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Foreign Missions.

SIAM AND ITS SOVERIGNS.

We copy the following article from a Calcutta paper—*The Friend of India*, of July 7th, 1874:

Since Siam is so extensively adopting Western customs and modes of governing it is only natural that we should, so far as possible, study our imitators, and examine their constitution. Unfortunately we do not possess any full account of the Indo-Chinese nations with the exception of Dr. Bastian's travels, comprised in a number of elaborate volumes which are sealed books to those unfamiliar with German. The versatile Dalrymple has left us sketches of Cambodia and the Malayan peoples and Sir John Bowring wrote a hasty book on Siam. But, excluding this information, there is a dearth of written knowledge respecting Indo-China. It is, therefore, gratifying to find an old resident in Further India, Mr. H. G. Kennedy, giving the English public the benefit of the insight he obtained into the manners, antiquities and religions of our south-eastern neighbours during five years' residence amongst them.

Unlike Japan—its only eastern competitor in the race for civilization—Siam is, as a Kingdom, but of recent growth. If we look back five hundred years we find the Siamese the most powerful Laos tribe which gradually pushed southwards from Northern Laos, or the Shan States, till a resting place was found at Ayuthia in 1350. According to the late King "this date is an ascertained fact," the most expert Siamese genealogist having been unable to carry the origin of the nation further back. The system of dual sovereignty seems to have always prevailed although the monarchy does not necessarily devolve in the strict line of hereditary descent. The succession is indeed confined to a single family both in the case of the first and the subordinate King; but the cry "the King is dead, long live the King" is never uttered by a Bangkok herald. When the death of the ruler is announced the Senabodi, or Supreme Council composed of six of the principal nobles, meet and decide as to the successor. The choice lies between one of the late monarch's younger brothers and one of his sons. Having in secret council thus marked their man, they go through the formal ceremony of submitting the chosen Prince's name for the approval of the assembled nobility. The succession is then regarded as settled. The minor ruler—the *rex designatus*—is chosen, crowned and enthroned simultaneously with the investiture of the supreme King. Should the latter die first, the former takes the vacant seat, and thus the wars of succession, with which the history of India and Asia generally is so full, are avoided. If the second king happen to depart this life before his mightier brother, no new *chota lat sahab* is appointed till the throne of the major king becomes also empty. Both vacancies are then filled together. Mr. Kennedy is of opinion that the second king exists only as a sort of reserve. It would not, however, be consistent with respect to the supreme monarch, or just to his own children, to reappoint a second king if the latter chanced to give up the ghost first. When the late second ruler died during the reign of the chief successor was elected till the major king had died too. How this plan of dual sovereignty had its origin we cannot even conjecture. But from Dr. Goldasticker's point of view it would seem that a subordinate king has existed even in Indian monarchies. In the epic poems there is mention of a king having a son or relative inaugurated as a junior, or *Yuvaraja*. The object of the inauguration of the prince as Yuvaraja was to secure him the right of succession and, besides the advantages supposed to arise from the religious ceremony, a share, also, in the government

and perhaps all the advantages of a reigning king. When Dasaratha desired to make his son Rama a Yuvaraja he addressed him thus—"Rama, I am old. . . I have paid my debt to the gods, the Rishis, my deceased ancestors, the Brahmanas, and my own self; nothing remains for me to be done save inaugurating thee." Strange to say, although the exact term Yuvaraja is not used in Siam to designate the junior king the same title exists in the changed forms of Uparat and Umarat and is the official name of a high official in charge of the criminal law. In ancient Cambodia, moreover, not only was there a second king but the very term Yuvaraja was applied to him. In a legend giving an account of the national origin it is said that "Long ago one of their kings, a great and wise monarch, had unanimous complaints made by his people against his own son, who was Obbaraj"—or second king. The Burmans, too, had a Uparaja, analogous to the Obbaraj and the Crown Prince of Vedic India.

Our readers may remember the remarkable ceremonies that took place in the capital of Siam in October last, when the young king laid his state attire aside, descended from his throne and joined the priesthood for two weeks. On resuming his seat at the expiration of this period he was recrowned. Seated in a thin white costume upon a golden dais, rills of clear water trickled down upon him through the perforated canopy above. The purifying ceremonial over, the insignia of royalty were formally presented and seven sectioned spiral vases of glass, gold, silver and plantain leaf were set up in front of the throne which was then "dedicated according to royal custom" by the nobles within and without the hall simultaneous passing a lighted taper from hand to hand. Mr. Kennedy holds, and on apparently good ground, that this ceremony is nothing more than the ancient Abisheka rite, as ordained by the Brahmins in writings which were penned when the world was young; and as the King of Siam was crowned in October last, so very probably were Indian sovereigns consecrated three thousand years ago. Similar coronation rites are also adopted by the tributary princes in the Laos States. There is another curious Siamese usage in connection with the creation of a noble. To the patent of nobility is added an official notification stating precisely the number of acres or fields which the recipient of the patent is at liberty to possess. In the case of the members of the Senabodi, however, "fields are not taken into account"—that is, this portion of the aristocracy may hold what extent of land they please. Nowadays the custom means little, but there is no doubt that it was introduced to prevent a subject from becoming dangerously powerful. Five hundred years ago, land was synonymous with slaves, retainers and dependants. Every noble, therefore, was given a certain quantity of land suitable to his rank, the King defining the extent when the title of nobility was bestowed. Judging from a statement in the "English Governess in Siam" it appears that this custom has been misunderstood in the case of Europeans whom the ruler of Bangkok has delighted to honour. Mrs. Leonowens, describing her own experience on such an occasion, says that the King placed in her hand "a small silk bag containing a title of nobility and the number and description of the roods of land pertaining to it." "My estate," she adds, "was in the district of Nokhuri and Prabat and I found that to reach it I must perform a tedious overland journey." "I am glad she never set out," remarks Mr. Kennedy, since "she would certainly not have arrived as no estate really exists. The words used do not convey a grant of land but merely forbid the new baron from acquiring more acres than the number specified in the patent."

It has been remarked by a French savant that the Cambodians, Laotians, Siamese and Burmans possess a con-

stitution "uniformly based on Chinese civilisation." We venture to think that this statement is open to question, unless in so far as Chinese is borrowed from Indo-Boodhist civilization. The language of Siam is evidently of Mongolian origin, while continual intercourse for a long period with Chinese immigrants has naturally had a very marked effect upon the physiognomy of the race. As we have shown, their civilisation is of comparatively modern growth, while it is more than probable that Boodhist missionaries from India introduced among them the faith of Gautama. The dramatic literature of the country has come from Malayan sources and their laws and manners appear to have been taken ready-made from the temple-building Cambodians whose territory was gradually swallowed up in the little kingdom around Ayuthia. All this, however, admits of correction till some courageous scholar unfolds the now sealed book of Indo-Chinese history. Sir Arthur Phayre is doing this for Burma but, as yet, he has no imitator.—*Friend of India*.

REPORT OF THE FOREIGN MISSIONARY BOARD.

[A number of the facts contained in the following Report have, in some other shape already been before our readers. We should therefore have inserted only portions of it, but as we find the Convention requested its publication in our columns we give it in extenso.—Ed. C. M.]

At the last meeting of the Convention our missionaries elect appeared before the body, and were solemnly committed to the Divine guardianship and care. They are now in Burmah and Siam, undergoing that preparatory training which can only be obtained on heathen ground, by means of intercourse with those who speak the languages which they will henceforth have to use in the proclamation of the gospel. They have been mercifully preserved from the dangers of the deep, and have entered on the first stage of missionary labour in the spirit of zeal and devotedness which love to Christ and the souls of men inspires.

The voyage from New York to Glasgow, and the subsequent voyage from Glasgow to Rangoon, were like all other voyages, with their peculiar pleasures and their special discomforts, not needful to be here described. The detention at Glasgow was at first regarded as a misfortune, but turned out "rather unto the furtherance" of the cause. Those six weeks were spent very pleasantly, Christian friends showing kind attentions to the missionaries, and contributing liberally to our funds; in addition to which Mrs. Churchill and Miss Eaton connected themselves with the "Royal Infirmary," where their services were gladly welcomed and their own medical knowledge and skill, previously attained at Philadelphia, considerably increased.

They left Glasgow Nov. 25th, and reached Rangoon on the 12th of Jan. The voyage was somewhat longer than usual, but their time was profitably employed. Whenever the weather permitted, public worship was celebrated on Lord's days. Efforts were made, by conversation and the distribution of tracts, to engage the attention of the ship's crew to the truths of religion, and there is reason to believe that serious impressions were in some instances produced, which it was hoped would ripen into sound conversion. At Rangoon the missionaries were received with much cordiality, and hospitably entertained in the houses of the missionaries of the American Baptist Missionary Union. There Miss Norris became the wife of brother W. F. Armstrong. On the second of February they left for Tavoy, where the whole body took possession of the mission house belonging to the Missionary Union, where Miss Norris had already resided for some time, taking charge of the schools of the Union, and visiting, as often as possible, the neighbouring churches, which were then destitute of

missionary oversight. The house was placed at our disposal by the Executive Committee of the Union. Three of our missionaries, however, brother Churchill and wife, and Miss Eaton, left Tavoy about a month afterwards, and proceeded to Bangkok, Siam, by way of Penang and Singapore. In taking this step they were sustained by the consent of their companions. Their reasons were detailed in a letter from brother Churchill to the Foreign Secretary, in which he says:—"First, if we go to Siam to labour at all, even among the Karens, a knowledge of the Siamese language is necessary, and we can study it there at far better advantage than elsewhere. Indeed, so far as we have not been able to find any one to teach us here in Tavoy, and it is doubtful if a teacher can be secured here at all. Secondly: A residence there will enable us to see the country and people as they are, and to gain such a knowledge of things as will help us to decide upon our future course with intelligence. Thirdly: It will be necessary for us to make a tour next year through the country, and even the slight knowledge we can obtain of the Siamese in six or seven months will help us materially in dealing with the officials. Fourthly: Dr. Dean's letter, a copy of which we received last week, speaks of doing work at once among the Eurasians, while, if we remain here in Tavoy we shall be quite idle, so far as any direct work is concerned." The Board concluded to acquiesce, for the present, in this arrangement, confiding in the judgment of the missionaries, and trusting that subsequent experience would throw further light on the subject, and more clearly indicate the right course of procedure.

As the Karens were primarily the objects of our mission, the missionaries at Tavoy are engaged in the study of their language, having secured teachers for that purpose at Rangoon. Six young men, who had completed their studies in the Theological Seminary at that place, accompanied them to Tavoy desiring to go with them to Siam when they should be prepared to enter that country. Four of them were employed as Teachers, and two were occupied in missionary work in the vicinity of Tavoy, where there was much need of their labours.

Siam has been chosen as the field of our operations, but it is not yet decided by what means the Karens of that country may be most effectually reached. It appears that their number is not so great as was originally supposed, and that they chiefly inhabit mountainous districts much covered with jungle. On the other hand, the attention of the Board has been directed by the Rev. A. Bunker, Missionary at Toungoo, to the Karenees, or Red Karens, situated about six days' journey North-east from Toungoo. They are more numerous than the Karens of Siam, their population consisting of at least a hundred thousand persons, while the Siamese Karens are not more than fifty thousand in number. They are more settled in their habits; their houses are better built than those of the other Karens; and they occupy their villages permanently, the Karens in general moving about from place to place. The Karenee district is well cultivated, and the climate is salubrious; and it is thought probable that the Siamese Karens may be reached from that district, by means of native preachers. Our missionaries have contemplated sending a deputation to explore the region, and correspondence has been also opened with the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Union, in order to ascertain whether we could establish a mission there without intruding on their ground, which must of course by all means be avoided. Whatever may be the issue, our missionaries are likely to remain at Tavoy till after the next rains, as it would be imprudent to enter on the actual field of labor before their preparation is completed. It may be added, however (Aug. 25), that information recently received leads

to the conclusion that the Karenee district forms part of the field of the American Baptist Missionary Union, and cannot therefore, in consistency with the principles of Christian courtesy, be entered by our missionaries.

In the early part of the year the Board directed the missionaries to institute inquiries respecting the Laos tribes, in the expectation of founding a mission among them. It was ascertained, however, that the American Presbyterians have two missionaries at Chiang Mai, or Timmy, the chief city of the Laos, and regard to missionary courtesy prevented the carrying out of the project of a mission among them.

Should it appear that the path of duty leads to Siam proper, as well as to the Karens in that Kingdom, it may be well to consider the arduousness of the enterprise. The Siamese are Buddhists of the "straitest sect." Like the "fool" of the Psalmist's time, and like the ungodly scientists who are found in such numbers in Europe, they hold that there is no living, personal, eternal God—no "life everlasting" beyond the grave, and no atonement for sin. The moral precepts which they are taught contain only the elementary principles of common ethics, but their effects are not more salutary than were the teachings of the philosophers to the Greeks and the Romans, and the Apostle Paul's description in Rom. i. 18-32 will equally apply to the idolaters of the nineteenth century, whether in India, China, Burmah or Siam.

Buddhists are among the last class of the world's population to yield to the power of the gospel. Nevertheless, the labour of our American brethren among the Buddhists of Burmah have been blessed, and more than a thousand of the inhabitants of that country are at this time members of Baptist churches. Surely, Siam is one of the "utmost parts of the earth" which have been given to the Saviour for his "possession," and "the time to favor" her, the "set time," will undoubtedly come. What if it is come already, and we provincialists are the chosen instruments of God's love and power to convey to the Siamese, the knowledge of salvation by the cross of Christ, and of the "life and immortality" which he has "brought to light?" What if the divine blessing is about to descend upon that nation by means of our missionaries, converting worshippers of dumb idols into living temples of the Holy Ghost, and studding Siam with Christian churches? Of such honour we are unworthy; but let us "have faith in God," and "pray without ceasing," and "expect great things" to follow the "labour of love."

The Board refer, with great satisfaction, to the correspondence of the missionaries with the secretaries and with friends, since their departure from this country. Many of their letters have been communicated to the public in the columns of the *Christian Messenger* and *Christian Visitor*. They are choice utterances of Christian affection, holy zeal, and firm determination to meet difficulties and dangers in the spirit of hearty trust in the "God of all grace." It is not likely that their path will be smooth and flowery. Whether they go to the Karens of Siam by the direct route, or whether they repair to the Karenees and make their country the base of operations, long and toilsome, and it may be perilous journeys are before them, putting to a severe test their powers of endurance. They expect all this, and hope to be carried safely through by divine mercy. The servants of God in these provinces will not fail to remember them constantly in their approaches to the throne of grace.

Meanwhile they are doing what they can. In their intercourse with their Karen teachers (and the same may be said of these in Siam) they are gaining such knowledge of the character and habits of the people as will be of great service to them when they engage directly in missionary work; and they even now embrace opportunities of