cannot believe, that however faithful she meant to be in that regard, she did literally fulfill it. Indeed we have been credibly informed that on several occasions, being summoned by the king to give an account of her apparent turning aside from the strait and difficult way marked out for her, by teaching lessons which had in them somewhat of the history of Christ and his teachings, she ably defended herself by saying to His Majesty, that it was as impossible for her to give his children lessons from English books utterly stripped of all reference to the Christian's God and Redeemer, as it would be for him to teach them from Siamese books without the least reference to Buddh [*sic*], and that it seemed to her not right to interpret her engagement not to teach the Christian religion as binding her to follow such a sweeping sense of it.<sup>61</sup>

Given Mongkut's displeasure with the previous training given by the missionary wives, and the explicit conditions of Leonowens's employment, it is unlikely that she had much influence in the religious outlook of her students. Indeed, this would be the case even had

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59. Landon, *Anna and the King of Siam*, 155, 157; compare *The Foreign Missionary: Containing Particular Accounts of the Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church...* [New York: Mission House, May 1854], 264. Roussos does mention that "the king felt that at the end she [Leonowens] made persistent efforts to convert her pupils to Christianity," but of the reasons given for the king's displeasure with Leonowens, this is not usually mentioned. "King Mahha Mongkut," 79.

60. *Bangkok Calendar*, 1869, 129.

61. *Ibid.*

she been highly motivated by religious concerns, which it seems she was not.<sup>62</sup> The *Bangkok Recorder* summarizes Leonowens's work by noting that she "did not feel it to be her duty to make any special effort to teach the Christian religion in connection with her services in the royal palace."<sup>63</sup>

Despite her self-portrayal in her books, Anna Leonowens played a relatively minor role in Siam during the reign of Mongkut. Chula Chakrabongse reminds readers that "Mrs. Leonowens did not come to Bangkok until 1862—after he [Mongkut] had been on the throne for eleven years, when most of his measures of reforms had been decided upon and his important treaties with western powers already concluded, so she could hardly claim any influence on his internal or external policies."<sup>64</sup> Leonowens has played an important role in mediating the relationship between the West and Siam since the time of Mongkut, but her importance rests in the stories that she told, and that were told about her. Though "Leonowens' story seems to have had virtually no impact on Siam/Thailand" during her lifetime, since then, Leonowens's stories, retold by Margaret Landon, and popularized by the movies and plays based on Landon's work, have reflected and reinforced western understandings of Siam, and have coloured Thai attitudes to the West.<sup>65</sup> The Leonowens/Landon stories reinforce the idea of Siam being a

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62. Upon Leonowens's employment, one of the previous teachers commented, "Mrs. L. makes no pretensions [*sic*] to have come for any religious purpose, still I do not think she is altogether devoid of religious interest, and I do have hope that she is one link in the chain for bringing about great good." Letter from Mary Mattoon of 17 July 1862 in *Siam Letters*, 2:213. The original sentence read, "Mrs. L. makes no pretensions [*sic*] to have come for any other purpose than money-making..."

63. *Bangkok Recorder*, 15 November 1865, 1.21.209.

64. Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life*, 209; see also Griswold, *Mongkut of Siam*, 49. Roussos agrees that Leonowens's role should not be exaggerated, but cautions against a complete dismissal of her influence. "King Mahha Mongkut," 83.

65. Patrick Jory, "The King and Us: Representations of Monarchy in Thailand and the Case of Anna

backward, depraved nation until it was civilized by the intelligence and strength of the western protagonist. These stories are deeply offensive to Thai people, and in a country where royalty is treated as above criticism, and where *lèse majesté* limits freedom of expression, Leonowens's portrayal of the king as cruel and despotic, and the later representations of the monarch as a frivolous, unintelligent playboy, are considered blasphemous.<sup>66</sup>

### **Mongkut's Response**

#### ***Freedom of Religion***

Mongkut was committed to freedom of religion, and throughout his reign he supported the missionaries in their attempts to teach their religion.<sup>67</sup> The favour and opportunities the missionaries expected to see after Mongkut's ascension largely materialized, and later reports talk about the missionaries being "treated with marked consideration" or "with marked favor" in this period.<sup>68</sup>

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and the King," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 4, no. 2 (2001): 205.

66. For further information, see Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life*, 209–211; and Chalerm Sri Thuriyanonda Chantasing, "The Americanization of 'The King and I': The Transformation of the English Governess into an American Legend" (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2000); Jory, "The King and Us," 203.

67. Manich Jumsai reports that after his coronation the king made an announcement from his throne inviting "the American missionaries to remain in his country and continue to preach their own religion. He even further said that they should write to their friends asking them to come and join them as many as possible." *Great Friendship*, 46. No other sources consulted mention the suggestion that the missionaries invite their friends.

68. *Missionary Magazine*, July 1852, 260; Letter of William Ashmore of October 1851, in the *Missionary Magazine*, April 1852, 113. See also Mrs. G. B. McFarland in George McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, 45.



There was one period starting in September 1854 when the missions felt the displeasure of Mongkut.<sup>69</sup> An article highly critical of the government of Siam had been published in Singapore's *Straits Times*, and Mongkut felt that one of the missionaries was responsible. He called all the missionaries together and asked them to sign a letter stating that the article was incorrect. The missionaries felt unable to do so, and because of this there were rumours that Mongkut was angry with them, and that he was contemplating the removal of the missionary suspected of writing the article.<sup>70</sup> The king forbade missionary travel outside of the city limits, but while rumors of the king's displeasure affected the audiences of the missionaries, they were not forbidden to work inside Bangkok.<sup>71</sup> The missionaries were also still invited to Mongkut's birthday party as usual, although his invitation asked that only those who felt that the king was not "too great a sinner to be the recipient of a blessing from him" would attend.<sup>72</sup> When Sir John Bowring arrived on his diplomatic mission, he spoke to the king about the missionaries, and things were patched up by April of 1855.<sup>73</sup>

Other than this one period, Mongkut's reign was marked by openness to, and opportunities for, the missionaries. At the start of Mongkut's reign he invited his friend Bishop Pallegoix to the palace, where they had a conversation about religion, during

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69. For general comments on this incident, see the letter of Stephen Mattoon of 27 November 1854 in *Siam Letters*, 2:103, and that of Dr. House of 25 December 1854 in *Siam Letters*, 2:104.

70. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 14 October 1854. The entry for 18 October 1854 mentions that the king had changed his mind about this. The *Missionary Magazine* of July 1855 reported that rumours mentioned the king's desire to remove "the missionaries" from Siam (300).

71. Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, 34.

72. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 12 October 1854.

73. Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 2:323; Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 31 May 1854; *Missionary Magazine*, April 1857, 101.

which Mongkut explained that “it is a bad system to persecute religion. I am of the opinion that one should leave everybody free to practice the one he desires to follow.”<sup>74</sup> He also offered to appoint Christian governors if there were many converts in a specific place.<sup>75</sup> Towards the end of Mongkut’s reign, Comte de Beauvoir reported that “no European Government ever looked more favourably upon Christian civilisation than the court of Siam has. Not only have they left our creed the most complete and favoured liberty, but the missionaries have become personal friends of the king.”<sup>76</sup>

The testimony of the Protestants is similar. Looking back over the reign of Mongkut, the *Bangkok Calendar* reported that “the last though not least of all the good influences of His late Majesty, which we shall now mention, is the perfect freedom he has given to the work of propagating the Christian religion. In the preceeding reign there was much to molest and greatly embarrass the Protestant Missionaries in their work. But next to nothing of that has been experienced during the last seventeen years.”<sup>77</sup>

Much of the freedom allowed missionaries in this period was tacit, but on occasion, Mongkut made his belief in religious toleration explicit.<sup>78</sup> Seni Pramroj records a proclamation from Mongkut which starts from the premises that “no just ruler restricts the freedom of his people in the choice of their religious belief wherewith each man hopes to find strength and salvation in his last hour as well as in the future beyond” and

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74. Pallegoix, *Description of the Thai Kingdom*, 402.

75. Ibid.

76. Beauvoir, *Week in Siam*, 88.

77. *Bangkok Calendar*, 1867, 137.

78. *Missionary Magazine*, July 1854, 199, 297.

that “there are many precepts common to all religions.”<sup>79</sup> Mongkut also discusses religious freedom in a letter he wrote to Pope Pius IX, in which he told the pope that “never, in the long and continuous history of Siam, had any of its kings ever constituted himself an enemy of any religious faith in this Kingdom.” Despite the importance of Buddhism to Siam, other faiths “had always been tolerated and sustained, making it possible for those who professed them to continue in their own religious practices and spread their respective gospels among the people of this country.” Specifically, unlike the surrounding nations, “no hostility to Christianity has ever been manifested here in this Kingdom.” In describing for the pope this “spirit of happy tolerance among the people of the Kingdom,” Mongkut states that “in as much as it is difficult to foretell the shape of the life to come hereafter, it is only just to allow every person the right to seek happiness therein in his own way.”<sup>80</sup>

Throughout his life, Mongkut demonstrated his willingness to act in accordance with his belief in the freedom of religion. It is reported that while he was abbot, one of the monks under his care decided to convert to Roman Catholicism, and Mongkut defended his right to do so.<sup>81</sup>

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79. Seni Pramoj, “Mongkut as Legislator,” 215.

80. All the quotations from Mongkut’s letter to the pope in this paragraph are taken from Seni Pramoj and Kukrit Pramoj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 179–180; see also Mongkut, *Phraratcha hattha lekha*, 188–189.

81. This story is related by both Moffat and Manich Jumsai. Moffat, *Mongkut*, 154–155; Manich Jumsai, *Great Friendship*, 42–43.

### *Rejection of Christianity*

Because of his toleration of Christianity, some people thought that Mongkut was attracted to the religion. The author of a piece in the *Bangkok Recorder* wrote that “I am one who believes that His Majesty is at heart much more in favour of Christianity, even, than he has the name of being, and that but for the trammels which his oath of office has thrown about him, he would show himself far more liberal in this direction than he now does.”<sup>82</sup> But while King Mongkut proved to be a friend to missionaries, he was unwavering in his rejection of Christianity.

At the start of Mongkut’s reign, William Ashmore wrote from the missionaries’ perspective that “the king has a sort of enthusiasm for everything American and European, except the religion of Jesus. He seems anxious to get all kinds of knowledge, except the knowledge of Christ.”<sup>83</sup> This is an accurate summary of Mongkut’s relationship to western knowledge during his life as a monk, and Mongkut continued to emphatically reject Christianity during his time as king.

If anything, Mongkut’s statements against Christianity got stronger in this period. In 1863, Bradley recounts that “as I reasoned with him [Mongkut] he went so far as to villify [*sic*] the Christian religion and speak blasphemously of our blessed Redeemer. I took occasion to reprove him for this outrage as being wholly out of place and wholly wrong.”<sup>84</sup> Bradley continued to “reason with” Mongkut, and as he did so increasingly in print, the king responded with criticisms of Christianity and defences of Buddhism. In

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82. *Bangkok Recorder*, 15 November 1865, 1.21.209.

83. Letter of William Ashmore of October 1851, in the *Missionary Magazine*, April 1852, 113.

84. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 26 November 1863.

1865, Bradley noted that “the King has been much stirred up by my last Siamese Recorder. He sent a copy of the paper back to me filled with his criticisms. Some of them are very bitter on religious subjects.”<sup>85</sup> The following year Bradley commented that he was “very sorry to see that he [the king] is becoming more and more blasphemous in writing against the Bible and Christianity.”<sup>86</sup> In 1868, Bradley again commented about a conversation about religion that he had with Mongkut, and says that the king “as usual, I am very sorry to say,” made “light of all kinds of religious faiths excepting that of Buddhism.”<sup>87</sup> Adele Fielde reported that the king on one occasion signed a letter to a missionary as “Your friend, but a sincere hater of Christianity.”<sup>88</sup>

Mongkut did not just reject Christianity, he affirmed and supported Buddhism. Even after he stopped being a monk, he continued to act as a good Buddhist, even preaching sermons on special occasions.<sup>89</sup> In 1861, Bradley reported that the king “seems to have got quite beside himself” in response to what Bradley said in the *Bangkok Calendar* about the Buddha’s birthday, and as mentioned, Mongkut would go on to defend Buddhism against the missionaries in their newspapers, especially in a series of articles in the *Bangkok Recorder*.<sup>90</sup> Missionaries acknowledged him as “the very Goliath

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85. Ibid., 6 November 1865.

86. Ibid., 19 April 1866.

87. Ibid., 25 February 1868.

88. *Missionary Magazine*, March 1869, 81.

89. Thiphakorawong [Kham Bunnak], *The Dynastic Chronicles Bangkok Era: The Fourth Reign, BE 2394–2411 (AD 1851–1868)*, trans. Chadin (Kanjavanit) Flood (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1973), 2:412, 3:12.

90. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 12 April 1861. The articles in the *Bangkok Recorder* will be discussed in the next chapter in the section on the intellectual difficulties of the Siamese.

[sic] of Buddhism,” “the Lion of Buddhism,” and the “Champion for the Buddhist religion.”<sup>91</sup>

Mongkut led people in Buddhism throughout his reign, and when it came time to die, he did so saying:

I bid farewell to the monks. I beg to salute Buddha who has long ago reached Nirvana, and I beg to render obeisance to his teachings, and to give my salute to the monks, for I have kept to the Three Gems as my guides and my guardians and as my reminders. ... At this moment I resolve to scrupulously abide by the Five Sacred Precepts of Buddhism. I have understood them and have clearly determined to abide by them. ... Though my body may be quaking, my mind is tranquil. I have studied these matters and will follow the teachings of Buddha, the Enlightened One.<sup>92</sup>

Bradley attempted to see Mongkut repeatedly while he was on his deathbed, but was turned away, and “failed of my purpose of seeing the king and of tenderly beseeching him to look to Jesus as his only and all sufficient Savior.”<sup>93</sup> While many western reports say that Mongkut died as a philosopher, he died as he had lived, a committed Buddhist.<sup>94</sup>

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91. For references to “Golia[t]h,” see *Bangkok Recorder*, 25 January 1866, 2.3; 8 February 1866, 2.5; and 19 April 1866, 2.15. For the “Lion of Buddhism,” see *Bangkok Recorder*, 3 May 1866, 2.17. For the use of “Champion,” see *Bangkok Recorder*, 27 September 1866, 2.38; 25 January 1866, 2.3; 8 February 1866, 2.5; and 5 April 1866, 2.13. There is some possibility that some of these references are to Thiphakorawong. See *Siam Repository* [Bangkok: Smith’s Place, 1872], 4:257. Thiphakorawong’s book, *Nangsue sadaeng kitchanukit* [Book of miscellanies] (Bangkok: Ongkankha khong khurusapha, 1971), has some similar arguments to the *Bangkok Recorder* articles. Bradley notes that he thought both Thiphakorawong and Mongkut replied to his articles (*Journals*, 6 November 1865), but he explicitly talks about replying to the king in his articles of 18 January 1866 (2.2) and 25 January 1866 (2.3). Bradley’s *Journals* also demonstrate that he believes he is arguing with the king. See 8 February 1866, 14 February 1866, 19 April 1866; compare *Bangkok Recorder*, 15 November 1865, 1.21.205; 8 February 1866, 2.5.

92. Thiphakorawong, *Dynastic Chronicles*, 2:552–553.

93. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 30 September 1868.

94. See William Bradley, *Siam Then*, 151; Samuel House, “History of the Missions,” 391–392; Leonowens, *English Governness*, 250. Compare *Missionary Magazine*, March 1869, 80–81.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVALUATION: FACTORS WITHIN MISSIONARY RESPONSIBILITY

#### Introduction

Despite much faithful, sacrificial, and costly work in Siam in the forty years examined in this study, there were extremely few conversions to Christianity. The question of why there were so few conversions in Siam was asked frequently by missionaries, for more than anyone, they knew both the painstaking labour and the painful lack of results.<sup>1</sup> For example, Dr. Bradley writes in 1840:

Had many to hear me talk and ask for books. But there is no evidence of the least conviction of sin among them all—not the least trembling anxiety to know how they may be saved from the dreadful hell towards which they are fast hastening. O what doth hinder the Holy Ghost's descent upon them. Is the obstacle with me? Is it with my brethren [?] Is it because it is not the accepted time [?] Is it because many long and dismal years must first be spent by missionaries in preparing the way of the Lord here? O Lord teach me for I am in great darkness and doubt.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will examine characteristics of the missionaries that might have contributed to the failure of the early Protestant missionary attempts to convert the Siamese.

Criticism is easy, but while there can be a perverse pleasure in pointing out the failures of others, that is not the intention of this chapter. Having spent time in Thailand, I

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1. The missionaries also had heard of great evangelistic results in other countries, including among the neighbouring peoples in Burma. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 5 October 1857.

2. Ibid., 29 November 1840.

recognize and admire the sacrifice, love, and effort by present and past missionaries.

However, missionaries are not above criticism, and a careful consideration of their failure will be helpful both for contemporary missions to Thailand, as well as for evangelism in similar countries.<sup>3</sup>

The evaluation in this thesis is also not meant to suggest that there are only human factors at play here. I believe in the necessity and the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit—as the early missionaries did. Stephen Johnson wrote in his journal that “without his [the Holy Spirit’s] almighty influences, the best adapted and most powerful means will be utterly ineffectual to the conversion of these stupid, dying heathen; but with them, the humblest and feeblest instrumentality may be productive of the most astonishing and glorious results.”<sup>4</sup> However, while this chapter does not negate the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit, or dispute God’s power and freedom to work in all circumstances, God often chooses to work through the social, political, psychological, and economic forces in our world rather than apart from them. The inscrutable, sovereign will of God is not the only satisfactory response when it is asked why so few Siamese converted to Christianity, and this chapter and the next will look at other answers to that question.<sup>5</sup>

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3. In the effort to avoid both missionary bashing and hero worship, this thesis echoes William Bradley, who says that the missionaries “deserve to be recognized for what they truly were: very human creatures, not saints, trying desperately to fight God’s battles in a world they saw threatened by the very knavery of scoundrels and idolaters, fearful lest the contest against evil would be lost because of their waning zeal.” “White Man’s Burden,” 182.

4. Journal of Stephen Johnson, as printed in the *Missionary Herald*, March 1837, 110. See also the Mission Letter of 1 October 1859 in *Siam Letters*, 2:154; *Missionary Magazine*, April 1851, 101; and Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 11 February 1859.

5. For evidence of missionary struggles with these types of questions, see a letter from Samuel Smith in the *Missionary Herald*, March 1860, 65; and *Missionary Magazine*, June 1843, 156.



## **Characteristics of the Missionaries**

Hamilton King, the US Consul General in Siam at the end of the nineteenth century, declared that “Siam is a country in which the American missionaries have made no mistakes of importance.”<sup>6</sup> Despite King’s confidence, the missionaries did make many mistakes. While they did many admirable things and had many praiseworthy qualities, their arrogance, rationalistic religion, unecumenical spirit, confrontational style of interreligious dialogue, attacks on the government (including the monarch), and their poor manners and breaking of cultural norms all worked against their efforts to lead their listeners to Christianity.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Sense of Superiority***

The writings of missionaries to Siam of this period demonstrate either an attitude of bleak despair or a posture of triumphalistic confidence. The despair experienced by the missionaries is understandable. As we will see in the next chapter, they lived and worked in a difficult setting, were frequently sick and lonely, and toiled for years while seeing almost no results for their work. The assurance that it was just a matter of time before the missionaries would be “successful” in Siam is more difficult for us to understand.

And yet, they clearly possessed confidence. The first time Samuel House saw Siam, he wrote in his diary that “thy people, O Siam, shall be my people; but my God

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6. In Brown, “Siam,” 203.

7. Though they were developed independently, there are many parallels between this section of my thesis and Nantachai Mejudhon’s dissertation (“Meekness”) which criticizes past and current evangelistic efforts in Siam for their arrogance and aggressiveness.

shall be their God.”<sup>8</sup> An article in the *Bangkok Recorder* boldly stated that “Siam will become a Christian country, and Siamese kings protect christianity. The only problem unsolved is, when shall these things be? Who shall have the pleasure of seeing the work of God prosper?”<sup>9</sup> Likewise, the *Bangkok Calendar* predicted that “Bangkok even, situated as it is in the midst of a vast prairie, bounded in all directions by the horizon, would soon be made quite a Paradise under a Christian culture and Christian rule.”<sup>10</sup>

This confidence came partly from the missionaries’ previous experience, for many of them came from the burned-over region of America which had seen repeated revivals.<sup>11</sup> They had experienced for themselves the power of the gospel, and seen areas transformed by the work of God’s Spirit, and they fully believed in the power of God to do the same in Siam.

The assurance also came from their reading of scripture. When the missionaries read their Bibles, they saw promises for the conversion of the world, and while “’tis true, the world is not yet converted, ... there are some few who are willing to accept God’s promissory note, without the name of an underwriter.”<sup>12</sup> The missionaries based their confidence on their trust in God’s promises, not on their own abilities, as Eliza Jones

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8. Feltus, *Samuel Reynolds House*, 44, echoing Ruth 1.16.

9. *Bangkok Recorder*, 11 October 1866, 2.40.

10. *Bangkok Calendar*, 1866, 95.

11. See Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 15, 19, 38–42.

12. *Missionary Magazine*, August 1869, 323. Specific biblical promises claimed by the missionaries include Psalm 2.8 (*Siam Letters*, 2:56), Proverbs 21.1 (Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 9 January 1855), Isaiah 26.3 (*Siam Letters*, 2:104), Isaiah 41.10 (Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 3 August 1851), Isaiah 41.14–16 (Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 13 December 1846), Isaiah 55.11 (*Siam Letters*, 2:53; *Bangkok Calendar*, 1871, 120), Isaiah 59.1 (Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 9 January 1855), Daniel 7.27 (*Bangkok Calendar*, 1860, 50), 2 Corinthians 4.15 (*Siam Letters*, 3:25), Galatians 6.9 (Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 3 August 1851, 18 January 1852), and Revelation 11.15 (*Bangkok Recorder*, 11 October 1866, 2.40; Jones, *Memoir*, 76).

made clear: “All our confidence is, however, in Him who has promised that all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our dear Redeemer.”<sup>13</sup> After all, they reasoned, “the work of missions is the work of Jehovah; therefore it has progressed, and it must prevail.”<sup>14</sup> When they were weary, a missionary like Dr. Bradley could claim the “sure word of God’s promise that in due time I shall reap if I faint not and by this am I sustained.”<sup>15</sup>

The optimism also came from missionary views on the millennium. While there was not one view of the millennium among the American missionaries, both pre-millennialists and post-millennialists were encouraged by their eschatology to work for the conversion of Siam.<sup>16</sup> The Presbyterian missionary William Buell believed that though things looked bleak now, “the spell shall ere long be broken, and they [the Siamese] shall be made the freemen of the Lord. The night of spiritual death which has so long hung over them, shall be succeeded by the ushering in of a brighter and better day.”<sup>17</sup> Dan Bradley agreed with “the impression that almost every thing here will wax worse and worse that the darkness will become more and more awful until just before the

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13. Jones, *Memoir*, 76, referring to Revelation 11.15.

14. *Missionary Magazine*, August 1869, 325. The article was titled “No Room for Discouragement,” and in it Dr. Dean asks: “We do well to be discouraged in the work of missions? No! Never. Obstacles there are, but no discouragements. God meets with obstacles, but was He ever discouraged?” *Ibid.*, 323.

15. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 18 January 1852, referring to Galatians 6.9.

16. Bradley mentions a discussion about the future with he and M[attoon?] being post millennialists, and others, such as House, being pre-millennialists. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 7 August 1854. David W. Kling argues that “millennial fervor” (of various types) was a key motivation for early American missions. “The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,” in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810–1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004).

17. Letter from William Buell of 13 April 1843, in *Siam Letters*, 1:25.

break of a glorious day of salvation for this people.”<sup>18</sup> The eschatological assurance helped support the missionaries in the years of dryness.<sup>19</sup>

The triumphalism of the missionaries also stemmed from cultural arrogance.<sup>20</sup> The missionaries were convinced that western culture and learning was superior to the Siamese, and they frequently showed their arrogant dismissal of Siamese culture. Siam was a powerful nation which was proud of its history and its achievements, but westerners treated the Siamese like barbarians (or semi-barbarians), and we occasionally hear a shocking arrogance in the voices of the missionaries.<sup>21</sup> Speaking of Siamese religious embassies being sent to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to try to counter the Christian witness in that country, the *Siam Repository* proclaimed that “Siam cannot save it, false is stamped on its features, and it must hold down its head, and slink away, and let the religion, that makes better nations, better people, better homes, better neighbors, better citizens, better everything, that is good, bear away the palm.”<sup>22</sup>

At times, cultural arrogance led to a despising of the people to whom the missionaries were ministering. Dr. Bradley recorded in his journal that “it does seem to

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18. Bradley, *Journals*, 27 July 1850. He goes on to admit that “the eye of sense cannot see that he [God] is doing any thing towards the accomplishment of salvation for this people.” Other missionaries caution that though the “hope of a speedy and universal triumph of the gospel over all the forms and follies of their idolatry” is a predetermined reality, they should avoid “antedating” the success. David Abeel in *Chinese Repository* (Canton: March 1833), 466–467.

19. Feltus, *Journal of Bradley*, IV.

20. William Bradley, “White Man’s Burden,” 181. Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit note that “by their own accounts, the early British official visitors acted towards Siamese officials with as much arrogance as they could muster.” *History of Thailand*, 40.

21. Sir James Brooks, an early diplomat to Siam reported that Mongkut was “a highly accomplished gentleman for a semi-barbarian.” Cited in Seksan Prasertkul, “Transformation of the Thai State,” 155.

22. *Siam Repository*, 1869, 1:148.

me that of all minds on the face of the whole earth the Siamese mind is the most vacant and degraded,” and the next day after viewing a display of fireworks, he conceded that “it was indeed a grand exhibition (for a people ignorant and stupid as this to make).”<sup>23</sup> In a printed paper (the *Bangkok Recorder*), Bradley and a defender of Buddhism carried on a conversation over several months (which will be discussed more in the next chapter).

Before his own comments, Bradley prefaced demeaning remarks about his opponent:

Our readers, we presume have not forgotten the discussion we had in our columns some two or three months since with a distinguished Buddhist Champion, and they may, perhaps, wonder why they have heard nothing more from him. We feel now constrained to confess that this silence has not been from any power we flattered ourselves we had in silencing him by argument, but rather from an unwillingness we have had to publish his last puerile effort. ... The article possesses some interest as a specimen of the utter weakness of Buddhism to sustain any argument against the Bible.<sup>24</sup>

Even when the Buddhist writer (who was probably Mongkut), marshals strong arguments, the editor of the *Bangkok Recorder* gives a back-handed compliment that is really a slight on the educational system of Siam:

We will at the outset frankly acknowledge that our antagonist has in his last article displayed much more tact and power at argumentation that we had conceived it possible for him to summon. And we are really surprised to find that he, having been educated in the temples of Siam, is so well acquainted with the European rules of polemic controversy. It would almost seem that he had been trained in a fully civilized land ...<sup>25</sup>

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23. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 23 October 1836, and 24 October 1836. He did pray that God would “open the hearts of these poor deluded stupid souls to receive instruction.” Ibid., 17 September 1837. Compare Dr. Dean’s statement about the “heathen” that he ministered to: “they have the stolid ignorance which disqualifies them to understand an argument and comprehend a logical conclusion.” Letter of 10 June 1868, printed in the *Missionary Magazine*, March 1869, 78–79. For further examples of slighting comments, see *Chinese Repository*, March 1833, 467; John Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987; first published in 1828), 342; Maen Pongudom, “Missionary Proclamation,” 48.

24. *Bangkok Recorder*, 5 April 1866, 2.13.

25. Ibid., 3 May 1866, 2.17.

The missionaries' faith in the promises of God provided a powerful motive for perseverance which allowed them to continue their work despite a lack of results. However, missionary assurance also produced arrogance and aggressiveness, which resulted in the alienation of their audience. Many, like Mongkut, would protest that Siamese culture was not inferior to that of western nations: "the followers of the Buddha are mostly aware of the powerfulness of truth and virtue, as well as the followers of Christ."<sup>26</sup> Mongkut explicitly compared Siam to the Sandwich Islands which were experiencing mass conversions, and stated that Siam did not need the gospel as it was not uncivilized.<sup>27</sup> The arrogance of the missionaries also led to a minimizing of the difficulties expressed by the Siamese, and resulted in the real questions of the Siamese not being taken seriously.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Rationalism***<sup>29</sup>

It has already been mentioned that Mongkut's attempt to eliminate aspects of the supernatural and the miraculous in Siamese Buddhism was in accord with missionary attitudes.<sup>30</sup> The missionaries were products of the enlightenment, who viewed the world

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26. Leonowens, *English Governess*, vi.

27. Seni Pramroj and Kukrit Pramroj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 16. Mongkut also compares the culture of Siam to that of biblical Israel and comments on the ignorance and superstition of the barbarous nation into which Christ was born. Ibid., 15, 18.

28. For more on this, see the section on the "Intellectual Difficulties" of the Siamese in the next chapter.

29. I am indebted to Dr. Donald Lewis for his suggestions for this section.

30. See the discussion above in the section about Mongkut's reform of Buddhism (especially pages 52–53).

through the eyes of rationalism.<sup>31</sup> They emphasized science and reason and tended to downplay the mystery and the miraculous in Christianity, and while the missionaries refer to Satan in the abstract, their writings do not demonstrate a belief in the active role of the demonic in Siam.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, while they acknowledge their need of divine power for their work in Siam, and while they at times have warm experiences of the Spirit, they did not make the power or the works of the Spirit an obvious part of their proclamation.<sup>33</sup> Power encounters were not part of the methods of the early missionaries.<sup>34</sup>

The power and work of spirits was an important part of the belief system of the Siamese, and popular Siamese Buddhism showed a keen awareness of the reality and activity of the spirit world.<sup>35</sup> It could be that the rationalistic theology of the missionaries

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31. Andrew Walls describes the European missionaries to Africa as children of the enlightenment in *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 122, 125.

32. For mention of Satan, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 13 December 1846; *Missionary Magazine*, April 1851, 101; *Siam Letters*, 1:19 (W. P. Buell, 8 September 1842); 2:36 (S. Mattoon, 1 October 1849); and the *Siam Repository*, 1872, 4:258.

33. For mention of the need for the Spirit, and a desire for his “outpouring” on Siam, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 6 September 1835, 9 January 1851, 9 August 1851, 11 February 1859, 29 April 1867; *Missionary Herald*, March 1837, 110; *Missionary Magazine*, March 1860, 65; and *Siam Letters*, 2:154. In Bradley’s journals, he reports many profound spiritual experiences, including periods of unutterable joy (30 August 1861), and an experience which he calls a “blissful baptism of the Holy Comforter” (1 January 1864); see also Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 18 February 1838, 28 February 1838, and 27 February 1868.

34. Elijah’s contest with the prophets of Baal (described in 1 Kings 18.16–46) is a classic example of a power encounter, in which two spiritual forces compete to demonstrate which is stronger. Power encounters have at various times been prominently used by Christian evangelists. For their role in the Prophet-Healing movement in early twentieth-century Africa, see Jehu J. Hanciles, “Conversion and Social Change: A Review of the ‘Unfinished Task’ in West Africa,” in *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Donald M. Lewis (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 169–172.

35. Most of the writings about nineteenth-century Siamese Buddhism (as well as much of what is written about contemporary Thai Buddhism) are accounts of the “pure,” academic Buddhism which downplays or ignores Siamese beliefs about spirits (however, see Vella, *Siam Under Rama III*, 28–29, 31). An explanation of some of the types of spirits in popular Thai belief is given in Anuman Rajadhon, *Popular Buddhism in Siam and Other Essays on Thai Studies* (Bangkok: Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development & Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation, 1986), 99–133.

eliminated a source of contact with the Siamese, many of whom lived in fear of the spirit world. The missionary de-emphasis of the supernatural meant that they were unable to respond to this area of concern for the Siamese.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Noncooperation***

One of the important things to note in the history of missions to Siam is the degree of cooperation between the missionaries. Siam in this period had no comity agreements dividing the country into regions for the different missions to work. The missionaries seemed to desire to work together, and they made significant efforts to share their common ground. They joined together for regular public worship in English and for prayer meetings, as well as staffing a tract house together and going on evangelistic tours together. The women together attended the Bangkok Maternal Association meetings and put on the Ladies Bazaar. In 1841, William Buell, the first of the Presbyterian Mission to work in Siam reported that “in our intercourse with the brethren of the other Boards, we are unrestrained and entirely cordial. Not a missionary here in his social and christian capacity makes any denominational or invidious distinctions.”<sup>37</sup> Later observers have also mentioned the ecumenical nature of missions to Siam.<sup>38</sup> However, these statements

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36. In his description of the effects of the enlightenment values of the early missionaries to Africa, Andrew Walls mentions that the Ganda people “found the empty skies of missionary Christianity hard to cope with.” *Cross-Cultural Process*, 125. While it would be difficult to test the effects of missionary rationalistic theology on the acceptance of their teaching, the comparative success of later charismatic or Pentecostal missionaries to Siam would be worth examining. For a discussion of the history of the charismatic movement in Thailand, see James Hosack, “The Arrival of Pentecostals and Charismatics in Thailand,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4, no. 1 (2001): 109–117; and David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 158–160.

37. Letter from William Buell of 4 July 1841 in *Siam Letters*, 1:9.

38. “With small members of missionary staff, the common goal to evangelize brought the different denominational groups and Missions together. In the face of common problems and extreme difficulties



need to be tempered with an understanding of the significant, public conflicts between Christians in Siam. The same missionary who described the “unrestrained and entirely cordial” intercourse between missionaries goes on to qualify these comments by describing conflict both between and within missions.<sup>39</sup>

The conflict between Christians was noted by the Siamese. In 1867, a Siamese thinker named Thiphakorawong published a book called *Nangsue Sadaeng Kitchanukit* in which he dealt with Christianity (among other things). In the book, Thiphakorawong asks why people who believe in the same Creator and the same Christ are unable to get along.<sup>40</sup> Siamese people of the period did not see clear distinctions between Protestants, Catholics, and Mormons, and Thiphakorawong includes all three in his question. The fighting between all these groups that the Siamese considered Christians worked against the efforts to convert the Siamese to Christianity.<sup>41</sup>

For the Protestant missionaries of this period, there was no doubt that Catholic missionaries were not their co-workers in Christ. In fact, Jacob Tomlin, one of the first Protestant missionaries to Siam, wrote that “we are persuaded these Catholic Christians

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they joined as a common front. ... The ecumenical movement was born on this and in other mission fields.” Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, 29. See also Feltus, *Samuel Reynolds House*, 45; Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 151.

39. Saying that “formerly there was collision here between the other two boards but now most happily nothing exists to mar the peace of any one necessarily,” and that “it is true that there does not seem to have existed between the members of the A.B.C.F.M. the same unanimity in their recent church organization as would have existed had they all been of one denomination yet still they have probably been as unanimous as could have been anticipated.” William Buell letter of 4 July 1841 in *Siam Letters*, 1:9. Someone has written “Omit” next to these two comments, perhaps in preparation for publishing parts of this letter in a missionary magazine.

40. Thiphakorawong, *Kitchanukit*, 130.

41. See also Henry Alabaster, *The Wheel of the Law. Buddhism Illustrated from Siamese Sources by The Modern Buddhist, A Life of Buddha, and An Account of the Phrabat* (London: Trubner & Co., 1871), 33. A Mormon missionary showed up in Siam in 1854, but “for the want of encouragement he remained only a short time.” *Bangkok Calendar*, 1860, 49.

are secretly our worst enemies.”<sup>42</sup> That perspective remained throughout this period, and in the eyes of some of the missionaries, it was more disturbing for a Siamese person to become a Catholic than to remain a Buddhist, as Dr. Bradley points out: “The horrors of heathenism appeared to us less horrible than the fact that Roman Catholics are riveting the chains of darkness that bind their souls in the service of Satan. To the human eye they appear in a far more hopeless condition than if they had never heard of Christ.”<sup>43</sup>

Unlike the missionaries, the Siamese did not see a great difference between Catholics and Protestants; instead, they saw the similarities between them and wondered why they could not agree:

Again the Roman Catholic Teachers and Protestant missionaries believe in and pray to Jesus in heaven praying to him day and night without ceasing as being the most High and the most excellent One. Still they do not agree together; but quarrel about the doctrines of Christ. ... Thus do the two sects reproach and quarrel and hook each other like cattle. Now where is he whom they adore as God? Does he know how they treat each other?<sup>44</sup>

Sir John Bowring commented on the situation in Siam from the perspective of an outside observer:

The diversity of the religious instructions of the Catholic and Protestant missionaries is an immense difficulty in the way of both. I am sorry to say, they frequently exhibit towards each other a spirit which is not that of Christian concord. ... The whole field is too much occupied with jealousies and misunderstandings; and I have heard it alleged by natives against their foreign visitors—‘They quarrel with one another; they do not understand one another; they teach different religions: how should we understand

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42. Tomlin, *Missionary Journals and Letters*, 124. Catholics were not favourable to Protestants, either. In 1845, one of the Protestants mentioned that “they [Catholics] have recently published a book, giving an account of various heretical sects, among whom we have our share of abuse.” *Missionary Magazine*, July 1845, 182.

43. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 30 April 1836. In an earlier entry (4 March 1836), he speaks of the “horrid delusion” of Catholicism, and mentions that it is an “arch plan to lead souls to Eternal Hell.”

44. *Bangkok Recorder*, 26 April 1866, 2.16.

their differences? When they can agree about what we are to receive, we shall be more disposed to listen seriously.’<sup>45</sup>

However, it was not just the Catholics and the Protestants who disagreed. There were also differences between the Protestant missionary groups.<sup>46</sup> While the missionaries did have interdenominational worship services, they usually refused to celebrate the Lord’s Supper together, and other differences of opinion were sometimes publicly observable.<sup>47</sup> Missionaries sometimes saw other missionaries as competitors, and there was at least one instance of a convert’s rebaptism because later missionaries felt that the earlier mode of baptism was inappropriate.<sup>48</sup> There were also personal conflicts between missionaries, including one that ended in physical violence.<sup>49</sup>

Divisions did not just happen between mission organizations, either. In the period that is being studied, one mission (the ABCFM) split into two parties and eventually dissolved their work in Siam because of an intense doctrinal disagreement about the possibility of entire sanctification.<sup>50</sup> Another mission (the AMA) at one point had two

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45. Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 1:335.

46. The focus of this paper is on Protestant missionaries, but there had also been significant differences between Catholic groups working in Siam. Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 57; see also Smithies and Bressan, *Siam and the Vatican*, 7.

47. See Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 6 September 1835 and 6 March 1836. An example of a public dispute was whether it was proper for a Christian to ever use alcohol; see *ibid.*, 29 September 1838, 23 September 1836.

48. On competition, see *ibid.*, 23 June 1839; after prayer and striving, Bradley discovered “the beauty and loveliness of a single and pure desire to win souls to Christ and not to a sect.” The first Siamese baptized (Buntree) was sprinkled by Gutzlaff, and later rebaptized by J. T. Jones. *Bangkok Calendar*, 1871, 106; Alex Smith, *Siamese Gold*, 19–20.

49. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 5 July 1845, 22 September 1845, and 11 May 1868; William Bradley, “White Man’s Burden,” 184.

50. In 1845, Stephen Johnson gave a summary of the situation for the Board of the ABCFM: “The difference has already been of upwards of 4 years standing, only that it has been gradually widening and assuming a more serious aspect. So important do our brethren regard their new views on the subject of

separate churches in Bangkok because the three families in the mission were unable to worship together.<sup>51</sup> One of the parties acknowledged that this had become a “public scandal to the dear cause which we both profess to sustain with all our hearts,” but felt that he was in the right.<sup>52</sup> Dr. Bradley was a key member of both these missions, but while his “pugnacious tendencies” bear some of the responsibility for both cases, he was not the only person at fault.<sup>53</sup> The Baptist mission also was divided with “a great gulf found betwixt the Chinese and Siamese departments of the Mission. A very unpleasant feeling is existing between them of long standing.”<sup>54</sup>

For a Siamese person interested in hearing more about Jesus, the fact that there were two major groups (Catholic and Protestant) that disagreed, numerous subgroups (the missions) each claiming that they were right and the other was wrong, and that within each group there were individuals who refused to worship together would be both

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sanctification and so erroneous and injurious to piety the sentiments of most Christians on this point, that they feel themselves solemnly bound in duty to God as his ministers to make our points of difference very prominent both in their preaching and remarks at our united services in our mother tongue. Thus our social meetings, in which we are united with our Baptist brethren, often become the scene of unpleasant and I fear unedifying discussion. We who entertain the common views on the subject and its kindred doctrines have felt it to be our duty occasionally in our preaching and remarks to defend what we deem on this subject to be Bible truth. We know not how or when this matter will end.” Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 22 February 1845.

51. This seems to have been due to some underlying issues between the missionaries, with an accusation from Dr. Bradley against Mr. Lane about financial irregularities serving as the flash point. For more information, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, from 1852 to 1854, especially 20 May 1852, 8 June 1852, 12 June 1852, 8 July 1852, and 4 March 1853. The forming of a second church was reported on 1 September 1853. The two other missionaries in the AMA voted to separate from Bradley on 23 March 1854.

52. *Ibid.*, 1 September 1853.

53. *Siam Repository*, 1871, 214. See Feltus, *Journal of Bradley*, preface. Bradley’s severe personality and unhealthy interpersonal relationships were acknowledged by Bradley as early as 1837, but it was something he never truly overcame. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 5 January 1837.

54. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 27 July 1857.

confusing and unattractive.<sup>55</sup> A man talking to Dr. Bradley in Petchaburi in 1862 said that he “had observed that Christians were divided often into many sects but that Buddhism was not divided. He seemed to think that this fact was some evidence that it stood firmly on an eternal rock.”<sup>56</sup>

Roussos summarizes the effects of the division between Christians on the evangelistic efforts during the time of Mongkut: “Part of the lack of success of missionary work in Siam during the 4th Reign was the fact that Catholic, Presbyterian, and Baptist missionaries spent much time bickering with each other and the answers they gave to the Siamese on questions of doctrine and practice differed, thus adding to the existing confusion.”<sup>57</sup>

### ***Attacking Buddhism***

One of King Mongkut’s children was asked to write an introduction to a history of Protestant missions in Siam. In it, Damrong recalled his first encounter with missionaries: “the conversation was to the following effect: Said the missionary, ‘Do you not know that your religion is wrong, and can only lead you to hell?’”<sup>58</sup> He goes on to express his opinion on early missionary methods: “The early missionaries were not well-advised in picking out and criticizing severely what they thought were the faults of Buddhism. They

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55. Pallegoix, *Description of the Thai Kingdom*, 418; Teerawat Bhumichitr, *Roi du Siam*, 187.

56. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 29 August 1862. Bradley answers by saying that “the devil the great deceiver is deeply interested in breaking up Christians into diverse sects for he sees that ... if it be greatly divided, it will diminish its power and he will have consequently a larger reign on earth. But he has no interest that Buddhism should be divided, and he makes no efforts to this end.”

57. Roussos, “King Mahha Mongkut,” 74; see also Bristowe, *Louis and the King*, 19.

58. Damrong in George McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, 2–3.

took pains to show contempt for the religion of the land.”<sup>59</sup> Damrong, writing in 1928, then comments:

the [present] missionaries, having lived long enough in Siam, have come to appreciate the character of her inhabitants, and have changed their methods to suit such character. Thus, instead of abusing Buddhism as a first step to the extolling of Christianity, they set about to exhibit Christian virtue, and thus inspire faith in a religion which possesses such good points. Aggressive works have been abandoned in favour of a gentler method, and the results must surely be more satisfactory from the missionary view-point.<sup>60</sup>

Sir John Bowring, examining the work of missionaries in Siam in the mid-nineteenth century commented that “if it be unwise and unbecoming to press our own opinions in an offensive way upon those we seek to convert, how much less excusable is it that we should speak to them of their own faith in opprobrious and insulting language.”<sup>61</sup> And yet, opprobrious and insulting language about Buddhism was used by the missionaries in their writings for the Siamese people, in their preaching to them, and in their conversations.<sup>62</sup> The missionaries were guests in the land, and yet they attempted to attract people to Christianity by pointing out the folly and impotence of the host country’s religious system.

In their printing, the missionaries wrote “tracts not only about Christianity, but about Buddhism, so the Thai could see the ‘rotteness’ of their own system.”<sup>63</sup> There are

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59. Ibid., 13.

60. Ibid., 14–15.

61. Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 1:344.

62. See also Thiphakorawong, *Kitchanukit*, page ๙. At times Christians attacked Buddhism more directly, as shown by Pallegoix’s approving description of how Christians used jeers, vandalism, and pranks to drive Buddhist monks away from a temple in the neighbourhood. *Description of the Thai Kingdom*, 408.

63. Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 110.

records of disturbances stirred up by offensive writings against Buddhism by the ABCFM (1837), Pallegoix (1844/1846), Caswell (1850), and Jones (1850).<sup>64</sup> In the printing they did in English, which was also read by the educated Siamese, the missionaries were blunt to the point of rudeness, as the following examples demonstrate:

It may be asked, what is the effect of such a system of religion [Buddhism] upon the morals of the people .... There is a rottenness about everything, morally speaking, which we do not find in Christian countries. ... It is eminently the offspring of Satan, as all its bearings and workings on the heart and morals will abundantly show.<sup>65</sup>

Buddh [*sic*] is a dead god, at best a lump of inanimate matter, and his followers are poor blind deluded mortals, wallowing in superstition and sunk in immorality; to them the future is shrouded in eternal night, without one ray of hope, or they look forward to spend it in sensual delight, and unhallowed pleasures.<sup>66</sup>

When P'ra Chaum Klau [Mongkut] was crowned he promised to protect Buddhism. The more's the pity—Buddhism is the great millstone, that is dragging down the whole nation. It is a spell upon them, which forbids their rising up as a strong and great people. They must be puny as a necessity, while they cling to a false religion and bow down to false gods. The very religion dwarfs them.<sup>67</sup>

The missionaries were no more diplomatic in their oral preaching to the Siamese. Bradley, in particular, left us good records of his confrontational preaching style. Near the beginning of his ministry in Siam he wrote in his journal, “Lectured my people on the falsity of their religion .... The people stare when I tell them plainly the rottenness of their

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64. For the ABCFM tract (“The Histories of Buddh and Christ Jesus contrasted”), see *Bangkok Calendar*, 1873, 97. For Pallegoix’s catechism, see Saat Chaiwan, *Priapthiap*, 165, and Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 2 November 1844, 16 November 1844. For the work of Jones (“Golden Balance”) and Caswell (“On the Killing of Animals”), see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 30 July 1850, 16 August 1850.

65. *Siam Repository*, 1872, 4:258.

66. *Bangkok Recorder*, 15 February 1865, 1.3.26.

67. *Ibid.*, 11 October 1866, 2.40.

religious system, but they seem to say that what I say is probably all but too true.”<sup>68</sup>

Bradley continued to speak plainly of the “folly and sin of idolatry and the truth and excellency of the Christian religion” throughout his time in Siam.<sup>69</sup> Bradley would often travel to Buddhist temples to speak to monks, speaking out “boldly against the folly and sin of Buddhism and the uselessness and wickedness of making these idol temples and of becoming priests of Buddh [*sic*].”<sup>70</sup> He would also go to the shops of those who made and sold images of the Buddha, and “preach against the business.”<sup>71</sup> In his conversation with Buddhists, Bradley did not hesitate to explain that the Buddha was “infinitely inferior” to Jesus, and that he “had good reason to conclude that Buddh [*sic*] was in hell.”<sup>72</sup> When people rejected the gospel, he was not afraid to “declare boldly and plainly [to his listener] that if his word proved true he will never be saved, never reach heaven, and will most assuredly sink to hell when he dies, and that thus it will be with all who die in the embrace of Buddhism.”<sup>73</sup>

The missionaries’ attack on Buddhism was both uninformed and unequal. Maen Pongudom comments that “looking at the nineteenth-century missionary, one hardly finds any evidences of any great missionary interest in and study of Buddhism.”<sup>74</sup> The

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68. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 24 September 1837.

69. *Ibid.*, 10 May 1863.

70. *Ibid.*, 22 February 1851.

71. *Ibid.*, 8 November 1851.

72. *Ibid.*, 16 February 1857 and 22 June 1854.

73. *Ibid.*, 9 February 1859.

74. Maen Pongudom, “Missionary Proclamation,” 63. See also Bristowe, *Louis and the King*, 19. Saat Chaiwan also comments on the missionary misunderstandings of Buddhism. *Priapthiap*, 269.



missionary understanding of Buddhism was largely based on what they could comprehend of what they saw people doing, or on popular writings which were not considered authoritative.<sup>75</sup> Not only was the missionaries' attack on other religions uninformed, it was unequal, for the missionaries felt that their own religion was above criticism. Henry Alabaster, criticizing the apologetic methods of the missionaries, mentions that a Buddhist "naturally feels justified in treating with ridicule the ideas of those ... who spare little sarcasm or insult in their never-ceasing endeavours to bring his religion into contempt."<sup>76</sup> Sometimes, the Siamese did respond to the foreign religion as the missionaries did, and pointed out the flaws in the missionary portrayal of Christianity. The missionaries, however, did not respond well to this. When Mongkut attempted this, "Bradley considered this defense of Buddhism and the counterattacks upon Christianity blasphemous, but in reality Mongkut's attacks were extremely mild in comparison to the assaults the missionaries made upon Thai Buddhism."<sup>77</sup>

### ***Attacking the King***

Buddhism is highly revered in Thailand, and the early missionaries were free in their criticism of it. Royalty is another subject which is handled with deep respect, and the king and his family were not spared in the criticisms of the Protestant missionaries either. The Americans were open and blunt as they criticized Mongkut.<sup>78</sup> Despite

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75. Maen Pongudom, "Missionary Proclamation," 143; Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 29 July 1850.

76. Alabaster, *Wheel of the Law*, 17–18, referring to Thiphakorawong's *Kitchanukit*.

77. Lord, "Missionaries, Thai, and Diplomats," 167.

78. For criticisms of Mongkut's role in leading people in Buddhism, see *Bangkok Recorder*, 5 April 1866, 2.13, and Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 13 October 1866, 9 January 1867; of his polygamy, see Dan

commenting that “any thing that we may say in our columns which may in any way refer to His Majesty, we hope will always be characterized by that high respect, which his very exalted position demands,” they offered these strong criticisms in public newspapers which were read by many people.<sup>79</sup> In a culture where causing anyone to lose face is frowned upon, public criticism of the king is a serious matter. The missionaries did so repeatedly, congratulating themselves that they were “faithful to tell him of his sins.”<sup>80</sup>

The missionaries treated other high Siamese officials in similar ways. Once, when Bradley was preaching to an audience about idolatry, the Second King (Mongkut’s brother) passed by the building, and Bradley used him as an illustration: “I took occasion to show that the sins of these leaders of the people are fearfully great and that the people who follow them or obey them in their commands to worship idols will surely perish with them unless they repent.”<sup>81</sup>

The missionaries also slighted the king (and the Siamese government) by behaving as if Siamese officials had no authority over them. When Bradley was considering a trip up-country on an evangelistic tour, a merchant advised him to apply to the government for a travel permit, but he considered such an action beneath him: “I should consider it degrading to the cause of my Redeemer to ask permission of Kings or Princes to preach the Gospel among their people. And therefore I would by no means do

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Bradley, *Journals*, 24 November 1866; of the entertainment he offered, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 18 May 1854; and of his brother’s behaviour, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 14 February 1866.

79. *Bangkok Recorder*, 15 November 1865, 1.21.205 (mistakenly numbered 20).

80. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 18 May 1854.

81. *Ibid.*, 18 October 1857.

it.”<sup>82</sup> The missionaries also refused to follow Siamese customs in how to respectfully approach royalty, as “such was not the American custom, and therefore [we] should not comply with it.”<sup>83</sup>

Nantachai Mejudhon points out that “such denigration of the king would be unthinkable to a Thai and no greater cultural sin could be committed by an American in Thailand than to insult or even speak to the king in any but the most respectful terms.”<sup>84</sup> While we occasionally hear of Mongkut losing his patience with the missionaries’ criticisms, the freedom of speech he gave the missionaries and the restraint he showed while receiving regular criticism is impressive.<sup>85</sup>

### ***Cultural Insensitivity***

The missionaries also broke the cultural norms of the Siamese. At times this was simply from ignorance, as when Bradley and his son went fishing in front of a Buddhist temple—the missionaries knew that killing on temple grounds was forbidden, but they were unaware that this included the waters in front of the temple.<sup>86</sup> The editor of Bradley’s journals commented after recounting how Bradley touched a lady on her head

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82. Ibid., 25 January 1836.

83. Ibid., 8 January 1836.

84. Nantachai Mejudhon, “Meekness,” 77. Public criticism of the monarchy can still land you in prison in Thailand under the *lèse majesté* laws (see chapter 1, footnote 25).

85. Lord, *Mo Bradley*, 179.

86. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 19 March 1867.

(a grave cultural faux pas) that “this incident will indicate how early missionaries unwittingly committed grave indignities for lack of knowledge of the customs.”<sup>87</sup>

Despite the high value Siamese people place on keeping face, and not being challenged in public, the missionaries were publicly confrontational with sins or errors, both with the Siamese leaders as we saw in the earlier section, and with common people. Dr. Bradley expressed his reasoning for being firm with the Siamese when he explained that “it seems to me there is no people on the face of the whole earth who so much needs to have the terrors of the Divine law preached to them by sons of thunder as the Siamese for they are exceedingly self righteous and deeply and strongly entrenched in this refuge of lies.”<sup>88</sup> And so, when a new Christian (Buah) was hesitant to accept baptism, Bradley used a church service to explain “the sin of refusing to pledge oneself to church by baptism.” He then asked whether Buah would come forward, and when he declined, Bradley “felt constrained to condemn [the reasons he gave] publicly.” Bradley concludes, “Buah quietly left the room as [*sic*] was not seen about the premises again that day.”<sup>89</sup> It is unclear whether Bradley and the other missionaries understood how much this public shaming of a person went against Siamese culture, or how deeply the young Christian would have been hurt.

At other times, the missionaries knew the customs of the people, but were convinced that Siamese traditions were wrong and should be challenged. When Dr. Bradley first met Mongkut (when he was a monk), he fully understood that there were

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87. Feltus, *Journal of Bradley*, 21. The woman reacted “as though she had been assailed by an assassin.”

88. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 19 November 1854.

89. All the quotations about Buah in this paragraph come from *ibid.*, 3 October 1841.

rules about Buddhist monks being in the presence of women, but “thought it would be well to make the experiment of violating one of their foolish and pernicious customs touching this matter and give one of the most influential men in the Kingdom to understand that neither myself nor American gentlemen generally regard females as our inferiors.”<sup>90</sup> On other occasions, Bradley and his wife pointedly walk arm in arm, commenting that such an action is “strangely diverse from Siamese custom.”<sup>91</sup>

At times this disregard for Siamese custom caused the missionaries to cause the Siamese to do things that would have been distressing for them. Siamese culture believes that the head is the most honorable part of the body, that the feet are the least, and that it is therefore highly degrading for your head to pass under someone else’s feet. Bradley knew this custom, but he refused a request to move off a bridge to let Buddhist monks pass underneath it without going under his feet.<sup>92</sup> When, for the same reasons, his teacher had qualms about sitting in a lower level of Bradley’s house, Bradley treated him to “a little reasoning with a spice of ridicule.”<sup>93</sup>

After more years on the field, Bradley reconsidered his position, and in 1855 when considering whether to use the lower level of a building for a place of preaching, he commented that not wanting your head to be under someone’s feet

is a superstition which ought to be broken down but I think it is not my duty to say to them that if they would hear me preach they must come to me under my family floor. For the present I think I should conform myself

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90. Ibid., 7 April 1836.

91. Ibid., 8 January 1836.

92. Ibid., 31 August 1851.

93. Ibid., 9 July 1842.

somewhat to these foolish and slavish notions that I may get more of them to hear me preach the liberty of the gospel of Christ.<sup>94</sup>

This decision to follow a custom (without agreeing with it) in order to gain a hearing for the gospel demonstrated a maturity that was conspicuously absent in other circumstances. There are other examples of westerners who followed Siamese customs “caring to display not so much the love of wisdom as the wisdom of love,” but they are unfortunately rare.<sup>95</sup>

At times the missionaries seem to act against Siamese customs, not from ignorance, or from a conviction that the customs are bad, but simply from bad manners.<sup>96</sup> The *Siam Repository* of 1869 explained that “the missionary goes where he is not wanted. His work is aggressive,” and at times missionaries acted as if the importance of their work justified rudeness.<sup>97</sup> Bradley relates a story where he approached a group of priests who were not interested in listening to him, but “determined I would speak on whether they would hear or whether they would forbear and leave them some mighty truths to think upon after I should leave them.” He then talked “twenty minutes or more in their hearing,” before leaving his “disrespectful auditors.”<sup>98</sup> Whether you are in America or in Siam, this is rude. On other occasions, Bradley sarcastically pokes fun at someone who

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94. Ibid., 10 June 1855.

95. Leonowens, *English Governess*, 188.

96. Bristowe describes Bradley’s criticisms of the king as being of a “singularly ill-bred manner.” *Louis and the King*, 19. See also Teerawat Bhumichitr, *Roi du Siam*, 174.

97. *Siam Repository*, 1869, 1:101. In 1835, Bradley expressed his view that “it is far better for us to be in a storm than in a calm. I am an advocate for courageous aggressions against the powers of darkness in this nation.” Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 6 September 1835.

98. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 1 March 1863.

disagrees with him and makes his audience laugh at the person.<sup>99</sup> W. S. Bristowe commented on some of the other early missionary methods:

St. Matthew's "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" was ruthlessly pursued. The King's wives and the Buddhist priests in their temples were tactlessly pursued with tracts and arguments, medical treatment for the sick was bartered for attendance at Christian teaching classes, and children were paid wages to accept education in English and Christianity. The taste and wisdom of such efforts may be thought somewhat dubious, and the results were certainly disappointing.<sup>100</sup>

### **Summary**

The early missionaries to Siam were dedicated people who were convinced of the truth of the gospel, and determined to share it with the Siamese people for their good. However, they had some characteristics, and used some tactics, which alienated their audience and worked against the Siamese converting to Christianity. We have seen in this chapter that the missionaries had an attitude of superiority to the Siamese which made the Christians treat their audience with arrogance and disdain. The missionaries also possessed a rationalistic world view which caused them to minimize the role of spiritual forces in Siam. An unwillingness to work with other Christians, and the divisions between Catholics and Protestants, between the different mission organizations, and within missions also characterized their efforts to convert the Siamese. The missionaries practiced an antagonistic style of evangelism, criticizing two of the most respected institutions in Siam, Buddhism and the monarch, as they worked among the Siamese. Finally, the missionaries exhibited cultural insensitivity, at times due to ignorance, at

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99. Ibid., 15 May 1859.

100. Bristowe, *Louis and the King*, 18.

times from conviction, and at times from bad manners. While the entire blame for the failure of their efforts for the conversion of the Siamese should not be placed on missionary shoulders, they bear responsibility for things that they could have done differently.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### EVALUATION: FACTORS OUTSIDE MISSIONARY RESPONSIBILITY

#### Introduction

Sir John Bowring summarized the results of missionary efforts from his perspective in 1857:

As far as the Siamese are concerned, the labours alike of Catholics and Protestants for their conversion have been almost or altogether fruitless. ... The number of professing Catholic Christians is far less than in the remotest days of missionary exertions; and the augmented numbers, unwearied zeal, and undoubted merits of those who represent the American Missions have produced no visible effect.<sup>1</sup>

Given such a lack of conversions, it is natural to ask what went wrong, as Bowring proceeded to do:

it is impossible to close one's eyes to the sad—the very sad, but most undoubted fact, that, [in] spite of sacrifices the most heroic, zeal the most devoted, liberality the most unbounded, little, almost nothing, has been done. I ask not the discontinuance of missionary labours, but the calm consideration of the causes of failure—of the incredibly small returns for immensely great exertions.<sup>2</sup>

It is to a calm consideration of the failure of early missionary efforts for the conversion of the Siamese that the previous chapter and this one attempt. This chapter will look at some of the important factors outside of the control of the missionaries which influenced the

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1. Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 1:336.

2. Ibid., 1:378.

lack of results, including both characteristics of the setting they worked in, and the people with whom they worked.

## **Setting**

### ***Physical Setting***

Part of the challenge of the early missions to Siam was found in their external circumstances, such as the climate, the health of the missionaries, the difficult language, and inadequate resources. Many of these factors were shared with other mission fields, some of which saw conversions in larger numbers than Siam, but it is nonetheless important to acknowledge the difficulties inherent in the missionary task in Siam.

Living conditions in nineteenth-century Siam were different from what the missionaries were used to, and therefore difficult for them to adapt to. Dr. Bradley, on his first Sunday in Bangkok, looked around in despair, concluding that “my missionary home seemed for a little time too horrible to endure.”<sup>3</sup> William Dean, who lived in Siam for many years, expressed his feelings about the country:

I would not exchange my place and privilege for any place or pleasure I can conceive this side of heaven. Yes, though the heathen are impure in person, in thought, in language and action: though the sky is hot, and the earth full of ants, and lizards, and scorpions, and all the plagues of Egypt, except that the river is not turned into blood, though it is full of dead bodies, and receives the sewerage of the city, and then fills our wash-basins and tea-pots, except as we substitute the rains of heaven: — yes, in the absence of home comforts and Christian society, so long as I can be useful, let me stay here.<sup>4</sup>

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3. *Bangkok Calendar*, 1866, 94.

4. *Missionary Magazine*, July 1866, 277.

Dean was content to be in Siam because he was convinced that it was where God wanted him, but the physical setting made life difficult for all the early missionaries to Siam.

### ***Health***

Perhaps partly because of these living conditions, health was a frequent problem for the early missionaries. Many died, often at the end of long illnesses, and the living frequently had to care for suffering friends and family.<sup>5</sup> Trips for health reasons were frequently taken, either to the mouth of the river, to other places in Siam, or to Singapore.<sup>6</sup> Those who lived also struggled with their own health, and reading missionary journals highlights just how much time was spent being sick. Looking back at his adjustment to life in Siam, Dr. Bradley refers to the “four years’ siege of bowel derangement I had in acclimating.”<sup>7</sup> These health problems were not necessarily something that the missionaries got over once they had adjusted to life in Siam, and in 1867, Dr. Bradley was still talking about his “feeble digestion and bowel derangement.”<sup>8</sup> Later in the same year he mentioned that “for the last twelve months I have scarcely had any relish for my meals. I have eaten as it were meals from principle.”<sup>9</sup> Bradley was not unique in his struggles with poor health, and health problems were also an obstacle to

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5. Surviving missionaries also had to take care of dependant children. See Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 23 March 1846.

6. These were frequently lengthy trips—the *Missionary Magazine* of July 1844 reports the return of the Davenports after having been away for half a year on account of poor health (204).

7. *Bangkok Calendar*, 1870, 106. His early journal entries support this claim, with frequent references to his intestinal problems. See Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 28 June 1836.

8. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 21 February 1867.

9. *Ibid.*, 2 March 1867.

productive missionary work for many others in the early years of Protestant missions to Siam.

### *Language*

Once the early missionaries had navigated their surroundings and health problems, they were faced with the language. A mission report from 1837 mentions the difficulty of learning Siamese:

The acquisition of the Chinese and Siamese languages, so as to speak or write either with purity or freedom, is a herculean work, and demands constant, long, and patient application to accomplish it. ... So many reports have been made of missionaries, but six months or one year or two years in the field, being able to preach the blessed gospel and translate the Bible in the language of the heathen about them, that it has become a general impression that the barriers erected by the confusion of languages are nearly demolished, and that a newly arrived missionary has little else to do but to go forth and talk and preach to the people with animating hopes that he will be understood and believed. Such an impression is exceedingly wide from the truth.<sup>10</sup>

While some missionaries eventually acquired the language at a high level, it took them “many years of unyielding exertion,” and others were never able to do so.<sup>11</sup>

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10. *Missionary Herald*, November 1838, 412. In a letter written in 1832, Eliza Jones reported her understanding that “the Siamese language is said to be the easiest of acquisition in India, and if my health permits, I shall hope to learn it faster than I have the Burman.” Jones, *Memoir*, 62.

11. The phrase comes from a letter from Charles Robinson dated 30 July 1835, printed in the *Missionary Herald*, May 1836, 178. J. T. Jones was said to have been “much more eloquent in Siamese than in English; often, to the astonishment of his friends who had heard him preach in both,” but he appears to have been a rarity. *Missionary Magazine*, January 1853, 6; Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 205. When Sir John Bowring asked Mongkut which of the foreigners spoke the best Siamese, his first mention was a non-missionary (Captain Joseph), before mentioning that some of the American missionaries also spoke it very well. Bowring, *Kingdom and People*, 2:273.

## **Resources**

Inadequate resources also plagued the early years of the missions to Siam, and there were often insufficient funds to carry out the tasks the missionaries wanted to do.<sup>12</sup> Not having enough workers was also a problem, as the *Missionary Magazine* made clear in 1842:

It is difficult to tell how much the mission suffers for the want of more laborers to engage directly in preaching, and teaching from house to house, and in spreading the truth in all corners of the land. Tracts lie useless on our hands, because we have not laborers to distribute them; we could publish with no more labor and trouble and but little additional expense three times the number we do. Our religious services are attended by but few, because there is none to invite them to come in. In short, all we can do in our present circumstances, can scarcely be expected to produce any important results; and we often feel that what has been done, and what is now going on, is almost useless, because the plans are not carried out with sufficient energy to render them successful.<sup>13</sup>

Missionaries repeatedly begged for reinforcements, usually without success. When people volunteered to serve, they were sometimes unable to get to Siam because of the financial difficulties of the missions.<sup>14</sup> While a list of missionaries serving in Siam in the period covered by this thesis looks impressive (see Appendices A and B), it really was a very small group of people that lived there long enough to do any good work—especially

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12. In January 1840, Bradley noted that the printing press had been shut down because of lack of funds, and it remained closed for at least eight months. *Journals*, 21/22 January 1840, 10 October 1840.

13. *Missionary Magazine*, July 1842, 193. Writing several years later Josiah Goddard put it more bluntly: “So far as man is concerned,—if you can send us help, we swim,—if not, we sink. I see no reason whatever, but that with a proper supply of laborers this may be a prosperous mission; but we must not tempt God, by asking blessings without using the appointed means.” *Missionary Magazine*, May 1846, 116. Still later, William Ashmore commented that “we are sadly crippled by the fewness of our number.” *Missionary Magazine*, October 1853, 419.

14. *Missionary Magazine*, November 1845, 296–297; February 1846, 52. In 1840, Bradley mentions that several missionaries were stranded at Singapore because the mission did not have enough funds to guarantee their passage the rest of the way. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 26 February 1840.

when it is remembered that many of the missionaries were working with the Chinese in Siam, and not the Siamese.<sup>15</sup>

The missionaries that were on the field were also overcommitted. Dr. Bradley commented in 1843, “I believe I have too many things in my hand at once to do any thing well,” and it is hard to disagree with him.<sup>16</sup> The missionaries were involved in teaching (English and science), medicine, printing, and diplomacy. Several times, it is noted how much time such activities take from “more direct missionary work,” yet they all seemed important.<sup>17</sup> In later years, several of the missionaries decided to go either partially, or completely, into secular business to support themselves, taking more time from evangelistic efforts.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Intertwining of Culture and Religion**

Another part of the setting in which the early missionaries worked was the colonial context.<sup>19</sup> Most of the Protestant missionaries in Siam in this period were from

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15. Summarizing the work of Baptist missionaries to Siam in 1847, the *Missionary Magazine* listed the missionaries to Siam since the mission was started by J. T. Jones in 1833. They included Corodon Slafter (arrived 1839, died in 1841), Robert Davenport (arrived 1836, returned 1845), and John Chandler (in charge of the type foundry). “Others sent to Siam, have been connected with the Chinese department.” *Missionary Magazine*, January 1847, 14.

16. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 10 June 1843.

17. Ibid., 29 April 1865, 1 December 1866.

18. Mr. Chandler separated from the Baptist mission in 1856, desiring to support himself by printing. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 29 August 1856. Dr. Bradley was self-supporting for most of his years with the AMA, mostly through his printing work, although also through some work he did as a linguist. Other missionaries reported in this time that Bradley’s family “are good and laborious missionaries, but are much hampered in their work by being compelled to devise means for their self-support.” Letter from Samuel Smith of 16 October 1860, as printed in the *Missionary Magazine*, March 1861, 67; see also Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 30 August 1858.

19. Much has been written about Christianity’s relationship to colonialism. Dana Robert argues that the relationship is not as simple as it is often portrayed, and that instead of missionaries being tools of

America, at least in part because Siam resisted British foreigners due to fears that they had imperialist motives. The Americans were more accepted because there were less fears that they were looking for colonial conquests.<sup>20</sup>

While Christianity's relationship to colonialism was not a major question for the missions in Siam of this period, Christianity's relationship to civilization was, and there were debates on whether civilization was intended to lead people to Christianity, or whether Christianity was supposed to lead people to civilization.<sup>21</sup> In some ways it is easy to make too much of this question, for in the nineteenth century, culture and religion were intertwined to such an extent that while one could ask questions of which precedes the other, they almost always came together.

This is true in Siamese culture as well as in the West. In Siam, Buddhism was an integral part of Siamese life. A letter signed by three of the Presbyterian missionaries in 1849 spoke to this:

Buddhism has here one of its strong holds. Its teachings are inculcated among the first lessons of infancy. It is mingled with all the literature of the country, receives the sanction and the powerful influence of government, is intertwined with all the civil, and social relations of the people and even enters largely into all their amusements.<sup>22</sup>

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colonialism, or blindly using colonialism, they often tried to “convert colonialism,” and transform it as they used it. Dana L. Robert, ed., *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706–1914* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 4–5.

20. William Buell wrote home in 1840 explaining that “I am happy to state that Americans are not confounded with the English. The former stand much higher with [the] Siamese than the latter.” Letter of 10 September 1840, *Siam Letters*, 1:2.

21. See Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 206–211; *Missionary Magazine*, April 1849, 104–105. For the idea that Christianity leads to civilization, see *Missionary Magazine*, April 1849, 104; *Missionary Magazine*, August 1869, 324. For civilization coming before Christianity, see *Siam Repository*, 1869, 1:237; the letter of Daniel McGilvary of 1 March 1869 in *Siam Letters*, 3:94.

22. Letter of Stephen Mattoon (signed jointly by Mattoon, Stephen Bush, and Samuel House) of 1 October 1849, in *Siam Letters*, 2:36.

Stephen Bush likewise lamented that “Buddhism in Siam ... is interwoven with every act and ceremony of the people, whether political, civil, or social.”<sup>23</sup>

Just as Buddhism and Siamese culture were tightly connected, “the American missionary seemed to have a view that Christianity and Western civilization are interwoven.”<sup>24</sup> Indeed, some of the writing in the missionary magazines explicitly identified the two: “We know perfectly well now that what we call civilization is really another word for Christianity in some shape or other. Where is there at this moment civilization upon the earth where there is not Christianity, and where Christianity has not been?”<sup>25</sup> Other articles warned against such a close identification, but the tremendous interweaving of Christianity and civilization was still assumed.<sup>26</sup>

The Siamese did not equate civilization and Christianity, and they were perfectly willing to accept parts of the western culture such as science, language, and customs, while rejecting the western religion.<sup>27</sup> Arthur Judson Brown, writing in the early twentieth century, commented that the Siamese attempted to “fasten the fruits of

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23. Letter of Stephen Bush, 19 April 1851, *Siam Letters*, 2:56.

24. Maen Pongudom, “Missionary Proclamation,” 380; Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 157.

25. *Missionary Magazine*, March 1864, 87–88.

26. “We are to keep in mind that the telegraph lines and railroads and steamboats do not save souls. Nothing but the gospel preached, the gospel believed and obeyed, can save men. God save us from the delusion that all is well while the world is being civilized, since the most civilized nation may be as far from heaven as the most barbarous tribe, or the most enlightened civilian as the most darkened savage.” Letter from William Dean of 17 April 1866, printed in the *Missionary Magazine*, September 1866, 368.

27. Popp argues against the common perception of westerners actively bringing knowledge and the Siamese passively accepting it. “Introduction of Western Science,” 154. Mongkut is an example of the Siamese actively seeking and pursuing the knowledge of the West. William Bradley also points out that the American missionaries were not the first to bring western knowledge to Siam, pointing to experiences under King Narai. “Mongkut and Caswell,” 30.



Christian civilization on to the dead tree of a Buddhist nation.”<sup>28</sup> As we have seen, Mongkut was a leader in this; Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit summarize:

Mongkut’s entourage and other groups in the elite were fascinated by the westerners’ idea of material ‘progress,’ but appalled by Christianity, and irritated by the westerners’ claim that their material and moral progress were interrelated. The strategy of Mongkut’s group was to split the material from the moral.<sup>29</sup>

The missionaries failed to understand this selective appropriation of the package they brought, and “never quite realized that interest in Western civilization did not imply interest in Christianity.”<sup>30</sup> Indeed, they felt that the Siamese interest in western science and language would lead to an understanding and acceptance of Christianity, marvelling at “how foolish it is for any one to suppose that the English language can be learned without learning the religion of Jesus at the same time. ... It is so full of Christianity that to know the one is to know the other.”<sup>31</sup>

While the Siamese were able to split the material and the moral, the missionaries were not able to separate their religion from their culture. Therefore, though Mongkut attempted to be a Siamese Buddhist who had appropriated certain aspects of western culture, the missionaries seem unable to visualize a Siamese Christian who had not accepted western culture—they required total conversion, including a conversion of cultural traits.

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28. Brown, “Siam,” 172. See also *Siam Repository*, 1869, 1:148.

29. Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *History of Thailand*, 41.

30. Popp, “Introduction of Western Science,” 149.

31. Mrs. G. B. McFarland in George McFarland, *Historical Sketch*, 222. See also: “We think it a good omen that so many of the Siamese are becoming sensible of the value of the mechanical and scientific improvements of Christian nations. Their attachment to their old superstitions is almost invariably weakened by the light they thus receive.” *Missionary Magazine*, March 1848, 77.

For the missionaries, a truly converted Siamese Christian should act, look, and speak much as a western Christian would. Mary Lovina Cort, a nineteenth-century missionary in Siam, writes of how the early missionaries preached “a gospel of dress,” and it was assumed that a Siamese Christian would need to clothe themselves differently than a Siamese Buddhist.<sup>32</sup> When a woman wanted to join the church in 1858, one of the missionary women expressed her “desire that she should change the style of her dress from that which the Siamese females are accustomed to wear, as that is very indelicate and improper for a Christian woman.”<sup>33</sup> Mrs. Bradley felt that “the change would make her [the Siamese convert] appear very singular among and odd among her own people and would no doubt bring down upon her, oftentimes, derision and ridicule,” but she saw no other option.<sup>34</sup> Dan Bradley’s missionary journal also tells of a missionary exercising church discipline on a Siamese man who took his jacket off during a service; though it was customary for Siamese men in the period to go without shirts, this man was publicly expelled from the service.<sup>35</sup>

Citing these examples is not meant to imply that every aspect of Siamese culture was good, and that no part of it should have been transformed by the introduction of Christianity. However, missionaries sometimes imposed their cultural norms on the Siamese, assuming them to be part of Christianity. There were occasional voices

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32. “When foreigners first arrive in Siam they are shocked almost beyond endurance at the nudity of the people; and although they constantly preach a gospel of dress, their influence in this respect seems less apparent than in almost any other. Not until Siam is clothed need she expect a place among respectable civilized nations.” Cort, *Heart of Farther India*, 170.

33. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 27 January 1858.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., 14 September 1862.

suggesting that this was not good, but for the most part this was just accepted—in practice if not in theory.<sup>36</sup> At times, the missionaries seem to have gotten distracted from their efforts at sharing the gospel with the Siamese by their attempts to educate them about proper attire, the error of making class distinctions, the evils of slavery, or the foolishness of polygamy.<sup>37</sup>

Since so much of Siamese culture was different from western culture, this bundling of culture and religion made conversion hard. William Dean commented in 1850 that members of the church who had fallen away

all find difficulties in living a Christian life, unknown to those who live in a Christian land. The whole frame-work of society, the usages of life, the mode of transacting business, are all hostile to a life of obedience to the divine command. While this is the course of the multitude, it is no easy matter for one here and there, of little faith and limited knowledge, without influence or the means of a livelihood, to reverse the course and stem the torrent.<sup>38</sup>

Because of the ways Siamese culture made it difficult to live as the missionaries thought a Christian should live, some missionaries predicted that Christianity needed to completely change the Siamese society, explaining that it “must change their government especially, completely changing society in its civil, social and domestic.”<sup>39</sup> One can

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36. “It has been complained however that Europeans are too forward in urging the Siamese and other Oriental nations to adopt their customs, and this is no doubt to some extent true. To attempt to introduce European customs as a whole into Siam, or any other eastern nation would neither be wise nor desirable ...” *Bangkok Recorder*, 1 April 1865, 1.6.53–54.

37. On clothes, see Cort, *Heart of Farther India*, 170; Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 14 September 1862. On class distinctions, see *Bangkok Recorder*, 18 October 1866, 2.41. On slavery, see Nguyen-Van-Khoi, “Education in Thailand,” 275. On polygamy, see *Bangkok Recorder*, 18 October 1866, 2.41; Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 25 January 1856, 24 November 1866; and Manich Jumsai, *Great Friendship*, 55.

38. Letter from William Dean of 6 June 1850, printed in the *Missionary Magazine*, January 1851, 41–42.

39. Teerawat Bhumichitr, *Roi du Siam*, 189 (translation mine), quoting an ABCFM Station Letter of 1 January 1842.

understand why there might be some suspicion towards Christianity on behalf of those in authority after statements such as this, and the well publicized Taiping Rebellion in China in the 1840s and 1850s would reinforce the connection in Asian minds between Christianity and anti-government sentiments.<sup>40</sup>

### **Characteristics of the Siamese**

The missionaries were not the only ones who felt, thought, and acted in ways that hindered the diffusion of the gospel in Siam. There were internal characteristics of the Siamese that played a role in their reluctance to convert to Christianity, including cultural differences, intellectual difficulties, and their lack of a sense of need.

### ***Cultural Differences***

There were cultural differences between Siam and America that should have influenced the presentation of the gospel, and some of the difficulty the early missionaries had in their communication with the Siamese involved problems with linguistic and conceptual categories. Siamese Buddhism lacks some of the concepts that the missionaries considered basic, such as substitutionary atonement (which runs counter to karma), a transcendent God, or creation.<sup>41</sup> While missionaries at times struggled with the linguistic problems (e.g., which Siamese word do you use for God?), they seem not to

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40. See Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

41. For more on these conceptual difficulties, see Nantachai Medjudhon, "Meekness," 88–91, and *Missionary Herald*, January 1848, 16. For the difficulty of communicating the concept of God to Siamese of the period, see Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 351; for the foreignness of the concept of a creator God, see *Missionary Herald*, January 1848, 15, and Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 9 January 1851, 5 April 1868.

have taken the conceptual problem as seriously as they should have.<sup>42</sup> Even when language existed for terms, there could be conceptual difficulties, as the missionaries found when they used the Siamese word for ‘sin’ and found that their listeners meant by it something different than the missionaries.<sup>43</sup>

But even had the linguistic and conceptual difficulties been overcome, the cultural differences would have affected how the message was heard. The values of a Siamese and the values of an American caused them to interpret the same stories differently. One of the early publishing projects the missionaries did was a series of books on Old Testament history, highlighting some of the foundational stories of the Bible. However, because of the Buddhist emphasis on non-violence, control of emotions, and non-confrontation, stories such as Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, the Old Testament sacrificial system, the wars of conquest, and prophetic denouncements of sin would have been barriers to the Siamese respecting the religion. Henry Alabaster points this out when he states that an educated Siamese “cannot understand a God with the attributes and qualities of men, a God who loves and hates and shows anger, a Deity who, whether described to him by Christian Missionaries, or by Mahometans or Brahmins or Jews, falls below his standard of even an ordinary good man.”<sup>44</sup>

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42. For some of the linguistic difficulties, see a letter from Charles Robinson dated 30 July 1835, printed in the *Missionary Herald*, May 1836, 177. Robinson complains that “for hope, faith, repentance, holiness, gratitude, benevolence, heaven, I cannot find any appropriate terms, in their language, especially for the five last mentioned.” Ibid., 178.

43. Several times the missionaries discovered that the Siamese were only considering the killing of animals as sin. See Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 27 December 1840 and 26 August 1867.

44. Alabaster, *Wheel of the Law*, 18.

Reading the missionary accounts, it seems that little or no effort was made to contextualize the gospel. Maen Pongudom made comparisons between the early missionaries to Siam and the apologists of the early church and concluded that “not a single missionary had really been criticized of having ‘Siamized’ or ‘Buddhistized’ Christianity as the early Church apologists were of having ‘Hellenized’ it.”<sup>45</sup> The message of the missionaries was dressed in western clothes, and the conceptual, linguistic, and emotive framework of the Siamese made it difficult for them to recognize the value of it.

### ***Intellectual Difficulties***

The Siamese also had intellectual difficulties with the message that the missionaries brought, and the missionaries do not seem to have responded to these real questions in a satisfactory manner.<sup>46</sup> The type of questions asked by the Siamese are expressed most clearly in Thiphakorawong’s book *Nangsue Sadaeng Kitchanukit*, parts of which make up the first part of Henry Alabaster’s *Wheel of the Law*, and in an ongoing debate in the *Bangkok Recorder*.<sup>47</sup>

In these places, the Siamese raise questions about the truth of the biblical record. The missionaries had criticized Buddhism for being irrational, full of non-scientific fables

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45. Maen Pongudom, “Missionary Proclamation,” 163. Compare Robert Montgomery’s comment that “to be received by large numbers of people, the new religion must lose its image in the consciousness of members of the receiving society of being foreign *only*.” Montgomery, *Lopsided Spread*, 49.

46. Maen Pongudom comments that “the missionaries were weak in their missionary proclamation to the ‘mind’.” “Missionary Proclamation,” 295.

47. The debate in the *Bangkok Recorder* continued over many issues (see 1 November 1865 [1.20] to 24 May 1866 [2.20]). There is some disagreement about who the “Buddhist Champion” was in the debate. For more information, see chapter 3, footnote 91.

and stories that were inconsistent with modern knowledge. When given the opportunity, the Buddhists turned the tables on the missionaries as they asked about the creation story, a 6,000 year old earth, the details of Noah's flood, and as they pointed out that the Genesis description of the rainbow was unscientific and unreasonable.<sup>48</sup> After listing such things, Mongkut comments that "these remarks are only given as specimens (of the darkness of the Bible) at the beginning of the book."<sup>49</sup> In the same article, he mentions that what was "published about the Bible being the source of great light, producing illustrious wisdom and knowledge, sounds strangely to the ear. Are they words written in earnest or in sport? Are they for adults or are they designed only for children to hear?"<sup>50</sup> The missionary responded and "labored to show him that the bible uses popular language and scarcely ever employs scientific [sic] terms," without realizing that the same arguments could be used for the Buddhist scriptures that he had criticized.<sup>51</sup>

The missionary response in this case demonstrates that different reasoning was used for Buddhism and Christianity. Buddhism was frequently criticized by the westerners for things which would also apply to Christianity, such as miraculous elements in the scriptures, or pre-scientific views of the world. In a discussion with a Buddhist, Dr. Bradley criticized the Buddha for not responding to suffering though he could, without realizing that the problem of evil is a difficulty for Christians as well:

O is this, said I to him, the great God whom you adore and serve. One who will sleep over a world in misery when he might awake and save it. A god

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48. Thiphakorawong, *Kitchanukit*, 91–95; *Bangkok Recorder*, 18 January 1866, 2.2.

49. *Bangkok Recorder*, 18 January 1866, 2.2.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*, 3 May 1866, 2.17.

who is as listless to all without himself and lost in himself as the veriest Opium smoker? Will you love and trust in such a God as this? I thought I saw the way opened to mind for a powerful tract following somewhat this train of thought.<sup>52</sup>

Mongkut (among others) was not hesitant to turn such missionary apologetics against the missionaries and pointed out gaps in the missionaries' theology.<sup>53</sup> As a biographer of Mongkut writes, "ironically the missionaries did themselves a good deal of harm by inveighing against Buddhist 'superstition,' for the astute Abbot [Mongkut] was quick to point out that a great deal of their teaching—the very notion of divine revelation, for example—was highly susceptible to the charge of 'superstition.'"<sup>54</sup>

The Siamese asked other difficult questions of the missionaries, such as why there were so many religions in the world if Christianity was true, or why people should work to change situations if God ordained everything.<sup>55</sup> They questioned Christian doctrines that they did not agree with, such as original sin, the salvation of infants, and heaven and hell.<sup>56</sup> These are good questions, which the missionaries do not seem to have felt the full weight of.

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52. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 28 November 1846.

53. An example of Mongkut's criticism is the limited knowledge of geography assumed by the story of Jesus being able to see the entire world from a high mountain (Matthew 4.8). Feltus, *Journal of Caswell*, 31–32; William Bradley, "Mongkut and Caswell," 38. The Siamese also pointed out the inconsistency of criticizing idol worship in the Siamese but using statues of European kings, crucifixes, or statues of Mary. *Bangkok Recorder*, 15 November 1865, 1.21, 205.

54. Blofeld, *Maha Mongkut*, 34. Blofeld views Mongkut's attitude to the missionaries more negatively than most, referring to their "increasingly tiresome attempts to convert him," and stating that "the missionaries' attempts to convert him irked him exceedingly." *Ibid.*, 31, 32.

55. Thiphakorawong, *Kitchanukit*, 112, 115.

56. On the justice of original sin, and punishing people for something they did not do, see *ibid.*, 121. The same place asks about those who die as infants, and how they are judged. Thiphakorawong questions the binary nature of heaven and hell, arguing that Buddhism is more fair than Christianity, for even bad people do some good, and good people do some bad. *Ibid.*, 158–159. The writer of a letter to the *Bangkok*



The Siamese also had questions about the practice of the Christians they saw—which included both missionaries and merchants. The missionaries admitted that

one of the greatest obstacles to the spread of the gospel amongst the heathen is the ungodly example of those who have been brought up in Christian countries, and who unfortunately bear the Christian name. ... The Siamese have frequently said to me, ‘Why do you offer us your religion, whilst those in our midst, who have been brought up in that religion, are no better than we, and are even more abandoned? True, you missionaries do not engage in those vices to which the others are addicted, but religion is your business. You are paid for it.’<sup>57</sup>

The Siamese disputed the efficacy of Christianity, pointing out the disjunct between the message they heard from the missionaries and what they observed in the Christians they knew. One of the missionaries relating this objection mentioned that the Siamese found that “it was very difficult to believe the Christian religion—that we who profess it do not appear to show by our lives any more evidence of a living and present God with us than do some of the Siamese who are particularly pious.”<sup>58</sup> The missionaries were asked why baptized people still seem to be under the power of sin, why Christians do not receive answers to their prayers, and why contemporary Christians do not perform miracles like Jesus and his immediate followers.<sup>59</sup> The Siamese also wondered about the selective acceptance of biblical teachings by Christians, as was illustrated to a group of people who

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*Recorder* questions the missionary certainty of heaven and hell, asking “who among men has seen the one or the other that he should feel authorized to speak thus of either?” 26 April 1866, 2.16.

57. McDonald, *Siam*, 116–117. See also Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 3 January 1864, where Bradley explains that the wicked men sent from England to Siam are “but the broken and seared limbs of that great and flourishing tree [Christianity].”

58. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 12 November 1845.

59. On baptism, see Thiphakorawong, *Kitchanukit*, 122. On prayers, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 12 November 1845. On miracles, see *Bangkok Recorder*, 18 January 1866, 2.2.

“lay it down as the principle which our Saviour taught that if a man insist upon having something of ours we must give him that, and as much more.”<sup>60</sup>

A major intellectual problem for the Siamese was that those who convert to Christianity do not seem to be materially better off than those who do not. The missionaries frequently argued that “those who believe in the Christian religion, have great prosperity—their country flourishes, and light and knowledge abounds because of the power of that religion.”<sup>61</sup> The Siamese pushed back on this argument, pointing out that non-Christian westerners were better off than Christian non-westerners, and that there was little difference observed in the welfare of Christian and non-Christian within the same nationality.<sup>62</sup> The missionaries responded by claiming that Christianity elevates nations without necessarily elevating individuals because the light of Christianity diffuses and reflects back on the entire nation. The missionaries also claimed that many of the Christians in Siam were not true Christians, but were “only Christians in name and not in heart.”<sup>63</sup> The Siamese refused to accept this, pointing out that the native Christians in Siam (who are poor and social outcasts) followed Christianity better than most of the

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60. Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 21 September 1837, referring to the passage in Matthew 5.40–42, where Jesus says, “If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow” (KJV).

61. *Bangkok Recorder*, 1 November 1865, 1.20; 25 January 1866, 2.3.

62. *Ibid.*, 1 November 1865, 1.20.

63. *Ibid.*, 15 November 1865, 1.21.210; see also Thiphakorawong, *Kitchanukit*, 119. The missionaries seemed to be thinking of Catholic believers, a point they made explicit in a later issue. *Bangkok Recorder*, 16 December 1865, 1.23.229. It seems that there are so few Siamese Protestant Christians at this time that a Siamese Christian is assumed to be a Roman Catholic.

Europeans.<sup>64</sup> The defender of Buddhism also asked why other Christian nations do not prosper like England, France, and the USA.<sup>65</sup>

When the discussions between missionaries and Siamese are recorded, frequently the questions and objections of the Siamese are stronger than the answers of the proselytizers. The missionaries often do not seem to take the questions seriously, or they answer them badly, partly due to their cultural arrogance, as the westerners refused to treat the Siamese as capable of serious thought.<sup>66</sup> But another reason for the missionary mishandling of questions is that the evangelists were so convinced of the truth of their religion that they could not believe that people could fail to see it without being stubbornly and willfully disobedient.<sup>67</sup> Questions were seen not as honest objections, but merely as excuses to justify the refusal to accept the gospel from people who are attempting to evade the power of the Spirit. Therefore, when the missionaries encounter questions, they feel free to ridicule the person asking the question instead of offering a real answer, or to evade the question, acting as if it does not even merit a response.<sup>68</sup> In the articles in the *Bangkok Recorder*, Mongkut reproved them for this:

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64. *Bangkok Recorder*, 1 December 1865, 1.22.220.

65. Ibid.

66. The *Siam Repository* dismisses Thiphakorawong's *Nangsue Sadaeng Kitchanukit* by saying that "although the book evinces some thought and considerable knowledge, it is infantile when he attempts to grapple with the great truths of Christianity." *Siam Repository*, 1872, 4:257.

67. Thiphakorawong describes the missionaries getting angry upon his questioning of them, and criticizing him for being difficult to teach. *Kitchanukit*, 115, 122. The Siamese author of an article in the *Bangkok Recorder* needs to remind his Christian interlocutors that "in the endless discussions of those who hold to different religions there is no use of getting angry at all." 1 November 1865, 1.20.201.

68. For ridiculing the questioner, see Dan Bradley, *Journals*, 15 May 1859, and *Bangkok Recorder*, 5 April 1866, 2.13.

And to be honest, we must say that men according to the wisdom they have are necessarily incredulous of Christianity, and hence ask many questions about it for information, and if you do not answer their questions their doubts will not be solved. If instead of answering their questions directly to the point, you give evasive answers, lugging in irrelevant matter, you do thus cover up and hide the point in question.<sup>69</sup>

The Siamese had real questions for the missionaries, questions which were too often not answered to their satisfaction, and this too contributed to the lack of conversions among the Siamese.

### *Sense of Superiority*

One of the things mentioned in the previous chapters was that the missionaries had an air of superiority, and were convinced that everything about their culture was better than the culture of the Siamese. Ethnocentric arrogance was not a characteristic only of western nations, and in the interactions between Siam and the West, “arrogance met arrogance, and ethnocentrism met ethnocentrism.”<sup>70</sup> The Siamese pride in their nation and their accomplishments was noted by western observers. One early diplomat, John Crawford, marvelled that “this people, of half-naked and enslaved barbarians, have the hardihood to consider themselves the first nation in the world.”<sup>71</sup> He later elaborated:

The most distinctive features of the character of the Siamese, as well as the most unreasonable and unaccountable, is their national vanity. It is no exaggerated description of the excess of this folly, which is given by the Abbe Gervaise, when he says, that ‘they commonly despise other nations, and are persuaded that the greatest injustice in the world is done to them when their pre-eminence is disputed.’ ... The lowest peasant considers

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69. *Bangkok Recorder*, 26 April 1866, 2.16.

70. The phrase is taken from Lutz, *Opening China*, 88, who was referring to western and Chinese interactions.

71. Crawford, *Journal of an Embassy*, 88.

himself superior to the proudest and most elevated subject of any other country. They speak openly of themselves and their country as models of perfection; and the dress, manners, customs, features, and gait of strangers, are to them objects of ridicule.<sup>72</sup>

This attitude was unfathomable to the diplomat, who tried to think of reasons “to account for so great an excess of weakness and delusion,” eventually settling on Siam’s limited knowledge of the world outside of their region.<sup>73</sup> Whatever the reasons for this attitude, the contentment that the Siamese felt with their culture was one of the barriers to the Siamese becoming Christians, as noted by the *Missionary Magazine* in 1851: “the political, civil and social obstacles in the way of the Siamese becoming Christians, are very great. National pride, arrogance, and the abject servility of each to his superior, are intricate meshes which Satan has admirably adjusted for the effectual slavery of this people in moral degradation.”<sup>74</sup>

In an early letter from Mongkut to Mr. and Mrs. Eddy of New York, he points out that the missionaries should not expect the same success as they had in other places such as the Sandwich Islands, for “our country is not like those nation as here were longly some knowledge of morality & civility.”<sup>75</sup> Indeed, he moves on to point out that the Siamese culture, with its acknowledged faults, was not inferior to the culture that gave birth to Christianity.<sup>76</sup>

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72. Ibid., 345.

73. Ibid.

74. *Missionary Magazine*, April 1851, 101. The quotation ends positively: “But God’s great power is superior to all these, and on this we rely.”

75. Seni Pramoj and Kukrit Pramoj, *King of Siam Speaks*, 16.

76. Ibid.

### ***Lack of Felt Needs***

Perhaps partly due to their national pride, the Siamese did not see their need of a Saviour, and did not believe that they needed to change their religion.<sup>77</sup> As we noted above, they did not see the moral superiority of the westerners, and they reminded the missionaries of the high ethical standards of Buddhism. Although the missionaries attempted to bring to Siam a package of civilization and religion, the Siamese were quite content to take the elements of western culture that they wanted, and to leave the rest of the bundle.

This is something that the missionaries could not understand. William Dean struggles to express his shock after working in Siam:

I once thought, before seeing the heathen, that they were poor creatures that would gladly accept good things offered to them, at any time and in any form; but after seeing them, I find that their wretchedness exceeds all my former conceptions by a hundred fold, while they exhibit the most perfect indifference to all my offered sympathy and help, unless it is shown in the shape of money. Indeed they are not slow to show their sense of wrong if I interfere with their religious creed, and repel as an insult my efforts to teach them anything they do not know. They affect, if they do not really feel, a sort of contemptuous sympathy for me, in all things in which my religion, social habits, and costume differ from theirs. Their conceited superiority to us in all things is expressed by look and action, if not in words, and is measured by the greatness of their ignorance and superstition. ... He that supposes the heathen are ready to accept the first offers of the gospel, has yet to learn the rudiments of missionary service, and to go forth prepared for the most unexpected disappointments.<sup>78</sup>

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77. Montgomery examines the perceptions of the potential rewards of conversion (which the Siamese did not perceive) in *Lopsided Spread*, 123–128. The possibility that the rationalism of the missionaries made them unable to respond to one possible felt need of the Siamese (deliverance from spirits) was discussed in the previous chapter.

78. Letter of 10 June 1868 as printed in the *Missionary Magazine*, March 1869, 78–79.

Put simply, the Siamese saw the benefits of western learning, and they sought it out, and accepted it gratefully. They did not feel a need for western religion, and they refused it when it was offered to them.

This inability to see the need for conversion is not only something that was hard for the missionaries to understand, but is to some extent also behind this thesis. When the research was started, it was due to a desire to find out what went wrong, and based on the belief that if the missionaries had not messed something up, they would have had evangelistic success. The factors examined in this chapter, which were largely outside the control of the missionaries, should make us consider the possibility that even if the missionaries had done everything correctly, they may not have seen massive evangelistic success. The missionaries could have responded better to the characteristics of the Siamese—by answering their questions, by working harder to bridge conceptual difficulties, and by treating them as equals and not as inferiors. And work could have been done to show the people their need of Christ, but it is impossible to remove every doubt, and difficult, if not impossible, to manufacture a feeling of need for the gospel when it is lacking.<sup>79</sup> The early missionaries to the Siamese did not seem to realize that they even needed to attempt such things.

### **Summary**

So why did missions fail in their evangelistic efforts to convert the Siamese to Christianity? As has been seen, there were numerous considerations—some within the

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79. See John G. Stackhouse, *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 146–148.

control of the missionaries, and some outside of their responsibility. This chapter has focussed on factors external to the missionaries, looking at both the characteristics of the setting, and of the Siamese, that made the diffusion of Christianity in Siam unsuccessful.

The setting of missions in Siam included a physical setting unfamiliar to the missionaries, health problems, a difficult language, and inadequate resources. The context of missionary work also included an intertwining of culture and religion, in both Siam (with Buddhism and Siamese culture), and in the West (with Christianity and western culture).

The Siamese also had characteristics which made the missionary task difficult, including conceptual, linguistic, and affective differences from the West which hindered communication, real questions and intellectual difficulties which were not answered, and a sense of the superiority of their culture which made them unwilling to accept everything the missionaries brought. Perhaps most significantly, the Siamese did not see their need of the gospel.

These factors are interconnected, and there is not one factor which is the “real” reason for the failure of evangelistic efforts in Siam. However, together, these considerations, along with the characteristics looked at in the previous chapter (which were under missionary control), made the conversion of the Siamese unlikely.



**CHAPTER SIX**  
**SINCE MONGKUT: THE RESULTS OF MONGKUT'S**  
**INTERACTIONS WITH CHRISTIANITY**

**The Current Situation**

The current situation in Thailand seems very familiar to those who have studied Siam in the time of Mongkut. There is an appreciation for western things, such as music and movies, and Thai people continue to have a great desire to learn the English language. Yet despite a passion for western culture, there is still little interest in Christianity in Thailand. The missionary to Thailand in the twenty-first century, like the missionary to Siam in the nineteenth, does not meet active resistance or persecution, but polite, passive disinterest. It seems that the reaction of the country of Thailand has mirrored the reaction of Mongkut.<sup>1</sup>

In many ways, the current situation in North America also seems familiar to those who have studied Siam in the time of Mongkut.<sup>2</sup> While there are many differences between the cultures, there are also similarities. We have seen that evangelism in Siam was made difficult because of a number of things, such as the Siamese sense of

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1. It is tempting to say that Mongkut provided the template that the rest of the country has followed in regards to religious matters, but would be extremely difficult to demonstrate that there was a causal relationship between the two.

2. I am indebted to my father for conversations about this topic.

superiority, conceptual, linguistic, and affective issues which made communication difficult, intellectual difficulties with Christianity, and a lack of a sense of a need for Christianity. These are also things which make evangelism difficult in post-Christian societies, and apathy is a common response to the gospel in North America, as it was in mid-nineteenth-century Siam. Some of the similarities, and the lessons that can be learned from the missionary work in nineteenth-century Siam, will be considered in this chapter.

### **Application**

Contemporary efforts to minister to the Thai seem to have learned from the mistakes of the past, and while there are still missionaries who practice an aggressive, antagonistic style of evangelism, they are now in a minority.<sup>3</sup> For the most part, missionaries have learned to respect the Thai culture, and to accommodate to it, attempting to not cause unnecessary offence by the breaking of cultural norms. They have also chosen to be more careful in their comments about the monarchy and the government, realizing that their status as outsiders should cause them to be slow to share criticisms. The respect for Thai culture has also resulted in a less arrogant stance towards the Thai, and a greater attempt to contextualize the message of the gospel in a way that makes it understandable to them. With the arrival of charismatic missionaries (and a

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3. For recent missionary, Thai Christian, and Thai Buddhist responses to scenes from the work of the early missionaries, see Nantachai Mejudhon, "Meekness," 159–217. The comments in this paragraph are largely based on observations of the work of missionaries when I lived in Thailand from 1996 to 1998, and in 2005.

wider acknowledgement by Christians of the ongoing role of the supernatural), missionaries are more able to address Thai beliefs and fears about the spirit world.

This is not to say that contemporary missions to Thailand do everything well, or that they should not care about the history of early evangelistic efforts to Siam. Not only can this knowledge of the past help missionaries avoid the same mistakes, but it can also assist in understanding the present situation, for the early missionary work has influenced contemporary Thai attitudes to Christianity. While not everyone would go as far as the Thai pastor who wrote in 1997 that he believes “that the Christian church in Thailand is viewed as having violated the cultural and religious values of reciprocity and harmony by the use of aggressive methods and is now deprived of the opportunity to initiate dialogue about the gospel,” an understanding of the history of the early missions to Siam must influence how the gospel is presented in Thailand today.<sup>4</sup>

There are also important implications for ministry in situations outside of Siam. The current western world bears many similarities with Siam, and North American Christians could learn many things from the characteristics of the American missionaries to Siam which hindered the diffusion of Christianity to that culture. While it is good for Christians to be assured of the promises of God, like the early missionaries we need to watch that we do not become arrogant, or despise those who disagree with us.<sup>5</sup> Like the Christians in Siam, we need to be aware of how inter- and intra-group divisions in Christianity (as well as the failures of Christians to live Christianly) affect our witness,

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4. Nantachai Mejudhon, “Meekness,” 2–3.

5. See Stackhouse, *Humble Apologetics*, and James W. Sire, *A Little Primer on Humble Apologetics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006).

and wherever possible, attempt to work together with other believers. Cultural sensitivity is something that could be learned from the mistakes of the missionaries, and we should attempt to not close people's ears to our message by offending them through our ignorance, apathy, or rudeness. This would involve some flexibility, and a prioritizing of the needs of those around us, just as the missionaries to Siam needed to decide which things about their audience they wanted to try to change before they became Christians.

The missionaries encountered conceptual, linguistic, and affective differences that hindered the communication of the gospel, and North American evangelists need to be aware of these things as well. It used to be that evangelistic efforts could assume people would understand language used in Christian witness, but this is no longer the case. Words that Christians are familiar with, such as sin or God, need to be carefully used and clearly explained so that both sides of the conversation are understanding each other. At times we will need to start by listening to what people mean by a term, and then attempting to fill in the meaning with other concepts. Christians should also be aware that the emotional effect of stories may not be what they assume, and gaps in affective communication need to be anticipated. In the West there are also real questions about the messages that we communicate, and unlike the early missionaries to Siam, we need to deal honestly, openly, and humbly with the questions that people bring. Finally, like the Siamese, many people in North America quite simply do not feel the need of conversion. Those working in North America need to grapple with this lack of felt needs, and not assume that if the communication of the message is clear, people will automatically desire to be converted.

## **The Failure of Missions to Siam?**

This thesis has examined Mongkut's interactions with Christianity and the failure of early Protestant missionary efforts to convert the Siamese. Throughout, an attempt has been made to avoid general talk of the failure of missions in Siam, realizing with Richard Popp that "in spite of the small numbers of people who became Christians, the missionaries had a tremendous impact on the country."<sup>6</sup> The list of things that the early missionaries gave to Siam is long, and includes "printing, European literature, vaccination, modern medical practice, surgery, and many useful mechanical appliances."<sup>7</sup>

The missionaries of the nineteenth century acknowledged the supreme importance of the salvation of souls, and this was usually what they looked to when they evaluated the results of their work. However, they realized that this was not the only motive for missions. An editorial in the *Missionary Magazine* in 1849 proclaimed that even "if we leave entirely out of view the doctrine of a future life, there are still abundant reasons for missionary effort."<sup>8</sup> The author goes on to list physical suffering and social evils "among the heathen, which the prevalence of Christianity would remove."<sup>9</sup> The article further claims that "unevangelized nations are deficient in intellectual and moral culture," and points to the stimulus that Christianity would be to such nations, before concluding that

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6. Popp, "Introduction of Western Science," 148. See also Brown: "It should be noted, too, while the number of conversions has been comparatively small, the social results of missionary effort have been unusually large. ... Indeed it is probable that missionary teaching has been more influential in establishing the general policy and developing the public sentiment of the country than in many lands where the number of converts has been much larger." "Siam," 201–202.

7. *Siam and Laos, as Seen by Our American Missionaries* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1884), 6. See also Alabaster, *Wheel of the Law*, xxiii.

8. *Missionary Magazine*, April 1849, 101–102.

9. *Ibid.*

the office of the gospel is to bring the heathen nations to be, in these respects, such as Christian nations are; to put every people under heaven on the highest platform of civilization and religion, of art and science, of learning, prosperity and usefulness, of happiness and social advancement. ... In view of what has been advanced thus far, we believe it to be susceptible of demonstration that, leaving entirely out of the account the doctrine of the future life, there are, in regard to the present condition of the heathen, abundant reasons for missionary effort.<sup>10</sup>

Essentially, the editorial is arguing for a holistic ministry. People can suffer in many ways in addition to spiritually, and there is value in improving their conditions in all areas of their life.<sup>11</sup>

For this reason, early Protestant missionary efforts in Siam should not be viewed as a total failure. As George Bacon wrote in 1892, “even if the work of the missionaries should cease to-day, the results accomplished would be of immense and permanent value. They have introduced Christian science; they have made a beginning of Christian literature, by the translation of the Scriptures; they have awakened an insatiable appetite for Christian civilization; and the end is not yet.”<sup>12</sup> William Maxwell Wood also comments on a quarter century of missionary work without one convert:

But is it not presumptuous to say that nothing has been done—that God has neglected His own work? In these twenty-five years may not the foundation of great and permanent future changes have been laid? Indeed, the apparent results of missionary teaching and residence are far more encouraging than might be inferred from the absence of personal conversion.<sup>13</sup>

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10. Ibid., 102.

11. The early missionaries acted as if they believed this: “The circumstances convinced them [the early missionaries to Siam] that three-fold ministry would be the most workable one, namely, preaching, healing and teaching. Thai people before them were suffering spiritually, physically, and intellectually.” Maen Pongudom, “Missionary Proclamation,” 6, 110.

12. Bacon, *Land of the White Elephant*, 275–276.

13. William Maxwell Wood, *Fankwei; or, The San Jacinto in the Seas of India, China and Japan* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1859), 192–193.

When we discuss the success or failure of missions in Siam, we need to heed the reminder of Maen Pongudom, who comments that “it seems unfair to the missionaries in this field if their works were counted only by the number of Thai Christians in the Church. The influence of Christianity in the life of Thai society as a whole must be counted too.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Conclusion**

While the success of the missionary ministry to fields such as education, social welfare, politics, technology, and medicine needs to be acknowledged, so does their failure in the religious arena. For as we have seen, while the Siamese gratefully sought out and accepted elements of western civilization that they found useful, they firmly refused the religion that the missionaries also brought. As the biographer of Samuel House relates:

But in Siam, from the time Dr. Gutzlaff arrived until the first enduring convert from among the Siamese was gained, thirty-one years elapsed. ... From the time that Dr. House and Mr. Mattoon reached Siam to devote themselves particularly to the winning of the Siamese, twelve years and six months passed before one lone Siamese renounced the faith of his fathers and acknowledged the Christian religion to be the truth.<sup>15</sup>

The people of Siam gave the same response to the missionaries’ religion as did the ruler of Siam from 1851 to 1868. This thesis has investigated Mongkut’s response to the early Protestant missionaries to Siam, and to the culture and Christianity that they brought with them. We have seen that as a monk, Mongkut sought out the western

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14. Maen Pongudom, “Missionary Proclamation,” 141.

15. Feltus, *Samuel Reynolds House*, 156–157.

missionaries, built relationships with them, and learned sciences and language from them (while also teaching language and culture to them). He thoughtfully interacted with them, and learned from them about their religion. He allowed these contacts to influence how he thought about Buddhism, and he instituted a great reform of Siamese Buddhism, all while making his rejection of Christianity clear.

When Mongkut became king, his attitude remained the same. He was friendly to missionaries, debated with them, joked with them, and learned from them, without seeing any need to convert to their religion. He chose western women to help educate his wives and his children, but the instruction he wanted from them was not in Christianity. When the missionary wives made this their focus, he looked for someone who would teach English and science without teaching the religion. King Mongkut protected the freedom of religion in the areas under his control, but he also proved a vocal and able defender of Buddhism against the criticisms of Christianity.

After examining Mongkut's interactions with Christianity, this thesis looked at some of the possible reasons for the lack of conversions in Siam. First, we mentioned some of the factors which were within the control of the missionaries, and saw how their attitude of superiority, their rationalistic world-view, their inability to work together, their attacks on the religion and the government, and their cultural insensitivity worked against their diligent and dedicated efforts to convert the Siamese to Christianity.

Not all of the reasons that the Siamese chose not to become Christians were within the control of the missionaries, however, and in the next chapter, we examined some of the factors for which the missionaries were not responsible. The difficulties of life and ministry in nineteenth-century Siam (physical setting, health challenges, and the



Siamese language), and the limited resources (financial, human, and time) of the missionaries were examined. The thesis mentioned the intertwining of culture and religion (for both Siamese Buddhism and western Christianity) as a serious challenge that the missionaries faced. Finally, we looked at some of the internal characteristics of the Siamese which may have influenced the failure, mentioning cultural differences, intellectual difficulties, the Siamese sense of cultural superiority, and the lack of a sense of need.

Since the first forty years of Protestant missions in Siam that were the focus of this study, much has been done, but the overall response of the Thai to Christianity has not changed. The present situation was mentioned in the final chapter, and an attempt was made to draw some lessons from our study of the early missionaries for current efforts to share the gospel both in Thailand, and in other cultures.

A nineteenth-century observer of Siamese life commented that “Siam is, beyond a peradventure, one of the most remarkable and thought-compelling of the empires of the Orient; a fascinating and provoking enigma, alike to the theologian and the political economist. ... And yet it is a strangely beautiful reality.”<sup>16</sup> This thesis has lingered in this strangely beautiful reality, to which the missionaries came bearing western learning and religion, and considered the fascinating and provoking enigma of a person, and a nation, who pried apart the gifts of the missionaries.

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16. Leonowens, *English Governess*, 286.

## APPENDIX A: PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES IN SIAM, 1828–1868, ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY

This information has been gathered from several different places, especially from the Journals of Dan Beach Bradley, the *Bangkok Calendars*, George McFarland, and from Mary Cort. When information was found in multiple places, dates seldom agreed, partly because there was often a delay between leaving Bangkok and leaving Siam (or arriving in Siam and arriving in Bangkok).

An asterisk after the exit date means the person died in Siam or on the way back to America.

Abbreviations used for the mission organization:

ABB = American Baptist Board

ABCFM = American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions

AMA = American Missionary Association

Indep = Independent

LMS = London Missionary Society

PB = Presbyterian Board

Name	Entry Date	Exit Date	Mission
Abeel, David	2 Jul 1831	7 Jan 1832 <sup>1</sup>	ABCFM
Abeel, David	19 May 1832	5 Nov 1832	ABCFM
Ashmore, Martha Ann S.	15 Apr 1851	19 Jan 1858* <sup>2</sup>	ABB
Ashmore, William Sr.	15 Apr 1851	19 Jan 1858 <sup>3</sup>	ABB
Benham, Maria H. N.	2 Mar 1840	21 Oct 1841	ABCFM
Benham, Nathan S.	1 Mar 1840	6 Apr 1840* <sup>4</sup>	ABCFM

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1. To Singapore.

2. Died on the way back to America, on 18 August 1858.

3. To China.

4. Drowned.

Name	Entry Date	Exit Date	Mission
Bradley, Dan Beach	18 Jul 1835	12 Feb 1847 <sup>5</sup>	ABCFM
Bradley, Dan Beach	31 May 1850	3 Jun 1873*	AMA
Bradley, Emily R. <sup>6</sup>	18 Jul 1835	2 Aug 1845* <sup>7</sup>	ABCFM
Bradley, Sarah Blachly <sup>8</sup>	31 May 1850	16 Aug 1893	AMA
Buell, Seignoria	18 Aug 1840	24 Feb 1844 <sup>9</sup>	PB
Buell, William P.	18 Aug 1840	24 Feb 1844	PB
Bush, Stephen	2 Apr 1849	30 Nov 1852	PB
Bush, Mrs.	2 Apr 1849	23 Jul 1851* <sup>10</sup>	PB
Carden, (Mrs.) C. H.	4 Apr 1866	20 Jun 1868 <sup>11</sup>	PB
Carden, Patrick L.	4 Apr 1866	20 Jun 1868 <sup>12</sup>	PB
Caswell, Anna Turrill <sup>13</sup>	1 Jan 1840	16 Jan 1849	ABCFM
Caswell, Jesse	1 Jan 1840	25 Sep 1848* <sup>14</sup>	ABCFM <sup>15</sup>
Chandler, Helen Mar C.	18 Nov 1843	4 Apr 1868 <sup>16</sup>	ABB
Chandler, John Hassett	18 Nov 1843	4 Apr 1868 <sup>17</sup>	ABB
Chilcott, Cyrus H.	24 Dec 1864	30 Nov 1865* <sup>18</sup>	ABB
Davenport, Frances G. R.	2 Jul 1836	Mar 1845	ABB
Davenport, Robert Dunlevy	2 Jul 1836	Mar 1845	ABB
Dean, Maria M. <sup>19</sup>	24 Dec 1864	1881	ABB
Dean, Theodosia Ann <sup>20</sup>	20 Jun 1838	5 Feb 1842 <sup>21</sup>	ABB
Dean, William <sup>22</sup>	18 Jul 1835	Sep 1837 <sup>23</sup>	ABB
Dean, William	23 Jun 1838	5 Feb 1842 <sup>24</sup>	ABB
Dean, William	24 Dec 1864	1884	ABB
Dean/Goddard, Augusta <sup>25</sup>	24 Dec 1864	8 Aug 1870	ABB

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5. To US to join the AMA.
  6. First wife of Dan Beach Bradley.
  7. Pulmonary consumption.
  8. Second wife of Dan Beach Bradley.
  9. Paralyzed after giving birth to a stillborn child in December 1843.
  10. Pulmonary consumption.
  11. To Hong Kong.
  12. To Hong Kong.
  13. Sister of Asa Hemenway.
  14. Erysipelatous inflammation of lungs.
  15. Technically with the AMA from 1 July 1848.
  16. Around 1854, the Chandlers return from being away from Siam for more than 3 years.
  17. Around 1854, the Chandlers return from being away from Siam for more than 3 years.
  18. Typhoid fever.
  19. The third wife of William Dean was previously married to Corodon Slafter.
  20. Second wife of William Dean.
  21. To China. Died 29 Mar 1843 at Hong Kong from smallpox.
  22. William Dean's first wife (Matilda) died in Singapore on route to Siam (5 Mar 1835).
  23. To China.
  24. To China (again).
  25. Augusta Goddard was William Dean's daughter.

Name	Entry Date	Exit Date	Mission
Fielde, Adele M. <sup>26</sup>	22 Jul 1866	11 Oct 1871	ABB
French, Henry S. G.	28 May 1840	14 Feb 1842* <sup>27</sup>	ABCFM
French, Sarah C. Allison	28 May 1840	7 Nov 1843	ABCFM
George, Amelia A.	2 Feb 1862	1873	PB
George, Samuel C.	2 Feb 1862	1873	PB
Goddard, Eliza Ann A.	16 Nov 1840	4 Mar 1848 <sup>28</sup>	ABB
Goddard, Josiah	16 Nov 1840	4 Mar 1848 <sup>29</sup>	ABB
Graham, Eliza	1866	1873	AMA
Graham, George G.	1866	1873	AMA
Gutzlaff, Karl Friedrich	23 Aug 1828	3 Jun 1831	Indep
Gutzlaff, Maria	14 Feb 1830	16 Feb 1831* <sup>30</sup>	Indep
Hemenway, Asa <sup>31</sup>	1 Jan 1840	28 Dec 1849	ABCFM
Hemenway, Lucia Hunt	1 Jan 1840	28 Dec 1849	ABCFM
House, Harriet M.	9 Jul 1856	17 Feb 1864	PB
House, Harriet M.	15 Dec 1866	1876	PB
House, Samuel R.	20 Mar 1847	23 Apr 1855	PB
House, Samuel R.	9 Jul 1856	17 Feb 1864	PB
House, Samuel R.	16 Dec 1866	1876	PB
Jencks, Caroline Baldwin <sup>32</sup>	14 Dec 1846	21 Nov 1847 <sup>33</sup>	ABB
Jencks, Erasmus N. <sup>34</sup>	14 Dec 1846	21 Nov 1847	ABB
Johnson, Maria Preston <sup>35</sup>	25 Jul 1834	Jan 1838 <sup>36</sup>	ABCFM
Johnson, Mary (Fowler) <sup>37</sup>	15 May 1841	1 Jul 1841* <sup>38</sup>	ABCFM
Johnson, Stephen	25 Jul 1834	Jan 1838 <sup>39</sup>	ABCFM
Johnson, Stephen	15 May 1841	12 Aug 1846 <sup>40</sup>	ABCFM

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26. Betrothed to Cyrus Chilcott.

27. Tubercular consumption.

28. To China.

29. To China.

30. Uterine hemorrhage.

31. Brother of Anna Caswell.

32. Last name also seen as Jenks.

33. Died on 27 June 1848 at sea.

34. Last name also seen as Jenks.

35. First wife of Stephen Johnson.

36. Died in Philadelphia shortly after returning home.

37. Second wife of Stephen Johnson.

38. Inflammation of the brain.

39. To the US.

40. To China.

Name	Entry Date	Exit Date	Mission
Jones, Eliza Grew <sup>41</sup>	25 Mar 1833	28 Mar 1838* <sup>42</sup>	ABB
Jones, John Taylor	25 Mar 1833	16 Nov 1839 <sup>43</sup>	ABB
Jones, John Taylor	1841	17 Sep 1845	ABB
Jones, John Taylor	19 Feb 1848	13 Sep 1851* <sup>44</sup>	ABB
Jones, Judith Leavitt <sup>45</sup>	1841	March 1846* <sup>46</sup>	ABB
Jones, Sarah Sleeper <sup>47</sup>	19 Feb 1848	1889	ABB
Lane, Mrs. (L. B.)	16 May 1850	24 Jan 1855	AMA
Lane, Mr. L. B.	16 May 1850	24 Jan 1855	AMA
Lion, William <sup>48</sup>	1867	1867	ABB
Lion, Mrs. <sup>49</sup>	1867	1867	ABB
Lisle, Anna L.	14 Jan 1868	1 Jun 1868 <sup>50</sup>	ABB
Lisle, William M.	14 Jan 1868	1 Jun 1868 <sup>51</sup>	ABB
Mattoon, Mary	22 Mar 1847	30 Jun 1864	PB
Mattoon, Stephen	22 Mar 1847	24 Jan 1859	PB
Mattoon, Stephen	15 Sep 1860	5 Dec 1865	PB
McDonald, Eliza S.	14 Sep 1860	1884	PB
McDonald, Noah A.	14 Sep 1860	1878	PB
McFarland, Jennie E.	14 Sep 1860	1878	PB
McFarland, Samuel G.	14 Sep 1860	1878	PB
McGilvary, Daniel	20 Jun 1858	22 Aug 1911*	PB
McGilvary, Sophia Royce <sup>52</sup>	14 Sep 1860	1923	PB
Morse, Andrew B.	26 Jul 1856	27 Jul 1857 <sup>53</sup>	PB
Morse, Harriet Hildreth	19 Feb 1848	24 Jan 1855	ABB
Morse, Mrs. (Andrew)	26 Jul 1856	27 Jul 1857 <sup>54</sup>	PB
Odell, John F.	1863	30 Jun 1864* <sup>55</sup>	PB
Peet, Lyman B.	28 May 1840	12 Aug 1846 <sup>56</sup>	ABCFM
Peet, Rebecca C.	28 May 1840	12 Aug 1846 <sup>57</sup>	ABCFM

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41. First wife of J. T. Jones.

42. Spasmodic cholera.

43. To the US.

44. Dysentery.

45. Second wife of J. T. Jones.

46. Died 21 Mar 1846 on route home with a liver complaint.

47. Third wife of J. T. Jones; later married Jones's adopted son, Samuel Smith.

48. Cort refers to the Lions. Possibly equivalent to Mr. and Mrs. William Lisle.

49. Cort refers to the Lions. Possibly equivalent to Mr. and Mrs. William Lisle.

50. To Hong Kong.

51. To Hong Kong.

52. Sophia was the daughter of Dan Beach Bradley.

53. To China.

54. To China.

55. Died on route home of consumption.

56. To China.

57. To China.

Name	Entry Date	Exit Date	Mission
Pierce, Mary E.	1 Jan 1840	22 Sep 1844* <sup>58</sup>	ABCFM
Reed, Alanson <sup>59</sup>	2 Jul 1836	29 Aug 1837* <sup>60</sup>	ABB
Reed, Jane G. Everts <sup>61</sup>	2 Jul 1836	16 Nov 1839	ABB
Robbins, Martha R. <sup>62</sup>	24 Apr 1838	20 Jul 1839	ABCFM
Robbins, Samuel P. <sup>63</sup>	24 Apr 1838	20 Jul 1839	ABCFM
Robinson, Charles	25 Jul 1834	4 Nov 1845* <sup>64</sup>	ABCFM
Robinson, Maria Church	25 Jul 1834	4 Nov 1845	ABCFM
Schuck, J. L. <sup>65</sup>	1836	1837	ABB
Silsby, Josiah	16 May 1850	12 May 1854	AMA
Silsby, Mrs.	16 May 1850	12 May 1854	AMA
Slafter, Corodon H. <sup>66</sup>	21 Aug 1839	7 Apr 1841* <sup>67</sup>	ABB
Slafter, Maria M. <sup>68</sup>	21 Aug 1839	7 Nov 1843	ABB
Smith, Samuel Jones <sup>69</sup>	17 Jun 1849	1858*	ABB
Telford, Lucina B.	24 Jun 1854	23 May 1863	ABB
Telford, Robert	24 Jun 1854	23 May 1863	ABB
Tomlin, Jacob	23 Aug 1828	14 May 1829	LMS
Tomlin, Jacob	2 Jul 1831	7 Jan 1832	LMS
Tracy, Alice Dana	25 Apr 1838	14 Jun 1839	ABCFM
Tracy, Stephen	25 Apr 1838	14 Jun 1839	ABCFM
Wilson, Jonathan	20 Jun 1858	30 Jan 1864	PB
Wilson, Jonathan	20 Jul 1866	1911*	PB
Wilson, Kate <sup>70</sup>	22 Jul 1866	1885	PB
Wilson, Maria <sup>71</sup>	20 Jun 1858	10 Jul 1860* <sup>72</sup>	PB

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58. Pulmonary consumption.

59. Last name is also spelled Reid.

60. Dysentery.

61. Last name is also spelled Reid.

62. Last name is also spelled Robins.

63. Last name is also spelled Robins.

64. Died soon after leaving Siam.

65. J. L. Schuck transferred to Macao shortly after his arrival.

66. First name also seen as Cowdon.

67. Dysentery.

68. Maria Slafter married Captain Brown in 1843, and then became the third wife of William Dean.

69. Samuel Smith was the adopted child of J. T. Jones, and thus had been in Siam from 1833.

70. Second wife of Jonathan Wilson.

71. First wife of Jonathan Wilson.

72. Marasmus.

**APPENDIX B: PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES IN SIAM,  
1828–1868, BY MISSION BOARD**

This information is simplified from the previous table. If a missionary left and later returned to Siam, only their first arrival and last departure dates are given. For more information, see Appendix A.

**American Baptist Board**

Jones, Eliza Grew (1833–1838)  
Jones, John Taylor (1833–1851)  
Dean, William (1835–1884)  
Davenport, Frances G. R. (1836–1845)  
Davenport, Robert Dunlevy (1836–1845)  
Reed, Alanson (1836–1837)  
Reed, Jane G. Everts (1836–1839)  
Schuck, J. L. (1836–1837)  
Dean, Theodosia Ann (1838–1842)  
Slafter, Corodon H. (1839–1841)  
Slafter/Dean, Maria M. (1839–1881)  
Goddard, Eliza Ann A. (1840–1848)  
Goddard, Josiah (1840–1848)  
Jones, Judith Leavitt (1841–1846)  
Chandler, Helen (1843–1868)  
Chandler, John Hassett (1843–1868)  
Jencks, Caroline Baldwin (1846–1847)  
Jencks, Erasmus N. (1846–1847)  
Jones/Smith, Sarah Sleeper (1848–1889)  
Morse, Harriet Hildreth (1848–1855)  
Smith, Samuel Jones (1849–1858)  
Ashmore, Martha Ann S. (1851–1858)  
Ashmore, William Sr. (1851–1858)  
Telford, Lucina B. (1854–1863)  
Telford, Robert (1854–1863)  
Chilcott, Cyrus H. (1864–1865)  
Dean/Goddard, Augusta Fanny (1864–1870)

Fielde, Adele M. (1866–1871)  
Lion, Mrs. (William) (1867–1867)  
Lion, William (1867–1867)  
Lisle, Anna L. (1868–1868)  
Lisle, William M. (1868–1868)

**American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions**

Abeel, David (1831–1832)  
Johnson, Maria Preston (1834–1838)  
Johnson, Stephen (1834–1846)  
Robinson, Charles (1834–1845)  
Robinson, Maria Church (1834–1845)  
Bradley, Dan Beach (1835–1848; see AMA)  
Bradley, Emily R. (1835–1845)  
Robbins, Martha R. (1838–1839)  
Robbins, Samuel P. (1838–1839)  
Tracy, Alice Dana (1838–1839)  
Tracy, Stephen (1838–1839)  
Benham, Maria H. N. (1840–1841)  
Benham, Nathan S. (1840–1840)  
Caswell, Anna Turrill (1840–1849)  
Caswell, Jesse (1840–1848)  
French, Henry S. G. (1840–1842)  
French, Sarah C. Allison (1840–1843)  
Hemenway, Asa (1840–1849)  
Hemenway, Lucia Hunt (1840–1849)  
Peet, Lyman B. (1840–1846)  
Peet, Rebecca C. (1840–1846)  
Pierce, Mary E. (1840–1844)  
Johnson, Mary (Fowler) (1841–1841)

**American Missionary Association**

Bradley, Dan Beach (1850–1873)  
Bradley, Sarah Blachly (1850–1893)  
Lane, Mr. L. B. (1850–1855)  
Lane, Mrs. (L. B.) (1850–1855)  
Silsby, Josiah (1850–1854)  
Silsby, Mrs. (Josiah) (1850–1854)  
Graham, Eliza (1866–1873)  
Graham, George G. (1866–1873)



**Independent/London Missionary Society**

Gutzlaff, Karl Friedrich (1828–1831)

Gutzlaff, Maria (1830–1831)

Tomlin, Jacob (1828–1832)

**Presbyterian Board**

Buell, Seignoria (1840–1844)

Buell, William P. (1840–1844)

Mattoon, Mary (1847–1864)

Mattoon, Stephen (1847–1865)

Bush, Mrs. (Stephen) (1849–1851)

Bush, Stephen (1849–1852)

House, Harriet M. (1856–1876)

House, Samuel R. (1856–1876)

Morse, Andrew B. (1856–1857)

Morse, Mrs. (Andrew) (1856–1857)

McGilvary, Daniel (1858–1911)

Wilson, Jonathan (1858–1911)

Wilson, Maria (1858–1860)

McDonald, Eliza S. (1860–1884)

McDonald, Noah A. (1860–1878)

McFarland, Jennie E. (1860–1878)

McFarland, Samuel G. (1860–1878)

McGilvary, Sophia Royce (1860–1923)

George, Amelia A. (1862–1873)

George, Samuel C. (1862–1873)

Odell, John F. (1863–1864)

Carden, (Mrs.) C. H. (1866–1868)

Carden, Patrick L. (1866–1868)

Wilson, Kate (1866–1885)

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## **VITA**

Doug Hills was born and raised in the interior of British Columbia. He did his undergraduate work at Simon Fraser University, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts. He then attended Regent College for a year, before heading to Thailand where he worked as a missionary apprentice for two and a half years.

Returning to Canada, Doug became a funeral director/embalmer for six years, got married, and then returned Thailand to work in an orphanage for three months. Upon his return to Canada, Doug returned to his studies at Regent.

Doug and Marian have two adult children, seven grandchildren, and a small dog.