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CENTURY AND THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

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American Missionary Views on Siamese Culture and their Evangelical and Social Works in Siam between the mid-19th Century and the early 20th Century¹

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the views and criticisms of the American missionaries about the lives, customs, religion, society and economy of the Siamese, drawing attention to the perceived negative aspects of the Siamese culture including various superstitions, idolatry, inhuman religious practice and bad mores, based on the books and mission reports written by the American missionaries at that time. It also examines the evangelical and social works such as modernized educational works, advanced medical services and westernization done by the missionaries especially the American Presbyterian Mission and the American Baptist Mission and their impacts on the modernization of Siam from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century.

Keywords

1. American missionaries 2. Siamese life and culture 3. Economy of Siam 4. Evangelical works 5. Modernized social and education works 6. Europeanization 7. Westernization 8. Modernization

A. Introduction

Siam, which was officially renamed Thailand in 1939, had gradually become a

¹ This paper is originally a conference paper presented at Southeast Asia in Evolution Trans-Pacific Agency and the City, c. 1850-1941 Conference organized by Department of History, The Chinese University of Hong Kong on 24 June 2017.

modernized state under the influence of western civilization which was brought largely by the American missionary works since the mid-19th century. Bangkok, as the capital and the most important missionary center of Siam, had particularly experienced remarkable modernization or westernization. Bangkok had only a small population of Siamese people. The principal races in the capital city were the Chinese and Burmans. It was estimated by the missionaries at that time that the population of the city was about 410,000 and among which 8000 were the Siamese. The priests numbered 10,000 and the Chinese at 350,000.² This paper aims to analyze the views and criticisms of the American missionaries about the lives, customs, religion, society and economy of the Siamese, drawing attention to the perceived negative aspects of the Siamese culture including various superstitions, idolatry, inhuman religious practice and bad mores, based on the books and mission reports written by the American missionaries at that time. It also examines the evangelical and social works such as modernized educational works, advanced medical services and westernization done by the missionaries especially the American Presbyterian Mission and the American Baptist Mission and their impacts on the modernization of Siam from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century.

B. History of the American Missionaries in Siam

1. Arrival and Preliminary Works of the American Missionaries in Siam in 1831-1849

Early in 1829, the German and British missionaries began preaching in Siam. In response to their appeal, the American missionaries had reached Siam one after another since 1831. Below lists a table to briefly illustrate the early history of the missionaries particularly the American missionaries in Siam during 1829-1849.

Year	Important Events of the American Missionaries in Siam³
1829	The American trading-vessel which was commanded by Captain Coffin brought the famous "Siamese Twins", the German missionary Gutzlaff and Rev. Mr. Tomlin of the London Missionary Society to Siam. They urged the American churches to preach in Siam for Christ.

² Samuel Francis Smith, *Missionary Sketches: A Concise History of the American Baptist Missionary Union* (Boston: W. G. Corthell Publisher, 1879), pp. 173-174.

³ Samuel Francis Smith, *Missionary Sketches: A Concise History of the American Baptist Missionary Union* (Boston: W. G. Corthell Publisher, 1879), pp. 173-181; Mary Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian board of publication, 1884), pp. 351-366.

1831	In response to the appeal of Gutzlaff, the American Board of Foreign Missions instructed Rev. David Abeel to go to Siam with Mr. Tomlin. The new-comers labored faithfully for the good of the many Siamese and Chinese of high and low degree.
1833	Rev. John Taylor Jones was appointed a missionary to Siam by his American Baptist missionary associates in Burmah. He was the first missionary of the Baptist General Convention to Siam. Before Mr. and Mrs. Jones reached Bangkok, they had become acquainted with the Siamese language, having studied it for half year. Mr. Jones made known the gospel message to not only the Siamese but also the Chinese through the Siamese. The Chinese work had been thrust upon the mission from the beginning. But Mr. Jones steadily devoted himself to laboring for the Siamese. He completed a catechism on geography and astronomy in Siamese, besides translating into that language a Burman tract containing a summary of Christian doctrines. He baptized three Chinese men in December.
1834	Two missionaries of the American Board, Messrs. Johnson and Robinson, reached Bangkok together with their wives. Johnson entered upon active labors for the Chinese, and Robinson for the Siamese. Rev. William Dean and his wife who had been appointed by the American Baptist Board missionaries to the Chinese of Siam, and Daniel B. Bradley, M. D. and his wife, whom the American Board sent out to reinforce their mission to the Siamese, also reached Siam. This was the commencement of the Chinese department. Mr. Dean was the first foreigner who ever studied the <i>Tie Chiu</i> dialect, which is spoken by the Chinese of Bangkok.
1835	Mr. Dean preached in the <i>Tie Chiu</i> dialect to an audience up to fifty. Three more Chinese converts were baptized in December.
1836	In July Messrs. Alanson Reed and J. L. Shuck who had been appointed missionaries to the Chinese of Siam by the American Baptists, reached Bangkok. Mr. Davenport, a preacher and printer, also arrived there to join the mission, bringing presses and types in both Siamese and Chinese. He labored in Siam about nine years.
1837	Mr. Reed of the American Baptists established a new center for Christian worship two miles above Bangkok, from which many excursions were made, and many tracts distributed. By March, Mr. Jones had made some progress in translating the New Testament into Siamese, portions of which

	<p>were printed and in circulation. A sheet tract containing the Ten Commandments was printed and pasted on the walls of the houses of people. In July, during the visit of Rev. Mr. Malcom, the first church of Protestant Chinese Christians which was ever gathered in the East was formed in Bangkok.</p>
1838,	<p>Mr. Johnson of the American Board's mission baptized his Chinese teacher. Rev. R. W. Dee who had been directed by the Presbyterian Board visited Bangkok and reported upon its eligibility as a station for the missionary operations.</p>
1839	<p>The Siamese government availed itself of one of the Presbyterian mission printing-presses to multiply copies of a royal proclamation against opium. Rev. Josiah Goddard was added to the Chinese department of the American Baptist mission, and Rev. C. H. Slafter to the Siamese. A chapel of the American Baptist mission was built, and three Chinese were added to the church by baptism. The attendance on Chinese worship was about twenty, and on the Siamese, from thirty to fifty. Mr. Slafter earned with him to Siam a second printing-press. Up to this date more than forty thousand copies of different works had been printed. An English and Siamese school was taught by Mrs. Davenport; and a small Chinese school by Mrs. Dean, Mrs. Reed, and others. In October, three more Chinese converts were baptized, making the native members nine, and the whole church, including missionaries, seventeen. The New Testament in Siamese except Hebrews and Revelation was completed.</p>
1840	<p>Fifty-eight thousand copies of the New Testament mentioned above were distributed. Vaccination was introduced into Siam by Dr. Bradley,—a great boon to the people among whom small-pox often committed fearful ravages. The American Board's mission was reinforced in its Siamese departments by the arrival of the Rev. Messrs, Jesse Caswell, Asa Hemenway, N. S. Benham and their wives, with Miss Pierce—Mr. Benham. Rev. Josiah Goddard and his wife came to the Chinese department of the Baptist mission. Rev. William Buell and his wife, the first missionaries of the Presbyterian Board to the Siamese, arrived in Bangkok.</p>
1841	<p>In addition to the baptism of six Chinese and one Siamese, a class in theology was formed by Dr. Dean to train native Chinese preachers to aid in the work of preaching the gospel to their countrymen.</p>

1843	<p>Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Chandler arrived from Burmah, where as a type-founder and lay missionary. As a practical machinist, he introduced knowledge of useful arts among the leading men of the kingdom. Though not a preacher himself, his influence in Siam was very important. The king and princes in Siam favoured intelligence and culture, understood the advantages of modern improvements, and desired their introduction into the kingdom. One of the princes was in constant intercourse with Mr. Chandler; and the latter both instructed him, and aided him in carrying out his projected improvements. A printing-office on his premises and a steamboat in the river Meinam were among the fruits of this enlightened spirit in the palace, which helped the cause of Christianity.</p>
1844	<p>Mr. Johnson baptized another of his teachers, Quaking, a Chinese of very respectable literary attainments. The American Baptist missionaries travelled several miles into the interior to distribute tracts. They made arrangements to commence an out-station some miles away from Bangkok. A house and a piece of land were purchased in Bangkok for the aged, poor, and sick of the church. The New Testament in Siamese by Dr. Jones was finished and published. He was an excellent and highly honored missionary, and won the respect and esteem of the Siamese court. His knowledge of the Siamese language was extensive and accurate, and the testimony of some best-educated people was that in this respect few natives could equal him.</p>
1845	<p>There was a reduction in the number of the American missionaries in Siam. Rev. Mr. Davenport and his wife of the Baptist mission left for the United States, and Dr. Jones, also, on a visit. Rev. Charles Robinson and his family of the A. B. C. F. M. also left Siam, while Mrs. Dr. Bradley died at Bangkok in the triumphs of faith after years of efficient service for Christ. But Prince Chow Fah Mongkut, who became king later, invited Rev. Jesse Caswell, an American missionary to become his teacher. He was a graduate of Lane Theological Seminary, a member of the Presbytery of Cincinnati, and in the service of the A. B. C. F. M.</p>
1846	<p>The American Board gave up its Chinese department in Siam. The American Baptists gave some attention to compiling a <i>Tie Chiu</i> dictionary for the benefit of present and future missionaries. Calls for religious tracts became more numerous, many went into the families of princes, nobles and even one of the highest princes. The Chinese hearers at the chapel</p>

	numbered about forty.
1847	Rev. Stephen Mattoon and his wife and Samuel R. House, M. D., the newly-appointed missionaries of the Presbyterian Board, recommenced the mission work of that Board in Siam which had been discontinued. Upon arriving the new-comers were most cordially received by the A. B. C. F. M. and the American Baptist mission, and welcomed to the homes of Messrs. Caswell and Hemenway, the only remaining members of the A. B. C. F. M. They were visited by many of the nobles and princes, and also paid their respects to the Praklang, Prince T. Mourfauoi, and his elder brother, T, Y, Chow Fall Mongkut, the prince priest at his residence.
1848	Miss Harriet H. Morse joined the American Baptist mission in February, specially to labor in the Siamese department. She did excellent service until 1855. The native church began to understand and practice the grace of liberality. In 1848-49 the church supported the principal native assistant entirely for the year, besides sustaining two schools more than six months.
1849	The Presbyterian missionaries were made glad by the arrival in April of Rev. Stephen Bush and his wife, as were the Baptists by Rev. Samuel J. Smith's arrival in June. The first Presbyterian church was organized in Siam. This church was made up of the mission families. A worthy native brother was added by certificate from the church in connection with mission of the A. B. C. F. M.—Quakieng. For fifteen years its missionaries had cultivated this most barren field.

As shown in the table, three American missionary organizations, the American Board of Foreign Missions (The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (A. B. C. F. M.)), the American Baptist Mission and the American Presbyterian Mission had been working in Siam in the early stage. The American missionaries preached faithfully to both the Siamese and the Chinese in various ways, like being both preacher and printer, using the Siamese language and the Chinese dialects, producing and distributing Siamese New Testament, catechism and Christian doctrine tracts, establishing worship center, missionary stations and churches or chapels, printing-presses and office, baptizing some Chinese and Siamese converts, training native Chinese preachers, supporting the native assistants, and providing modernized education including the Siamese, English and Chinese schools, etc. They introduced advanced medicine like inoculation and vaccination into Siam. They had labored very well. The natives including the Siamese

and Chinese experienced the truthfulness, benevolence and goodness of American Christian men.⁴ Furthermore, the American missionaries, as machinist and politician, spread the practical knowledge of modern innovation among the ruling class of Siam and paid respects to the princes and the prince priests, which exerted very significant influence in Siam and hence facilitated their evangelical works. All these works laid the foundation for the development of Christianity and modernization in Siam in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

2. Development of the American Missionaries in Siam in 1850-1915

In 1850, Rev. Dr. Bradley, who had transferred his relations to the American Missionary Association, returned (to Siam) with Mrs. Sarah B. Bradley and his children from the United States, and with him came as associates Rev. L. B. Lane, M. D., and Prof. J. Silsby. To the American Missionary Association (A. M. A.) had been made over the dwelling houses, chapel and printing-press, etc. of the A. B. C. F. M. The Presbyterian mission failed to procure a home of its own because of the unwillingness of the government to give foreigners any foothold upon Siam. Nangklao or Rama III (1788-1851), the king of Siam who had always been a zealous Buddhist, had become more despotic and averse to foreign intercourse than ever. He settled down into a narrow policy to exclude all nations except China from the products of his dominion. The native gospel teachers were imprisoned, and threatened with the rattan and fetters. The Siamese servants left in a panic and none came to hear gospel. Worse still, the American Baptist mission suffered a serious fire in January 1851, which destroyed their dwelling-houses, chapel, printing-press including a nearly-completed New Testament in Siamese and all their personal effects.⁵ In April of this year, Mongkut (Prince Chow Fah Noi 1804-1868) who had long been secluded from public affairs in a monastery but with intimate association with the American missionaries, was made the second king. He became a pupil of Mr. J. H. Chandler, a missionary of the American Baptist Mission, and allowed further development of Christianity with trust in his teacher, which brought a new era of Christianity development to Siam. The gospel teachers and servants returned as the king was known to be personally friendly to the missionaries. They were treated with respect by all ranks. Providence was pleased to order trials and bereavements to all the missions.⁶

⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 366-367.

⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 367-369, 371.

⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 359, 369-370.

In this month Mr. and Mrs. Ashmore joined the American Baptist Mission, and remained in connection with it nearly seven years. With their support, the native church had thirty-five members including thirty native believers. In this year, a decree was also issued to tolerate Christian worship and missionary itinerancy. Upon the invitation of the king, the female members of the American Baptist Mission visited the palace daily to instruct the ladies of the court English. The contributions of the church were equal to one dollar per member.⁷

Dr. Jones, an outstanding missionary and scholar of the American Baptist Mission passed away in September this year, which was a great loss to the missionary strength in Siam. Just before his death, Rev. William Ashmore and his wife had been sent to Bangkok to take charge of the Chinese department of the American Baptist Mission by the Baptist Board.⁸ In the same year, the Presbyterian mission also obtained an eligible location which was tendered them near the center of the city, adjoining one of the largest wats (Buddhist temples) and in the neighborhood of several others. King Mongkut who desired his ladies equipped with knowledge in English, invited the wives of the missionaries to visit the palace and alternate in giving regular instruction to his family members. The wives of the missionaries of the three missions had committed in this important education work for the royal family for three years. In October 1852, the Presbyterian mission completed and occupied the other dwelling-house which became its home and ample room.⁹ After the various evangelical works including Sabbath service, Christian book distribution and school education, etc. done by the mission, it experienced a time of great outward prosperity. The government became friendly with the mission. The missionaries enjoyed the respect of all classes, their schools flourished and their books were eagerly sought. The mission of the American Missionary Association, as a special token of the king's regard for its senior member, Dr. Bradley was permitted to occupy a desirable location at the mouth of the principal canal of the city which was the chief channel of travel west.¹⁰

Dr. House of the American Presbyterian Mission made a tour of great interest to Korat, an important inland town north-east of Bangkok in 1853. He distributed many books and made known to many a surprised listener in a wide district of country never

⁷ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, pp.180-181.

⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 371.

⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 372-373.

¹⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 374-375.

before visited by a missionary. Mr. Mattoon devoted much of his time to making a revised translation of the New Testament into Siamese. The American Baptist Mission also baptized eight Siamese converts in this year. In 1854, Mr. Chandler, who had been temporarily in America, returned to the mission, and Rev. Robert Telford was added to the laborers. He did faithful service for ten years, and returned to the United States in 1864, on account of the failure of Mrs. Telford's health. After the death of Dr. Jones, Rev. S. J. Smith, born in Hindostan and who had been associated with Dr. Jones for several years as well as having been appointed a missionary in 1848, married the widow of Dr. Jones, and has ever since been helpful in the Siamese work. Besides, Mormon missionary reached Siam in 1854 but withdrew soon as meeting no encouragement. The Siamese indulged in the practice of polygamy. Mr. J. H. Chandler and his wife returned to Siam, and with them came the Rev. Robert Telford and wife to assist in the Chinese department of the Baptist mission. In January 1855, Dr. Lane of the American Missionary Association, on account of the health of his family, and Miss Morse of the Baptist mission, took their final leave of Siam. Dr. House, re-embarking with his wife and Rev. A. B. Morse and wife, reached Bangkok again in July 1856, greatly to the joy of the solitary mission family there.¹¹ Meanwhile, one or two months before, the government of United States had negotiated a treaty almost identical with the British, and to the great satisfaction of the Siamese, Mr. Mattoon was appointed consul. On the other hand, he continued his mission-work including preaching and bible translation, etc. In 1856, the Presbyterian schools reported forty-seven in attendance, and every department of the work was in successful operation. Another station in Bangkok and a large lot with frontage on the river on its west bank in the lower suburbs of the city were secured. Mr. Morse removed there and started building a brick dwelling-house with the advantage of carrying on some departments of missionary work. The Presbyterian mission was then established on the newly-purchased ground and it removed to the new station four miles below in November 1857. Another dwelling-house commenced immediately. The number of ordained ministers warranted the formation of a Presbytery. The Presbytery of Siam was duly constituted in September 1858, but signs of superficial religious interest appeared.¹²

The stricken band in the Presbyterian mission was strengthened by the return of Mr. Mattoon and his family, and Rev. N. A. McDonald and Rev. S. G. McFarland and their

¹¹ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, pp.181-182; Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp.375-377.

¹² Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 378-380.

wives in the same month. The mission set up its own press and was in successful operation soon. It certainly helped the spread of the Christian publication and hence the gospel in Siam. In 1859, Messrs. Wilson and McFarland of the Presbyterian mission accompanied Mr. Telford of the Baptist Board on a trip for distribution of Siamese and Chinese tracts down the east coast of the gulf as far as Chantaboon. With this accession to the Presbyterian mission members as they had lately received, the mission established a new station in Petchaburee outside of Bangkok. This is an important inland town, about eighty-five miles southwest from the capital city. The acting governor of the province favored having a station there, where the authorities treated uncivilly the first missionaries who visited it, and arrested those who received books from them. The Baptist mission also opened a second place of public worship in this year. The mission believed that there was a period of special religious interest in 1860. The native members formed a "Society for the Diffusion of the Religion of Jesus," which supported one colporter. In 1861, a new chapel was erected, and more than two thousand dollars were subscribed towards the building by the first and second kings, nobles and princes. In this year, Messrs. McGilvary and McFarland with their families also moved to Petchaburee, and another dwelling-house was built there. The name Petchaburee signified the "city of diamonds". The missionaries found there in the midst of the rubbish of heathen superstition and idolatry, a gem or a living stone of priceless value for evangelical work. Through their evangelical effort in there, some natives became their church members and further spread the gospel among the native people. In February 1862, Rev. S. C. George and his wife, who had been sent out by the Presbyterian Board arrived in Bangkok. A neat mission-chapel which had been built on the mission premises was opened for divine service in May.¹³

By the departure of Mr. Telford in 1863, the Chinese church of the Baptist mission was left without a missionary. The church then numbered thirteen, and the Siamese twenty-eight. In August 1864, Rev. Cyrus A. Chilcott, a young and gifted missionary joined the Chinese mission in Bangkok for more than one year. Just before his death, Miss A. M. Fielde joined his missionary work. She remained a devoted missionary for several years in Bangkok, and since that time in connection with the mission at Swatow in China. When Dr. Dean returned to the Baptist mission in Bangkok, she labored under his direction.¹⁴ In February of this year, Mrs. Mattoon of the Presbyterian mission left

¹³ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, pp. 182; Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp.382-385.

¹⁴ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, pp. 182-183.

Siam because of asthmatic problem, but Mr. Mattoon remained to finish the important work of making a revised translation of the Siamese New Testament. In December, Rev. Dr. Dean returned with Mrs. Dean, Miss F. Dean and Rev. C. H. Chilcott to take charge again of the Baptist Board's mission-work for the Chinese and of the Chinese church in Bangkok. In April 1866, Rev. P. L. Garden and his wife arrived to join the Presbyterian mission, and Rev. J. Wilson also returned with Mrs. Kate M. Wilson in July. The fall of this year was a season of marked religious interest at the Bangkok station. There were several cases of conversion. A daily prayer meeting which was instituted by the converts was well sustained. Dr. and Mrs. House also returned to the Presbyterian mission in December. In October 1867, the missionaries stated: "During the past twelve months more additions have been made to the native church than in all the previous years of its history." Eleven had been received in Bangkok and four in Petchaburee.¹⁵ In the judgment of Dr. Dean, the considerable evangelical and preparatory work of the Baptist mission was worthy to be cherished. In his report of this year he said:

The work in Thailand (Siam) is indeed small, but hopeful, and should be continued. Since the forming of the church in 1837, there were fifty one Chinese baptized in Christ. The work of preparation has been done.¹⁶

Rev. William M. Lisle and his wife joined the Baptist mission with hope in January 1868.¹⁷ Rev. Samuel J. Smith and his wife, who had long been connected with the American Baptist Board, also became self-supporting. Mr. Smith was in charge of not only a large printing-establishment and a weekly English newspaper but also Sabbath preaching and other services in Siamese. Mrs. Smith, as an indefatigable teacher and writer, also did much in the work of instruction and others for the good of Siam. However, the Siamese department of the Baptist mission was suspended this year.¹⁸

King Mongkut of Siam who was a practical astronomer and very fond of science, invited the French astronomical expedition and the foreigners including the missionaries to be his guests on some occasions. In the death of the king in October 1868, the missionaries lost a kind personal friend and "well-wisher," as he used to sign himself and all a liberal-minded sovereign, who put no obstacles in the way of their evangelizing his people. Prince Chulalongkorn, his eldest son of only fifteen years, was made his

¹⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 387-389.

¹⁶ Samuel Kho, *150 Years of Thankfulness: A history of the Maitrichit Chinese Baptist Church (1837-1987)* (Bangkok: Maitrichit Church, 1987), p. 8.

¹⁷ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 183.

¹⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 390.

successor by the unanimous choice of the grandees of the realm in the same month. The young king won very favorable opinions from the missionaries who sought an early audience to express their congratulations and best wishes by his intelligence and the evident sincerity of his assurances of good-will. King Chulalongkorn (1853-1910) was the first ruler of Siam to break over the superstition that prevented his setting foot outside of his own dominions.¹⁹ 1868 was a year of rich blessing. Two chapels were dedicated and two churches organized at the out-stations. In January 1869, the American missionaries were reinforced by the addition of Rev. James W. Van Dyke and Rev. John Carrington and their wives to the Presbyterian mission, and Rev. S. B. Partridge and his wife to the Baptist. Mr. Van Dyke was assigned at once to the Petchaburee station as a colleague to Mr. McFarland and then labored alone. Mr. Carrington remained at Bangkok and while acquiring the language gave valuable assistance in the school. Mr. Partridge who had been a signal-officer of bravery in the war of the Rebellion, was able to perform valiant service for the mission.²⁰ In February 1870, Mr. McDonald left Siam for the U.S. with his family. A young Siamese who accompanied them was baptized by him. In October 1871, Miss Fielde of the Baptist mission to the Chinese also left Siam to join the mission of the Board in Swatow, China. Near the end of this year Mr. McDonald and his family returned to Siam, and with them Rev. R. Arthur and his wife, Rev. J. Culbertson and Miss E. S. Dickey. Miss Dickey was an efficient teacher in the mission-school in Bangkok, and subsequently in Petchaburee. Rev. Cornelius Bradley and his wife came back to Siam to be associated with his father in the mission-work of the American Missionary Association in 1871. In June 1872, Ayuthia, the ancient capital of Siam, a town of considerable importance, was occupied as a missionary station by Rev. J. Carrington of the Presbyterian mission and his family. Mr. and Mrs. Arthur also joined their missionary work. Their new chapel was dedicated with interesting services in Petchaburee in August. In October, twenty church-members were reported in Petchaburee, and eighteen in Bangkok.²¹

In 1872, Dr. Dean insisted on the continuance of the missionary work in Bangkok, in response to the question of the Executive Committee of the Baptist mission that whether it was expedient to maintain a mission for the Chinese at Bangkok. However, Mr.

¹⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 391-393.

²⁰ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, pp. 183-184; Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 393-394.

²¹ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 184; Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 400-401.

Partridge was transferred to Swatow, China four years from the time he began his work. Dr. Dean was left with his family in Bangkok and in charge of the Chinese department. Mrs. Dean continued to teach the Siamese women and children and two of the former were baptized. The members the three churches numbered seventy-eight, but the lamp burned somewhat dimly.²² In the next year, there was a great diminution of the number of the missionaries in the Presbyterian mission. The great loss to Siam was brought by the death of Dr. Bradley, the missionary of the longest service in the field. He had been laboring for Siam and the Siamese for thirty-nine years with undiminished faith and zeal until June of this year. Fortunately, Maa Tuan, the eldest daughter of Quakieng, the former Chinese assistant, was received to church membership in November, and two of his sons were admitted afterwards. A translation of *Pilgrim's Progress*, made by the native elder of the Bangkok church, was also printed and was sought after in this year. Upon the departure of Dr. Bradley, the American Missionary Association withdrew altogether from the field in Siam in 1874. The Presbyterian Board was then the only Board left to provide for the spiritual needs of the Siamese people. Miss Mary L. Cort and Miss Susie D. Grimstead joined the Siam mission and were assigned to the station in Petchaburee. Miss Cort has remained there ever since, in labors abundant and manifold with courage untiring.²³ On the other hand, as S. F. Smith, the Baptist missionary scholar stated "the year 1874 was the most remarkable in the entire history of the mission." All the out-stations of the Baptist mission received large additions by baptism, as well as in Bangkok. Two new churches were constituted, two chapels were finished, and a pastor ordained.²⁴ In October 1875, Rev. S. G. McFarland and his wife returned to Siam together with Rev, Eugene p. Dunlap and wife. The departure of Dr. House and his wife made necessary the coming over of Mr. and Mrs. Van Dyke from Petchaburee to take charge of the upper station of the Presbyterian mission in Bangkok. They assisted Miss Grimstead in the management of the girls' school.²⁵ Dr. Dean had gathered many fruits in Siam during his forty years of service for the Baptist mission. The year 1876 indicated a natural reaction after the great blessing. Dr. Dean shortly returned to the U.S. in this year and his absence was felt by the people, who were as sheep without a shepherd in spite of the presence of their native pastors.²⁶

²² Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, pp. 184-185.

²³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 402-405.

²⁴ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 185.

²⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 406-407.

²⁶ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 186.

1877 was a fruitful year for the missionaries. The native churches received large accessions, thirteen being added to the Bangkok church, twenty to the Petchaburee, making the total number of communicants in Siam one hundred and four. The Baptist mission also reported that it had six churches and 418 members in Siam in this year.²⁷ In fact, the Government of Siam arrayed itself in favor of Christianity. For instance, it issued a proclamation in October 1878 to claim:

Whoever is of the opinion that any particular religion is correct, let him hold to it as he pleases: the right or wrong will be to the person who holds to it. In the treaties and in the customs of the kingdom of Siam, there is no prohibition against persons who shall hold to any particular religion. If anyone is of the opinion that the religion of the Lord Jesus is good, let him hold to it freely." "Whenever there is government work, persons who hold to the religion of the Lord Jesus must perform it. No religion is henceforth allowed to interfere in government work. Whoever shall hold to any system of religion, let him do so freely. Let no Phraya Lao, Taosaan, or common person, being a relative or a master of a person holding to the religion of the Lord Jesus, interfere in any affair which that religion does not permit or allow to be done, as worshipping spirits, feasting spirits, and various employments on Sunday. Let there be no compulsion or constraint to practise or to do anything of the kind: it is absolutely forbidden. Only war and business of absolute importance are excepted. At such times they must serve on Sunday, but let there be no impositions."²⁸

The Baptist mission in Bangkok had been full of variations in circumstances by 1878. Most of the missionaries there were also of brief residential duration as shown in the following table.

Baptist Missionary	Approximate Duration of Residence²⁹
Dr. Dean	22 years
Dr. Jones	18 years
Mr. Davenport	9 years
Mr. Telford	9 years
Mr. Goddard	7.5 years
Dr. Ashmore	7 years
Miss Morse	7 years

²⁷ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 186; Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 408.

²⁸ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 187.

²⁹ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, pp. 187-188.

Miss Fielde	6 years
Mr. Partridge	4 years
Mr. Chilcott	1 year
Mr. Slafter	Less than 8 months
Mr. Reed	5 months
Mr. Lisle	Less than 1 month

Based on the above history of the Baptist mission, S. F. Smith pointed out the nature of the pilgrim-life of missionaries, moving like shepherds' tents in Siam. Their long and discouraging labors often seemed of little benefit or service, but in a promising manner that the seed of gospel, long buried, springs to life, and brings forth fruit.³⁰ As for the achievement of the Presbyterian mission, two new churches were organized under the direction of the Presbytery of Siam in 1878. One was located at the upper station of Bangkok and the other in Bangkaboon, a fishing-village near Petchaburee. The native Christians in Bangkok constructed a house for the native preacher at Ayuthia, and support another assistant there. The total church membership in Siam numbered one hundred and thirty-three.³¹

In January 1879, King Chulalongkorn published a proclamation of religious freedom to all the people in Siam again. In the next few years, he also instituted many other measures of reform, and therefore was considered the most civilized and progressive native ruler in Asia, like the Emperor of Japan in that time.³² Under this favorable circumstance, the Presbyterian Board sent out Rev. C. S. McClelland and his wife to the Siam mission, with Miss Laura A. Olmstead in 1880. The McClellands went to Petchaburee. Miss Olmstead became Miss Hartwell's associate in the girls' school. In spite of the sad defection of the native elder in the First Church of the Presbyterian mission in Bangkok, and the absence of any ordained missionary in Petchaburee for a while, twenty-five new converts were reported in Siam in this year. In 1881, the new missionaries and the lady teachers in Petchaburee were greatly tried by the stubborn resistance and unchristian conduct of their native helpers and other church-members. The missionaries at the station and even some pupils and others on the mission premises also suffered severely from cholera. Ernest A. Sturge, M. D. was the only means of saving

³⁰ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 188.

³¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 409-410.

³² Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 188.

many lives in the town and vicinity. In 1882, Rev. McClelland and his wife, Miss Coffman and Miss Hattie McDonald left the Presbyterian mission in Siam because of ill-health. Although the whole burden of the schools in Petchaburee fell upon Miss Cort, the girls' school in Bangkok still had thirty-seven names on its roll. An exhibition of the skill and industry of the Presbyterian mission for the Royal Centennial Exposition was conducted in this year in commemoration of the founding of Bangkok. King Chulalongkorn greatly supported the exhibition and became the purchaser of the whole. The greatly-needed reinforcements to the missions also came in this year. Some missionaries including Mr. Van Dyke, Mr. and Mrs. Dunlap, Rev. C. D., Mrs. McLaren and Miss Lillian M. Luinell, who had been home to regain their health returned to the Siam mission. They were very graciously received in Bangkok by the king, of whom they obtained through the U.S. minister to Siam, General Halderman.³³

The Baptist mission to the Chinese, which had been maintained in successful operation for years by the veteran missionaries Dr. and Mrs. Dean was reinforced by the arrival of Rev. L. A. Eaton in December 1882. There were many additions to this number during 1883. Petchaburee was favored with a revival of interest in spiritual matters. The faithful discipline and the zealous labors of Mr. Dunlap resulted in the penitential return of many wanderers and in the addition of fifty-six communicants during the ten months preceding October. Notwithstanding the threat from the Chinese protective societies, the Baptist churches numbered five and the members five hundred in this year.³⁴ As for the Presbyterian mission, Rajburi was occupied by the mission and then was made an out-station with Siamese workers in charge in 1910. In 1899, the first stations were opened in Pitsanuloke in the north near the boundary between the two missions of Siam and Liao, and Nakon in the southwest on the peninsula. Eleven years afterwards, upon the appeal of Dr. E. P. Dunlap, a new station was opened at Tap Teang, west of Nakon. The expansion of the mission had been exceedingly slow and for years its work was only confined to Bangkok and Petchaburi and the surrounding region, with occasional work in more distant parts of the field by the few missionaries who were free for itineration.³⁵

³³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 411-414.

³⁴ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 188; Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 414-416.

³⁵ Robert E. Speer et al., *Report of Deputation of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to Siam, The Philippines, Japan, Chosen and China April-November 1915* (New York City: The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, 1915), p. 80.

The American missionaries particularly the Presbyterian mission and the Baptist mission were steadily establishing their homes, churches, chapels, schools, extending the missionary bases and stations and preaching places, baptizing and training the natives, developing the evangelical and social works especially in the Bangkok city and nearby, and hence bringing about a close relationship with the royal family, upper classes and the common people including the Chinese despite their sicknesses, the natural disasters and the Buddhist threat occurred at times, as the king and the government of Siam gradually adopted a friendly, open and favorable policy towards them and their various works which were considered beneficial to the country.

C. Views and Criticisms of the American Missionaries on the Siamese Culture

I. Life of the Siamese

1. Inhabitants in Siam and Their Appearance

Apart from the Chinese immigrants, who monopolized trade, the inhabitants in Siam may be classified into three groups: 1) the full-blooded Siamese of the North; 2) the Samsams, or mixed Malay and Siamese population; and 3) the southern Malays, subdivided into the rude aborigines, who inhabited the wooded uplands of Malacca, and the more cultivated Mohammedan Malays. They were migratory in their habits. Like the followers of the False Prophet, they were attached to their faith but readily accommodated themselves to the social usages of the Siamese and Chinese in all other respects. They wore turbans and loose trouser and carried a bent poignard.³⁶ The Siamese generally had copper-colored complexion, black eyes, black hair, black teeth, scanty clothing and shaven heads. They were also very skillful boatmen.³⁷

2. Women

It was difficult to distinguish a Siamese woman of the lower classes from a man in dress, manner, appearance and occupation. The streets, marketplaces and the temples were crowded with women. Housekeeping and needlework form a small part of female labor there that considerable opportunity is given for out-of-door work.³⁸

³⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 39-40.

³⁷ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 81-82.

³⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 34.

3. Marriage

When a Siamese man wanted a wife, he got two or three elderly persons who were friends of the maiden's parents to intercede for him and offered a certain sum of money for the maiden. Whether the maiden was willing or not, she was married to the one who paid the highest price. The matrimonial age for a Siamese maiden was about seventeen. Mary Backus, a missionary scholar of the American Presbyterian Mission had briefly described this marriage custom with the example of her friend, Leang, a native member of the Presbyterian Church and a student of the school under Mrs. House. When Leang was about seventeen years old her parents thought it was time for their daughter to be married. They received an offer from a wealthy Chinaman who was a heathen much older than Leang and had already had two or more wives. He just wanted Leang to add a new ornament to his harem.³⁹ In fact, polygamy, as a custom, was common particularly among the higher classes in Siam. The Siamese men usually had several wives at a time, but they did not marry all in the same way. They paid a sum of money for each, but all ceremony was laid aside after the first marriage to save the ceremony payment. They often built a little house for each wife, or assigned her a small suite of rooms in the mansion if they were men of wealth and position. On the other hand, polygamy was not common among the lower classes as the underclass could not support more than one wife at a time. However, a wife could be put away or left at will. In spite of these evil practices, the missionaries admired the Siamese for many of their families where the “heart of the husband safely trusted in the wife,” and the wife, with loving confidence in husband “looked well to the ways of her household.”⁴⁰

4. Homes of Different People

The houses of the lower class in Siam particularly Bangkok were usually small, of one story and thatched with the leaves of the attap palm. Most of them were not painted. The houses on the land were placed on posts six feet high, and their sides were made of bamboos split and woven together, forming a kind of basket-work. Besides, thousands of the people lived in floating houses lining both banks of the river, which were one of the peculiarities of the Eastern city. The floating houses were one story high, and built of boards and placed on rafts of large bamboos, which rose and fell with the tide. These rafts were renewed every two or three years. The houses of the princes and nobles were large and handsomely furnished. The missionaries, foreign consuls, merchants and wealthy

³⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 34, 164-165.

⁴⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 174.

Chinese also had good and substantial dwellings. The ordinary Siamese houses of the lower class on the land usually had three rooms. The Siamese suitor must often promise to furnish the requisite number before the parents will consent to let him claim his bride. There was the bedroom, where the family all crowded together at night; an outer room, where they sat through the day and where they received visitors; and the kitchen.⁴¹ The bedroom was where things like old baskets and bags, rags, bundles and boxes accumulated. Idols were found in the bedroom sometimes, especially if anyone was sick. There were no bedstead, table, chair, bureau, washstand or any of those things which were considered necessary. A torn straw mat or an ox-hide on the floor, with a brick-shaped pillow stuffed with cotton or a brick or block of wood for a pillow, constituted the ordinary Siamese bed. There were long narrow mattresses stuffed with tree-cotton in the families which were not very poor. They might be covered with an old ragged waistcloth, and over them was suspended a mosquito curtain of cloth or unbleached cotton. The missionary criticized that these curtains had been hanging for years without ever being washed. The beds and mats were filthy and swarming with bugs, which also infested the curtains, coverings, cracks in the floor, wall, boxes, and all the rubbish in the room, and they even crept over the people. The outer room was barren enough, with a mat or ox-hide for guests to sit upon, and a tray from which all were served with betel and tobacco. It was considered a great insult not to offer betel to guests. They thought the red lips and black teeth it produced were very beautiful.⁴² However, the missionary seemed tended to disagree to this custom. Regarding the furniture, the cooking utensils and the mats which served for beds, with the pillows of gayly-painted bamboo or of tightly-stuffed cotton, made up the entire furnishing of a Siamese home. The houses of the poor people were just simple bamboo huts of one or two rooms, while their richer neighbors had teak-wood houses with an extra room; but all were alike simple in their furniture.⁴³ Therefore, the missionary generally thought that all kinds of the Siamese houses were indeed short of furniture for having normal home life. As for their livestock, the missionary also pointed out that the Siamese did not bring their cattle into the house because it was very frail and set upon poles about six feet from the ground. The Siamese kept the livestock under the house, so that they could hear if thieves come to steal them.⁴⁴ One can imagine the Siamese houses were noisy and stank because of the livestock beneath, particularly in hot weather.

⁴¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 87-88, 175.

⁴² Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 180-181.

⁴³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 184.

⁴⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 181-182.

5. Kitchen and the Cooking

The missionary criticized that the Siamese had no godliness and their kitchen was often a dirty and dingy place, and the tiling to it entirely lacked cleanliness. Kitchen had no chimney, and the smoke naturally finds its way out so that everything was black and sooty. There was little furniture except a fireplace, a black rice-pot, a kettle, a frying-pan, baskets of various shapes, a pail for carrying water, drying fish, ...etc. It also had a rude box filled with earth where they built the fire and cooked; that was they boiled rice and made curry and roast fish and plantains over the coals. There should also be a little stool, a foot square and six inches high, that the Siamese called a table. They often placed the curry, fish and sliced vegetables on the stool, while those who ate squat about it, each having a bowl of rice, which was replenished from a larger dish nearby or directly from the rice-pot in the fireplace. All in the household were taught to do these simple things. If the father and the brothers are at home in poor families, where the women work for the living, were apt to get them ready as the women. There was no making of bread, pie, cake or pudding—no roast, gravies and soups. Even vegetables were seldom cooked at home, but were prepared by others and sold in the markets or peddled about the streets. There they bought boiled sweet potatoes, green corn, stewed fruits, curries, roasted fish, nuts, peanuts, bananas, sliced pineapple, melon and squash, etc. Pickled onions and turnips were sold through the streets of Bangkok and Petchaburee. The missionary regarded these two foods just as the pickled beets sold in Damascus of the Christian World.⁴⁵

6. Housekeeping and Home Life

The missionary noted that the housekeeping among the Siamese was very simple and primitive. It was remarkably different from the complicated, advanced and various housekeeping of the American. There were no women who had worn out their lives in making and mending, baking and scrubbing, and fussing over cook-stove in Siam. The Siamese did not dread the spring house cleaning or the fall setting up of stoves and putting down of carpets. There was no Thanksgiving dinner to cook, nor Christmas holiday feasting, Fourth of July picnic, preserving, pickling, canning of fruits, packing of butter, pressing of cheese, etc., as in the United States. For this reason, the missionary adversely criticized that the Siamese had no happy home-life, family altar and pleasant social board where father, mother, sisters and brothers met three times a day. There was also no sitting-room for developing loving companionship with their household, no place

⁴⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 175-177.

for books, and no books to read, except a few vile tales or books of superstition and witchery.⁴⁶

7. Food Culture: Meals and Table Manners

There was no regularity about the meals of the Siamese. They ate whenever they were hungry and did not wait for one another. In the higher families, the men always ate first and then their wives, children and dogs took what was left. The usual rule was for each one to wash his own rice-bowl. They ate with their fingers, seldom using spoon. Mary Backus tried to compare their food and table manners with those of the early Christian, and pointed out:

They (the Siamese) do not use the wafer-like bread so common in the Levant, which the Syrians double into a kind of three-cornered spoon, and, dipping up some kibby, or camel-stew, or rice, eat down spoon and all.⁴⁷

It seemed that the Siamese were inferior to the early Christian in terms of food culture in the eyes of the missionary. Mary Backus also criticized the dietetic hygiene of the Siamese by mentioning that their kitchen floors were nearly all made of split bamboo with great cracks between, through which the Siamese poured all the slops and pushed the scraps and bones, so that sweeping was unnecessary. What's more, near the door there were also large earthen jars for water, which were filled from the river. They washed their feet with the water before they entered the house, and their hands and mouths before and after they ate.⁴⁸ But it seemed that the water in the river was unclean. Mary Backus particularly criticized that the dirty vessels that the Siamese used brought about diseases to them:

They use brass basins and trays a great deal, but for lack of scouring they are discolored and green with verdigris; and I cannot help thinking that the use of such vessels is one of the fruitful sources of the fearful sores and eruptions with which the whole nation is afflicted.⁴⁹

8. Food Culture: Staple Foods

Rice was the principal food for the natives including the Siamese and Chinese. For the common people, the chief food was fish. A great variety of fishes were produced in the rivers of Siam. The American missionaries also liked some kinds of the fishes which

⁴⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 182.

⁴⁷ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 178.

⁴⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 178.

⁴⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 178.

were delicious. Curry was made of all sorts of things, but was usually a combination of meat, fish and vegetables. The ingredients were chopped fine or pounded in a mortar, especially the red peppers, onions and spices. The predominant flavor was red pepper which made people moody and easily irritated. Many of the curries were very nice, and with rice furnished a good meal. However, the missionary reported that the vessels of the Siamese sometimes had broth of abominable things which disgusted the missionaries. For instance, the Siamese made curry of rats or bats or of the meat of animals that had died of disease; and they flavored it with kapick, a sort of rotten fish of which all the Siamese were very fond. Siam produced two of the most abominable but the most delicious food for the inhabitants. They were durian, a large fruit, and kapick which was not found anywhere outside Siam.⁵⁰ Plenty of the Siamese foods that the natives thought delicious were actually considered abominable by the missionaries.

9. Various Ships for Multi-Purposes

The boats in Siam particularly Bangkok were usually used for trading and loaded with rice, sugar, salt, cotton, oil, dried fish and dye-woods, etc. Some functioned as boat, shop and dwelling at the same time. Nobleman's boat was always propelled by a dozen or two paddlers. Men, women and children in Siam could swim. There were also a large number of steam-yachts owned by the natives on the rivers of Siam. The Chinese also had their own Chinese junks which were moored by immense ratan cables. Foreign ships with national flag from many different nations also sailed to Siam for the purposes of commerce and others.⁵¹

10. Costume and Its Washing

Most of the Siamese wore no upper garment but only a waist-cloth, which they kept on when they went to bath. When they came up out of the water they changed it for a dry one. It was then rubbed a little in the water, wrung out and spread in the sun to dry. They folded it up when it was dry. In other words, there were no washing days or ironing days for the Siamese.⁵²

11. Expense of Daily Life

Rice costed three cents per pound. Bananas were sold for two cents a dozen and oranges for half a cent each. Building a little bamboo house after the native fashion did not cost

⁵⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 68, 122, 176-177.

⁵¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 85-87.

⁵² Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 178, 181.

much. For example, Miss Cort paid for a schoolhouse in Petchaburee, fourteen by twenty-two feet, only \$6.38 for the materials; \$5.44 for the wages of the men and women who built it, making the total cost of only \$11.82.⁵³

12. Sluggish Life and Social Life

The missionary noted that Siam was one of the hot countries in South-east Asia where everything was done slowly. The Siamese led a sluggish life.⁵⁴ Regarding their social life, the Siamese never gave any dinner-party or tea-party or visit to each other, as the missionaries did at home in the United States. There were occasional feasts at a wedding, funeral or hair-cutting. Sometimes girls in the neighborhood sat together under the trees to sew, or by the same lamp at night to economize oil and to chat and gossip. A popular place for the pastime of the Siamese was at the temples when they went to hear the Buddhist services, which were usually in Bali, and therefore not understood, or by the river-banks and wells when they went to fetch water.⁵⁵ The missionary thought that the Siamese lacked the proper ways and spaces to have social life.

13. Family Education

The missionary noted that the home-life of the Siamese and American children were remarkably different, though their plays had much in common. The missionary criticized that the Siamese parents loved their children as dearly but not as wisely, as American fathers and mothers loved theirs. The Siamese children were generally allowed to do just anything they were pleased with until the parents became angry and gave them harsh punishment. The hand of a little child was sometimes bent back until the child writhed in agony. They were whipped very severely, too. However, these punishments were not often administered for what the Americans would consider sinful. The missionary condemned the education by the parents that they lied, swore and gambled, and that they could not possibly punish their children who simply modelled upon their parents. They often cursed their children for something very minor, and hence the children learned to curse each other. The missionary bitterly denounced the child abuse and the poor home education by the Siamese parents. On the other hand, the missionary believed that there was one thing that the Siamese children could teach young folks in the United States. It was reverence for their parents and the old-aged and respect for those in authority.⁵⁶

⁵³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 68.

⁵⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 114.

⁵⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 181-182.

⁵⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 192.

14. Life of the Siamese Girl and Baby

Mary Backus described the daily of life the Siamese girls with the example of what her little friend did in a morning as follows:

“There she washes her face—not in the dipper, but by throwing the water over her hands and rubbing them over her face. She needs no towel, for the water is left to dry. She does not brush her teeth, for they are stained black by chewing the betel-nut and seri-leaf. Her hair does not require combing either, for it is all shaved except a little tuft on the top of the head, and that is tied in a little knot and not often combed; a day after a girl is twelve years old it is shaved and kept very short. After breakfast is over—and a very simple meal it is in Siam—the children go off and find some pleasant place in which to play. The baby goes with them, and is carried by the older sister on her right hip,.....The girls play at keeping house, and make dishes of clay dried in the sun, and from seeds, grasses and weeds they make all sorts of imaginary delicacies. Little images of clay washed with lime are their only dolls; these are sometimes laid in tiny cradles and covered with a few pieces of cloth.⁵⁷

As shown in this description, the missionary tended to criticize that the Siamese girls were lack of personal hygiene and parental care. Infants also lacked parental care. They received neither formal education nor informal education, and their pastimes were pleasurable but unhealthy. On the other hand, the Siamese cradles for baby were made on oblong wooden frames, from which hanged a network bag made of cord, which formed the cradle, and a board was put in the bottom to keep the netted cord in shape. The large cradle of the same sort in which the live baby slept was fastened by ropes to the rafters of the house. In the eyes of the missionary, this Siamese cradle formed a cooler and safer cradle than those in which American babies rested.⁵⁸

15. Pastimes of the Siamese Boy

The boys in Siam were very fond of pitching coins. They often played leap-frog and jumped the rope. They had also learned from the foreigners to play marbles and football. Football was a very popular game among the Siamese boys as well as men, but they used a little square piece of thick leather with feathers instead of a ball. Fishing and catching crabs and prawns were also favorite pastimes. At that time the young and old Siamese

⁵⁷ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 184-185.

⁵⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 185.

were actively engaged in playing games with kites. Mimic battles were frequently fought in the air by means of these kites, skillfully directed by strings held in the hands of the owners too. Siamese children always had pets raised for fighting. The boys often searched for crickets at sunset. These little creatures were put into small clay cages, closed at the top by bars of little sticks which let in the light and air. Then the boys gathered some evening, put all their crickets into a large box, and watched them fight. Needle-fish from their long sharp mouths were also used for this cruel purpose. Two fishes were put into separate bottles placed close to each other for snapping fight, though they could not reach each other. This passion for mimic fights grew in boyhood. When they became men they spent most of their time at cockpits, where nearly all their gambling was done.⁵⁹ The missionary tended to regard these games of fighting and gambling as cruel and uncivilized pastimes. The missionary also noted that there were no story books printed for the children of Siam, and stories were passed down verbally. The missionary criticized that their stories were “so uninteresting that the American children would wonder how anyone could listen to them.”⁶⁰

16. The Siamese Music and Entertainments

The missionary despised the Siamese for their ignorance or knowing nothing of music. In the eyes of the missionary, their songs were merely a monotonous chant. The Siamese had but few musical instruments, and it did not take many to make a full band. Their bands often played at weddings, funerals and other grand affairs, but they did not vary their programme in the least, playing the same tune on all of these occasions. For this reason, the missionary tended to look down upon the Siamese as the people of primitive or low culture.⁶¹ Theatrical performance was also popular in Siam. The masses always gathered to watch theatrical performance in which there were the actors and actresses with chalked faces or hideous masks and in glittering and fantastic attire. However, the center of attraction was a pretty child of a dozen summers or so, richly attired and fairly overlaid with jewelry like necklaces, gold chains, armllets, bracelets and anklets.⁶² Furthermore, celebrated gambling establishment was easily found near any house. It was a floating house occupied by a Chinese. The missionary used “Chinamen” as a derogatory term for these Chinese who were regarded as the master-gamblers of Siam. The gamblers were usually seated in the front of the room in the gambling house. They

⁵⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 185-187.

⁶⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 188.

⁶¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 190.

⁶² Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 192.

were seen in a brilliant light, sitting in two parties on the floor, and in their bewitching games. At the front was a little recess on a float, which was occupied by musicians and play-actors. Play often began late in the afternoon and lasted half the night. At one end of a Chinese gambling saloon was often an altar, and on it a figure of the god of luck. Between the play-actors and the gamblers was a paper screen with lamplight on the side of the performers, where a man made shadow puppet-shows, and contributing to the fascinating power of the gambling shop. When tired of gambling the Siamese usually adjourned to the neighboring theatre to watch the Lakons' theatrical performance in which only girls took part. There were many such gambling establishments down the river and probably hundreds in Bangkok, which were licensed by government. The gambling entertainment were gradually undermining the pillars of Siam, despite that they afforded much revenue. Three days in the year the people were allowed to gamble as they pleased. The missionary condemned this sin which was assuredly the ruin of this nation and urged for reformation. The missionary was inclined to condemn these immoral entertainments like gambling and girl show, and the related idol worship.⁶³

17. Compulsory Work for Captives and the Siamese Perception of the Chinese

The Siamese captives were liable to be called upon to do government work at any time. For this reason, the captives sometimes escaped the work by wearing the queue to pretend to be the Chinese, despite that the Siamese often looked down upon the Chinese and regarded them as pork-raiser, an inferior class. Mary Backus shared his story about a Siamese boy to illustrate these circumstances in that time:

A lad on our premises who had worn the queue for years decided to have it cut off, and when asked why he did so replied, " I hear the Siamese are requiring every one wearing the queue to give in the Chinese language the different parts of a pig; as I could not do that, I had my queue cut off." If the story is true, it was a happy thought of the Siamese. The Chinese are the pork-raisers of Siam, and could easily meet the test.⁶⁴

II. Siamese Customs and Superstition

1. Traditional Tales and Historical Ruins

In Siam, all sorts of wild tales and legends were told of perils from robbers, wild beasts

⁶³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 233-235.

⁶⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 150.

and malarious sickness which were supposed to be the curse of evil spirits inflicted on those hardy enough to venture into the situation of extreme disadvantage, antagonism or hostility. The missionary noted that there were some celebrated ruins in a forest some miles north of Siamrap. They included the ruins of Nagkon Thorn, Angkor the Great, or Nagkon Wat, the City of Monasteries. The city ruins were little more than piles of stone among the jungles. Concerning Angkor the Great, the missionary criticized that the ancient tradition spoke in most extravagant terms, as being of "great extent, with miles of royal treasure-houses, thousands of war-elephants, millions of foot-soldiers and innumerable tributary princes." The missionary tended to denounce these traditional tales, legends and historical ruins as vulgar and widespread superstitions.⁶⁵

2. Custom for New-born Infant

As recorded by the missionary, the new-born Siamese baby was first well rubbed with a red and yellow powder, and strings with a silver coin attached were tied around her wrists and ankles; then, being wrapped in some pieces of their dirty, worn-out waist-cloths, she was put on a cotton pillow under a round framework in bird-cage shape, covered with dark muslin. As Siamese custom required, baby and cage were then set away in a corner of the close room where the mother was lying on a bare board before four or five smoking firebrands. The room was filled with smoke as the house had no chimney. The little brown baby was looked at occasionally, and brought to the mother to be nursed, and she was bathed once or twice a day by having tepid water poured over her and her skin was still wet rubbed over with the turmeric powder and softened chalk. She was also fed with boiled rice mixed with mashed bananas. The missionary condemned this custom of putting a less-than-one-week old baby in a smoke-filled house and fed on rice and scraped apple as an evil practice or an indirect murder because it would very likely kill the baby. Despite this fact, the missionary pointed out that in most cases the baby lived through all these and grew up into a pretty little girl, and, being the youngest of the children, was petted by all the family "like many a winsome darling in our own Christian land." The missionary seemed to believe and highlight that the God in Christianity was taking care of the Siamese babies though they were put under the threat of their primitive custom.⁶⁶

3. Wedding Custom

⁶⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 44, 48-49.

⁶⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 163-164.

The missionary noted that the Siamese had a superstition that persons born in specific years were incompatible with each other. For instance, if one were born in the “year of the Dog” and another in the “year of the Rat,” they would not live happily together after marriage. The matter of birthdays could be settled favorably by a fortune-teller who generally pronounced no difficulty was in the way. The bridegroom was supposed to build the house on the premises of the bride's parents, and as near the old home as possible, so that it was almost one family. When a Siamese had several daughters married and gathered around the old homestead, there was a little family settlement. The bride's parents often suggested that a certain sum be appropriated for the building of the house, and named another sum for mutual trade. It was usually agreed that they contributed areca-nut, red lime, sen-leaf, cakes and so forth for the wedding-feast. They also specified the plan of the new house with certain number of rooms. If both families were satisfied, a bargain was made and accepted by both parties. The bride's parents then consulted the astrologers in reference to a propitious day for the wedding. During all these months the young couple seldom met each other. They were carefully kept apart and waited patiently. Meanwhile a bamboo house was built as a new home for the young couple. The little house was festooned with the broad, graceful leaves of banana and adorned with the tall green stalks of sugar-cane, symbolizing “peace and fruitfulness”. Flowers and fruits were arranged in fantastic designs on the walls with bright-colored curtains and screens; all things were ready in the new home.⁶⁷

The ceremonies of a Siamese wedding consisted largely of feasting. This feast of fruits and cakes and sweetmeats was spread on mats upon the grass among the trees and flowers for the guests. By the sound of tabret and pipe and bands of music heralded the coming of a procession walking in single file, all guests gayly dressed in holiday attire, some bearing trays containing gifts for the bride and her parents, and others with offerings of fruit, cakes and confections to contribute to the wedding-feast in the fruit-garden. The missionary looked upon the youthful guests at the Siamese wedding feast as “the multitude fed by our Lord in Judea so long ago—flits the pretty bride.” In the feast, the bridegroom among his young men attendants, sat apart from the women, to follow the Siamese ideas of propriety because a slight breach of etiquette on his part might blast his hopes. The feast continued if this was a propitious day, closing in the evening. However, the ceremonies were usually kept up until the third and fourth day. The bridegroom must content himself with an occasional glance as the bride flitted in and

⁶⁷ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 165-168.

out among her guests. When the twilight had waned, preparations were made for the torchlight procession to conduct the bridegroom and bride to the new home. The missionary compared it with the parable of the Ten Virgins in the New Testament: “At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom Cometh,” and pointed out that after the same manner was this procession formed. When the feast was over, the money was counted by reliable persons and found correct. The sums were sprinkled with rice, scented oil and flowers, symbolic of blessings craved for the young couple. It was then handed over to the bride’s parents for safe-keeping. The Siamese wedding-gifts were few and primitive in style. The gifts were usually unglazed earthen pots; brazen vessels, trays, cups, spoons, small ladles, heavy wooden buckets and baskets used for carrying water, and porcelain bowls for holding rice and vegetables at meals. They were always useful articles. After the feast, the young couple went to the new house.⁶⁸

Most of the Siamese wedding invited the Buddhist priests to participate. At the wedding the Buddhist priests came to the house and chanted prayers for the benefit of the young couple. The parents of the bride and bridegroom and all the guests vied with each other in their attention to these priests, who also received gifts. The young couple was bathed with holy water poured by the elders, pronouncing a blessing upon each. The fresh suit for the bridegroom was frequently presented him on a salver by a lad sent from the parents of the bride.⁶⁹ In the eyes of the missionary, the wedding custom of the Siamese was full of superstitions.

4. Traditional Holidays

There were plenty of holidays in Siam. The typical ones were Holy Days, National Holiday Season, White Elephant Holiday and New Year Holidays. The Siamese including the children did not keep Sunday because there was no Sabbath in Siam. The missionary denounced their occasional holy days as merely gala days, when dressed in their best and gayest garments, the young and old Siamese went to the temples to make offerings to the image of their “dead god Buddha.” They were often taken from the temples to some theatrical show to spend the remainder of the day. During the national holiday season, these theatrical performances were going on all the time, besides the Chinese street-shows like the “Punch and Judy” held in the United States. The missionary also condemned that all the fathers, mothers and children of the Siamese gambled in the

⁶⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 168-169, 172-173.

⁶⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 170, 172.

season.⁷⁰ Besides, 21st of June had been fixed as a red-letter day in the Siamese annals, in other words, a holiday for commemorating the actual reception of the royal stranger, a white elephant at the capital of Siam since 1880s. The white elephant had been captured by two Siamese peasants, and then a province governor and some high officials and attendants skilled in the management of elephants escorted the elephant to the royal stables outside the palace-grounds. Kind of Siam regarded this illustrious captive as a palladium for his own life and the prosperity of the empire.⁷¹ As for their New Year holidays, the missionary found them very strange that the holidays were not celebrated in the first month of the year, but in the fifth month corresponding to March or April. On one of the three days that the doors of temples were opened, the people especially women and children dressed in their best attire, entered the temples, bowing down before the idol, and made offerings of flowers. The wealthy had prayers and preaching at their own houses, when they feasted the priests and gave presents to them. During these days all were allowed to gamble, and they were engaged in games of chance with all their hearts. The missionary noticed that both the Christians and the Siamese had prayer or ceremony for obtaining blessings during the holidays. On New Year's Day the Christians in United States prayed to God to watch over and bless them and their friends through the year. Similarly, the king of Siam had companies of priests on the tops of the city walls through certain ceremonies in concert to drive away evil spirits, and on one of these nights large and small guns were fired for this purpose until morning.⁷²

Raknah Holiday was fixed by astrologers at the beginning of seed-time, generally in May. The minister of agriculture was regarded as king for the day, because he, as the king's substitute, held the plough, broke up the ground and planted the first rice of the year. He was escorted by a public procession to some field, and there the priests decorated a pair of oxen with flowers and fasten them to a plough after some superstitious ceremonies. The Siamese also had two holidays every year for *Swinging*, when the minister of agriculture was carried by a long procession to a place where there was a high swing between two tall poles. Attended by four Brahman priests, the minister ascended the platform and stood on one foot until three games of swinging were ended, which occupied about two hours. If he ventured to touch his foot once to the floor during the games, the Brahmans were allowed to take all his property. When the games were over, the swingers sprinkled on all about them water that had been made holy by the

⁷⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 190.

⁷¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 138-140,143.

⁷² Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 224-225.

priests. This was the Brahmanical mode of calling down blessings on the people. These ceremonies and games were repeated on the second day. Princes and officers of government and dense crowds of the people were present to witness them.⁷³ The missionary generally noticed that the Siamese holidays were very different from those of the United States and Europe. The missionary particularly criticized the Siamese for having “no Christmas, for, as a nation, they know nothing about Christ,”⁷⁴ and denounced these traditional holidays associated with idolatry and bad entertainments as irrational superstitions. The missionary criticized that “superstition and the worship of idols enter not only into the holidays of the Siamese, but into everything they do.” The missionary bitterly condemned the Siamese for their widespread idolatry: “They raise the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways, they have not glorified.”⁷⁵

5. Hair-Cutting Festival

The missionary noted that Kone-chook, a hair-cutting festival was in progress in Siam. It was the ceremonies and the gayeties that attended the first clipping of the cherished topknot on the child's head. This was the great occasion in the life of a child, and second only to that of a wedding or a funeral in the life of the family. The Siamese in shaving the heads of their children, as they did from their earliest infancy, always left a small circular lock of hair on the top of the head to be untouched by razor or shears until the child was eleven, thirteen, or fifteen years old. The parents feared that their child would become insane or a prey to a *yak*, a kind of demon if their hair was cut at an earlier day or without the customary ceremonies. This lock grew a foot and was kept oiled and neatly twisted into a knot. Through this a gilt or golden large-headed hairpin three inches long was thrust, and frequently a garland of fragrant white flowers was worn around it, giving young Siamese children a pretty appearance. When the lucky day for the hair-cutting had been fixed by the astrologers, the friends of the family were invited, and for one day or two there was a constant round of prayer-chanting, play-acting and feasting of Buddhist priests and friends. The ceremonies began with the priests chanting in chorus their prayers, a thread of cotton yarn passing from their hands around the clasped hands of the kneeling child and back to them again, serving as an electric conductor to the child. In the next morning, the mail of highest rank among the guests with shears clips off the long-cherished lock, and the head was close shaved, and then the child was led to an

⁷³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 226-228.

⁷⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 224.

⁷⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 232.

elevated seat under a canopy of white cloth and consecrated water was poured over it, first by the parents, and then by kindred and friends. Candles were lighted and the music was playing loudly five times round the child, who is seated on a kind of throne, containing cooked rice, fruit and flowers, offerings to the spirits of the air. The candles were then blown out in such a way that the smoke would be borne toward the child in order to stock him or her with spirit and courage for the duties of life. The relatives and friends of the family now are expected to make a present in money to the child, each according to his ability or station, so that the newly-shorn youngster would receive enough to quite a start in the world or sufficient for a dowry. And then a general feasting ensued, and the music and theatrical performances continued for a day or two more. After this the children were reckoned as young men or young women.⁷⁶

On the other hand, the poor families just took their child to a Buddhist temple when he arrived at the proper age, and had a priest shave off the tuft with some simple religious ceremony. On the contrary, the celebration of the first hair-cutting of a young prince or princess was a very grand affair. The governors of provinces were summoned to be present; the highest priests in the kingdom were invited; and public festivities, with free theatres, shadow-plays, rope-dancing, etc., to amuse the immense crowds of people present, were kept up for many days. If the child prince or princess was of the very highest rank, part of the ceremony took place on an artificial mountain constructed in the court of the palace of strong timberwork and boards, like a beautiful mountain of gold. The ceremonies on this occasion commenced with the chanting of prayers in the hall of state at the palace by twenty-four head priests of the chief temples of the city, and the lighting of “the candle of victory,” six feet high, which burned day and night until the moment the hair was cut.⁷⁷ The missionary criticized that “How costly all these vain heathen superstitions !” She pointed out that_all this pomp and parade and immense expense and these wearisome ceremonies were undertaken to avert from the king's daughter imaginary evils, from which if they existed. Therefore, she urged for earnest prayer for these boys and girls in Siam, who trusted in these foolish rites and offerings to spirits that did not exist, so that they might learn, believe and rejoice in the truth as it was in Christ.⁷⁸

6. Allegiance Oath by the Officials and Second New Year Festival

⁷⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 193-194, 196-197.

⁷⁷ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 197-198.

⁷⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 204-205.

About six months after New Year's Day, the Siamese princes, lords, nobles and all among the people who held any office, took the oath of allegiance. They assembled at the royal palace and drank the “water of vengeance” and sprinkled it upon their foreheads. It was the water in which had been dipped swords, daggers, spears and other instruments by which the king executed vengeance on those who rebelled against him. The officials were required to drink the water to express their willingness to be punished with those instruments if found disloyal. The priests were excused from this service but had to meet in the royal temple on that day and perform appropriate religious services. Some of this water was sent to the residences of the governors in the distant provinces, and the neighboring people assembled there to drink.⁷⁹ Soon after the oath ceremony, the Siamese had a kind of second New Year for four days which was fixed by the instead of the moon. The priests were invited to meet at the palace for a royal festival, and the people feasted the priests and one another and played at their games of chance. The women brought water and bathed first the idols, and then their grandparents and other aged relatives by pouring water upon them.⁸⁰ The missionary was inclined to deprecate this service of oath publicly advocating brutal absolute monarchy and the second new year festival promoting idolatry and Buddhism.

7. Customs of Buddhism: Buddha’s Anniversary, Buddhist Lent and *Taut Katin* Ceremony

The Siamese observed three days of their sixth month with great veneration as the anniversaries of the birth, the attaining to divinity and the death of Buddha. In these three days the Siamese made merit which they thought they did by giving to the poor, by making offerings to the priests and the idols and by listening to prayers and preaching. All classes, young and old went to the temple-grounds and made little conical mounds of sand surmounted with flowers and flags of all colors.⁸¹ There was also a season called the Buddhist Lent, when the priests did not go so far away from their temples as not to be able to return at night. All classes also anticipated this season, and provided for them the food like parched rice and corn, flowers, silvered and gilded trees and other articles to make their dormitories pleasant. The day these gifts were presented was called the *Kow Wasah* holiday. The priests offered some of the gifts to the idol; others they presented to their elders and to aged priests in the same temple. When the Buddhist Lent was ended and the priests were allowed to travel where they pleased, the *Auk Wasah* holidays were

⁷⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 225.

⁸⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 225-226.

⁸¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 226.

observed. In anticipation of their coming, the laity prepared clothing suitable for their wanderings. The kings had numerous priests' robes shirting dyed yellow, which was the sacred color. The people prepared gifts according to their means.⁸² The *Taut Katin* ceremony took place a few days later. It was the annual visitation of the kings to the sixty or seventy royal temples to perform their devotions and make offerings to the priests. It was a great festive season with the people. The temples near the palace within the city-walls were first visited by the king, seated on an elegant golden chair of state sparkling with gems. Then he, with all his princes, ministers of state and high nobles, visited daily some temples that were accessible only by water for some twelve days, and after this the second king made his visits. The river presented a very animated appearance as the boat-processions pass escorting His Majesty. Notwithstanding this "splendid sight," the missionary bitterly criticized that "the Christian beholder is pained by the thought that the display is to do honor to a false religion and a false god."⁸³ The missionary always regarded the Siamese Buddhism as an anti-Christian religion which required much effort to resist for freeing the Siamese from evil.

8. Offerings to the Spirits and Idolatry

In Siam and particularly in Bangkok, it was a common practice to form a little square tray from pieces of the plantain tree, and place the offerings on there, leave them by the side of the street, where the spirits would find them, placing them on the water, and let them float down the stream. They filled the river and the land. On the rude tray, which was about a foot square, were strewed rice, coarse salt tied up in a little rag, some fresh flowers, betel-nut, sliced plantain, the end of a torch, and two rough images of clay representing a man and woman. The purpose of making images was that the spirits might accept them for their servants instead of the persons who offered them. Some might make little models of a Chinese junk, and fitted them out with little red and white banners, wax tapers, fruit and flowers. These boats contained clay images of men, women and children as passengers and at dusk the tapers were lighted and the little vessels launched on the river as an offering to the spirits. Many charms were also used to keep off the evil spirits that brought disease. But the most common practice as a preventive measure of cholera was wearing a few strands of cotton yarn about the neck or wrist. Many houses were encircled by a long cotton cord, with bits of written paper fastened to it. The outer palace-walls were girt around, the cord looped up from the battlements. On the other

⁸² Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 228.

⁸³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 229-230, 232.

hand, death crossed the enchanted line, if the spirits did not, and hundreds of the king's large households were swept away. Besides the spirits that the Siamese supposed had caused the pestilence, there were other spirits that they treated with great respect during those days.⁸⁴

In front of or near every house, raised on a single pole, stood a little wooden house, having one small room opening on a little porch. There was always a quantity of offerings which made the house like a doll's play-house. The grown-up members of the family had built them to secure the good-will of the spirit guarding the spot occupied by their dwelling. If any of the family was sick, a piece of board-shaped like the head of a spear, slips of cloth covered with written characters, little clay images of elephants, horses, men and women, rice, betel-nut, tobacco and flowers were offered. The worship of these spirits was a kind of superstition that appeared to have been handed down by the forefathers of the Siamese from the ancient times before the arrival of Buddhism. As the people believed that these spirits could protect them from sickness during cholera-time, the offering-houses were well supplied, and the little sprites were given tobacco, betel, food, clothing and clay horses to ride. The temples of the idols and the priests were filled with hearers. Many presents were made to the priests and much bowing to idols. Priests were busy chanting prayers over the dying, praying that they might be happy in the next life. Many Siamese exhausted themselves in blind groping after its god.⁸⁵

The missionary adversely condemned the horrible idolatry in Siam. For instances, she had visited an image-house and found one idol that had fallen over backward, another without a head, another without arms, where were obviously lack of strength. She also pointed out that the nooks and corners of the mountain gates were filled with idols and figures representing the miseries of the lost, and the bottom of the caves were paved with tiles and surrounded on all sides with rows of idols.⁸⁶ The missionary tended to denounce all sorts of offerings, worshipping of spirits and idolatry as evil superstitions that could not protect the Siamese from evil spirits and diseases like cholera.

9. Customs for the Dying and Dead and Superstition about Animals

When a Buddhist prince or princess was at the point of death, the attendants wishing to

⁸⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 242-244.

⁸⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 245-246.

⁸⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp.102, 117.

give the departing spirit a passport into the spirit-world addressed themselves to the work of fixing the thoughts of the dying one upon Buddha. To accomplish this, they took turns in enunciating the name of Buddha generally employed when in health—P’ra Arahang. It was uttered as often as eight or ten times per minute, hoping that the departing spirit would think of Buddha, and would accumulate large fund of merit to his credit which would become of vast service to him in the spirit-world. The missionary regarded it as a service having much the same objective as that of the “extreme unction” of the Roman Catholics. When a prince of high rank had just died, other princes, nobles and lords, in the order of their rank, poured a dipper of water upon the corpse one by one. Certain officials in the household dressed the body for a sitting posture in a pair of tightly-fitting short pantaloons and jacket, and over these a winding sheet wrapped around the body. Then the corpse was placed in a copper urn with an iron grating for its bottom, and this is put into one made of fine gold. The golden urn was placed on an elevated platform, while conch-shell blowers and trumpeters and pipers performed their several parts. This act was called *Ch’ on p’ra sop K’u’n p’ra taan*, literally, an invitation to the corpse to be seated on the platform. When seated all the insignia of royalty, the band of musicians performed a funeral dirge; and they assembled daily at early dawn, at noon and at nightfall to perform in concert with a company of mourning women who bewailed the dead and chanted his virtues. In the intervals a company of Buddhist priests, sitting on the floor a little distant from the platform, recited moral lessons and chanted incantations in the Pali. This service continued day and night, and was kept up from weeks to months until the time appointed for burning the corpse has arrived, which might be two to eight months after death. As for the death of a king, his successor immediately began preparations for the *P’ramene*, which was a splendid temporary building under which the body was to sit in state several days on a throne glittering with silver, gold and precious stones, and then was committed to the flames.⁸⁷ The remains of a king were usually kept from eight to seventeen months.

The chief priests began to assemble, a hundred or more on the floor of the P’ramene in sight of the holy urn, and rehearsed in concert lessons in Pali called P’ang-soo-koon, which were in substance reflections on the brevity and uncertainty of human life. Having uttered audibly these short lessons, they continue in a sitting posture, with downcast looks, reflecting silently on the condition of the living and the dead, and then retired giving place to another hundred or more to recite the same lessons. This was repeated

⁸⁷ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 247-250.

every day while the corpse sat in state for three days afterwards. Every Siamese subject, noble or plebeian, man and woman, must then had his head shaven for respect for the dead. Sundry Chinese, Malay and Siamese dramas and shadow-scenes were also played. All the ashes left by the burning were put in a clean white muslin and laid in a golden platter. They were then ceremoniously carried in state to the royal landing, and escorted by state barges and attended by funeral bands, carried down the river about a mile and there committed to its waters. The funeral obsequies of a king were continued three days after the burning, and the ceremonies were almost the same as those in anticipation of it until the last day. On that day a royal procession was formed to bear the charred remains in the little golden urn to a sacred depository of such relics of the kings of Siam within the royal palace.⁸⁸

On the other hand, the costly funerals of the royal family and nobility were not possible for the common people. The dead were generally burned in funeral pile, unless they committed suicide, or were struck by lightning or died of cholera or some other disease causing sudden death in which all these cases were considered as deficient in merit and undeserving of burning.⁸⁹ The priests were sent for to attend the dying, sprinkle the suffering one with holy water, recite passages from their sacred books and pronounce the name of Buddha repeatedly. After death there was a season of weeping and wailing by the family, and the body was then washed and wrapped tightly. All urn or wooden coffin was brought, and the body placed therein. The dying one was removed outside on account of the superstitious fears of the family. When the coffin was carried off, it was through a hole cut in the bamboo wall, lest the spirit should find its way back and haunt the premises. The cremation took place in some temple-ground. However, the dying made merit by bequeathing their dead body to the vultures, and the bones were burned occasionally. Paupers and criminals were fed to the vultures or burned without ceremony. All persons struck dead by lightning or carried off suddenly by small-pox or cholera were first buried for some months, and then dug up and burned. The funerals of the wealthy lasted several days, and were connected with feasting, fireworks and theatrical displays. The heads of all the immediate family and their servants were shaved.⁹⁰ The missionary noted that at the cremations, during plagues, epidemics and floods, more attention was given to spirit-worship than to Buddhism proper. During the rice-planting and harvest, the

⁸⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 257, 260, 264.

⁸⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 91.

⁹⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 265-266.

favor of the spirits of the air, earth and water was sought. Spirit-offerings might be found in the homes of the people, in the boats, fish-poles, threshing-floors, and even hanging to the sacred Bo tree itself.⁹¹

In Siam, animals were well cared of by most persons, for they made merit in this way. The Siamese also believed that a fish, monkey, dog, cat, snake, bird or pig will be the possible home of their own soul at some future time.⁹² The missionary was inclined to criticize that the funeral ceremonies for all kinds of the Siamese including royal family, nobility, the wealthy and common people mainly focused on making merit for the dying person or the departing spirit to enter and live a fruitful life in the spirit-world after death, particularly through various kinds of Buddha-oriented services offered by the Buddhist priests and the worships and offerings of spirit which were originated from the superstitious mind of the Siamese. The missionary regarded these services, offerings and animal caring practices as the misleading superstitions that infringed the Christian doctrine of salvation, and on the contrary brought about disadvantages or obstacles to the Siamese in the pursuit of eternal life.

III. Siamese Religion: Buddhism and Buddhist Wat

The state religion of Siam was Buddhism. In this respect, the Siamese had the same idolatry and were alike ignorant of the God of Christianity despite that all the different races were on the same footing.⁹³ There were about two hundred wats (temples) in Bangkok, the capital city of Siam, which consecrated to the worship of Buddha. Some of them had groves several acres in extent, containing pagodas, image-houses, priests' dwellings and salas or lounging-places. They occupied the pleasantest parts of the city, and the deluded people spent vast sums on these temples and their idols, expecting in this way to make merit for themselves. Temple was a great place for the pastime of the Siamese when they went to hear the Buddhist services which were usually in Bali. Their religion taught them that at death their soul entered the body of some animals such as bird, snake, elephant or buffalo unless they had made enough merit to be born something better and higher like man. Therefore the amount of merit made in one's life was very important for them, as they might be born thousands of times. When they found an elephant of a

⁹¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 274.

⁹² Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 91, 187-188.

⁹³ Smith, *Missionary Sketches: A Concise History of the American Baptist Missionary Union*, p. 174.

lighter complexion than usual, they thought the spirit of some distinguished person dwells in it, possibly, that of some future Buddha, sure to bring a blessing to the country. Furthermore, as Buddhism forbade the Siamese to slaughter animals for food, they had no milch cattle and knew nothing of butter or cheese.⁹⁴

Buddhist priests were the religious teachers in Siam. There were about ten thousand priests in Bangkok and some thirty thousands in Siam. The missionary denounced them as “a perfect army of self-conceited idlers”. They lived on the charity of the people, going about every morning from house to house among their parishioners. To make merit, the old mother or grandmother was up at an early hour to have rice cooked and ready for them. The priest collected sufficient for their morning and noonday meal. Their religion forbade them to take food after midday. Bangkok had the finest pagoda and other temple-buildings and small pagodas. There were also many usual houses for the hundreds of priests.

The missionary also noted that inner walls of a beautiful temple in Bangkok had the scenes about the life of Buddha, and in its farther end was “an immense gilt image of this deity” in a sitting posture, made of brick and mortar. Some idols, however, were made of gold, silver, brass, ivory, wood and stone. Worshiper prostrated himself before the idol, touching his forehead three times to the floor, and laid his simple offering of flowers upon the altar. The missionary also found that in one of these temples there were four hundred images of Buddha, life-sized and each seated on a gilded throne. There was also a Buddhist temple which was an old preaching place to rest. It was a large room open on all sides. From the ceiling in the center of the room hung a piece of cloth two or three yards long, on which was a coarse picture of Buddha with a disciple on each side of him, and above them in the clouds angels with flowers. Below them, on a black ground to represent darkness, were painted persons suffering the torments of hell and the priests trying to assist them.⁹⁵ The missionary adversely condemned Buddhism as it taught the Siamese that there was no living God, no Creator who made this beautiful world.⁹⁶ She bitterly criticized the Siamese Buddhism that:

The dead god Buddha that they worship, whose images are in every temple, was but a man like themselves, and, now that he has left the world, knows and cares

⁹⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries* pp. 82, 84, 120, 137, 181-182.

⁹⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp.82, 84-85, 91-92, 101.

⁹⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 100.

nothing about it.⁹⁷

The missionary regarded the Siamese legend about Buddha's sacred foot as one of the origins of the Siamese Buddhism. Accordingly every February multitudes of the Siamese visited Prabat which meant "sacred foot". It was supposed that Buddha left a clear imprint of his foot in a rock on a mountain there, which was a standing proof to all his followers that he had once visited Siam. There were several wats and monasteries with their many dwellings for the priests, preaching-places, and huge image-houses under the rocky sides of the mountain. Many worshipers went to wats, which served as a social center in the every-day life of the Siamese people. The priests provided the service of sprinkling holy water to the heads of the worshipers for blessing. Those were too poor to make any offering took up a priest's fail and with all the solemnity possible fanned the footprint.⁹⁸ However, the missionary doubted about the reality of the sacred foot legend and looked down upon the related temples and priest services as evil places and superstitions without any blessing. Especially Buddhism, the prevailing religion, and the education of Siam often stood side by side, and aided each other. The missionary criticized their united influence for fastening the chains of superstition and blighting the moral feelings of the entire nation.⁹⁹

Regarding the Siamese wat, it usually consisted of a number of buildings scattered about a large park-like enclosure. Such Buddhist temple was often connected with a monastery. Therefore, a wat was not merely a place of worship but mostly a monastery. The Siamese Buddhism under the influence of Brahmanism went so far as to amalgamate with the Buddhist religious notions derived from the primitive tree- and serpent-worship, which was a form of indigenous religion in Siam. Practical Buddhist worship there was marked by the prevalence of Brahmanic mythology. In the principal avenue of the grounds of a wat there were figures of enormous stone griffins, representing the demon kings of the four regions who guard the world against the attacks of evil spirits; and crouching lions (literally, "Shakya the lion"), who was by his strength the king of the beasts, by his moral excellence the king of men. In *Wat P'hra Keuu*, the private temple of the royal family within the palace enclosure was the finest specimen of an altar. Its shelves were loaded with rare specimens of Siamese, Chinese and European idols

⁹⁷ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 100.

⁹⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp.103-104, 106, 108, 298-299.

⁹⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 207.

covered with plate gold, solid silver vases, golden candlesticks, marble statuary, etc. The cross-legged statue of Buddha was particularly noteworthy. The kings and nobles of Siam spent large sums on their temples and idols. Generally there were two ranks of wats. Wats built by the royal family or nobility were called *Wat Hluang* or "royal wats." The wats of the people were *Wat Ratsadom*. The missionary opposed the Siamese idea that "Church and State are one, and the king is supreme in religion as in the government."¹⁰⁰ The missionary particularly criticized that such expensive wats or temples and the monstrous images for their main purpose was "to make a large amount of merit", and "merit-making, is, after all the sum and substance of Siamese Buddhism." The missionary realized that wat embodied "a theory which extracted and remodeled the best ideas of ancient Brahmanism."¹⁰¹ The missionary believed that the overall picture of a Siamese wat showed that:

the practical aspects of this much-vaunted creed in the hands of the common people, proving that the influence of these great centres of classic Buddhism hinders the material prosperity and dwarfs the intellectual and moral development of the nation.

¹⁰²

She further criticized that in the wat there was a cult that degraded, alms-giving that flooded the land, lazy beggars, a monastic system that encouraged violation of the sacred family ties, etc.¹⁰³ She also attempted to distinguish the Christian concept of salvation from the Buddhist, which was condemned as heresy. The missionary demonstrated that the Christian spoke of "the preaching of the cross", while the Buddhist spoke of "turning the wheel of doctrine" as the most expressive of the Buddhist idea of salvation, rest or *Nipān*, adopting the wheel as the symbol of the weary rounds of transmigration. The preachings given in wats or the houses of the nobles or the wealthy were merely for the purpose of making merit or extra merit, which the missionary considered meaningless. A Buddhist monk in Siam possessed in his own right eight articles including three robes, a girdle, an alms-bowl, a razor, a needle and a water-strainer. They must observe strict celibacy and refrain from all secular avocations. Priests were easily recognized by their yellow robes and shaven heads.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 269, 274, 280-281, 291, 297.

¹⁰¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 281, 300.

¹⁰² Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 281.

¹⁰³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 300-301.

¹⁰⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 287-288, 292.

IV. Traditional Education in Siam

The Buddhist temples had been the only “temples of learning” for centuries and the Buddhist priests had performed the double office of pedagogue and priest. These mendicant teachers formed one-thirtieth part of the entire population, and the custom of the country was such that parents often required their sons to spend all the years of boyhood and youth under the care of these teachers in the temples. As Buddhism was planned only for men, girls were usually not taught in the wat-schools. In the Siamese knowledge or the East knowledge, women education was not only unnecessary but positively injurious to women. Generally when a little boy was out of his babyhood, his parents began at once to look around for a desirable teacher for him. A priest who was usually a friend or relative of the parents, and one whom they thought they could trust to care for and educate their boy was selected as the teacher. The child was then taken to the wat or temple, and given to the priest. In doing this the parent gave up all claim, authority and oversight of the boy to the priest. The boy's most important duty was to wait for his teacher, follow him on his morning tramps, paddle his boat, serve his food and was ready to obey his wishes at all times. The priest, on his part, was expected to teach the boy to read and write. If the priest was a very extraordinary man of letters he might teach the first principles of arithmetic. Instead of the knowledge the priest taught, the missionary highly appreciated that these Buddhist schoolmasters did “succeed in imparting better than most college professors of other countries, and that is a feeling of respect on the part of their pupils for their teachers.” On the other hand, the missionary believed that this only “good thing” found in the old-fashioned wat education was partly owing to the religious element. The missionary denounced the priests’ birch or ratan discipline, which was often terribly severe. For example, a mistake in writing or spelling usually brought down the teacher's lash, and this was called *son hi chum* (teaching to remember). The student's hands were tied around a post and then he was whipped for a more heinous offence of disobedience or want of respect toward his teacher. The parents or grandparents often requested the wat-school which was made up of boys and girls to whip their child a great deal (called “*te hi mak mak*”) so that he would learn fast. These schools were free from all the trammels of school laws and school committees, with each teacher being left free to follow his own will in everything. The missionary strongly opposed this inhuman pedagogical principle that the student was improving just in proportion to the amount of corporal punishment administered.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 207-210, 214, 216.

Another problem of wat-school education noted by the missionary was that the children were required to commit to memory more readily than the average American school-boys, but in studies requiring a process of reasoning or long-continued hard work they usually fell behind. They often began a new study or work with great avidity, but tired before it was half finished. The average Siamese boy of nine or ten years of age did not ask more than a day to learn all the large and small letters of the English alphabet, and a tiptop student wanted only half a day. Furthermore, there was usually only one school-book which was a kind of combined primer and reader for the student. After that was mastered, the student practiced reading on whatever he could find. It might be fabulous tales, dramas or ghost-stories, but certainly not good and truthful books like the Christian books prepared by the missionaries. The wat-schools had no regular school-term, no regular hours for class, study and play and no vacations. The whole study work was controlled by the whim of the teacher without rule. In this respect, the missionary thought that a student usually had learned very little after eight or ten years of study under the priest teacher, and then successively became a nain and a full-fledged priest which was the summit of the fondest parent's wishes. On the other hand, the Siamese girls were not supposed to have any education. Not one woman or little girl in one hundred could read in Siam, while all the boys were taught by the priests in the wats to read and to write. The missionary therefore criticized that wat-school was just “a school of idleness and vice”, and those who left its haunts were fitted only for “a lazy, aimless existence.” The Siamese girls grew up to be the “hewers of wood and drawers of water”, the planters and the traders of Siam, while the influence of the Siamese men was to a great extent “a dead weight on the prosperity of the country.” The Siamese natives themselves also admitted that the time had evidently come when something better was demanded.¹⁰⁶ Obviously, the missionary was dissatisfied with the inhumanity, disorder, gender bias and ineffectiveness of the temple-centered education in Siam, and strongly urged the Siamese and the Siamese government to have a modernized reform of the traditional education.

V. Economy of Siam

Agriculture was the main employment of the Siamese. The Chinese were introducing improved farming methods everywhere. Rice of best quality was transplanted in Siam.

¹⁰⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 99, 206-207, 211-213.

The plants usually lied partially covered in the still pools of water between the rectangular ridges marked off for the purpose of irrigation. At high-flood seasons the planters were moving about in boats to attend to their crops. The growth was almost spontaneous. The rice was sown in June, transplanted in September and harvested in late December or January. The rice was generally threshed by buffaloes. Sugar was produced everywhere in Siam. With the care of the Chinese settlers, sugar's quality yielding could find no parallel to that in the world, so that it quickly became one of the most important Siamese exports. Almost all the spices used throughout the world found their early home in the peninsula of Siam or the neighboring islands, for example, the cardamom, a plant valuable for its seeds and the principal ingredient in curries and compound spices. Pepper-plantation was also common in Siam. It yielded two annual and very profitable crops. Tea was cultivated in the Laos provinces, and coffee and cotton were also raised. Tobacco was largely grown, and its use was almost universal. A fine aromatic powder, made from the root of the curcuma, was sold by the boatload in Bangkok. Siamese mothers yellowed their children with it for beauty.¹⁰⁷

Vegetable-gardens and fruit-orchards surrounded most of the villages in Siam. Many of the gardens especially those near Bangkok were owned and run by the Chinese. The Chinese gardener lived within the premises. The Indo-Chinese fruits were of great excellence of flavor, and almost every day furnished a new variety. Oranges were plentiful; pineapples were a drug in the market; lemons, citrons, pomegranates were abundant and very cheap. As the season advanced, mangoes, guavas, custard-apples and the like followed in quick succession. The small mahogany-colored mangosteen was perhaps the most popular tropical fruit. The tamarind lived for centuries, and under its shade the Siamese assemble for most of their social games. The durian was regarded as "a child of the forest," and the plantain or banana had some forty varieties, with fruit varying in size as well as in flavor. The bamboo was a tree-like plant with a jointed stem, producing branches with willow-shaped leaves, which were widely used for building houses and making various things. The short succulent shoots were served on the table like asparagus, pickled or candied. The stems furnished bottles, buckets, baskets, fishing-rods, posts, bridges, walls, floors, roofs, and even the string that lashed together rafter and beam of the common native house in Indo-China. Roses were perennial, and bright geraniums, brilliant lilies and numberless plants indigenous to the country were in great demand and cultivated extensively for domestic or religious uses. Seven varieties of

¹⁰⁷ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 69-70.

the lotus were produced and sold. The mali, a fragrant white flower was much cultivated in the neighborhood of Bangkok. Throughout the Indo-Chinese peninsula were many forests of teak and other valuable woods, tropical trees yielding rich gums and aromatic odors. There were plenty of wood-oil tree, the india-rubber, gutta-percha and other varieties of the Ficus. Besides, the Indo-Chinese peninsula was very rich in minerals and offered a first field of inquiry to the geologist. Gold was most productive at the foot of the "Three Hundred Peaks." Copper and tin were found in large quantities; silver in connection with copper and lead. There were also large unworked deposits of coal and petroleum.¹⁰⁸

Three kinds of money were commonly used in Siam. The largest piece was a *tical*, which was worth sixty cents; this next size was a *salung*, or fifteen cents; this smallest a *fuang*, or seven and a half cents. In Siam particularly in Bangkok, many smaller craft were market-boats, with fruits and vegetables for sale. The typical fruits sold were the far-famed durian which the natives considered the king of fruits, the shaddock or pomelaw, the delicious mangosteen, the rich custard-apple, the refreshing orange, the blushing rambutan, pineapple and banana, etc.¹⁰⁹ There were a large variety of shops which were open in front with a veranda. A typical shop usually had no showcases, but the smaller and more fanciful articles were displayed on these shelves, arranged one above another, like a flower-stand some three feet high. In the way of dry goods, were bleached and unbleached and turkey-red muslins, Siamese waist-cloths and some fading calicoes. There were boxes of tea, native umbrellas, peacock-feathers, tigers' skins, tigers' bones, piles of coarse crockery and pieces of matting, etc. Pretty little brown teapots and tiny cups were also found there, all of which at home were considered toys for children, and also largely used by the tea-drinkers of Siam. In addition to the shopping-places like this in the city of Bangkok, there were several fine foreign stores which might be considered as modernized facilities introduced by the westerners. Besides, there were plenty of Chinese bazaars which were about a mile long in Siam especially Bangkok. The missionary found there tailors, blacksmiths, druggists, goldsmiths and idol-makers, dyers, etc.¹¹⁰

In Siam particularly in Bangkok, some floating-house restaurants were operated.

¹⁰⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 71-75, 78, 80.

¹⁰⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 86, 90.

¹¹⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 88, 90-91.

The sold pork steaks, ducks, fowls, hot rice and curry, dried fish and vegetables, etc. The Siamese markets were often a confused display of vegetables and fruits, betel-nuts, cigars, odd-looking cakes, eggs, salted and fresh fish and dried meats. The Siamese stores usually had an open room with a little porch where the salesman or saleswoman sat. The people who had brought articles to market for sale arranged their wares on either side of the street. Interestingly, the bones of the tiger were sold as a tonic, and rhinoceros-horns were sold in Bangkok for more than their weight in silver. The cattle were small, and were used only to tread out the grain or with pack-saddles to transport rice, silk or army supplies. The missionary particularly noted that the buffalo, or ungainly water-ox, took the place of oxen which was commonly used in agriculture in the United States.¹¹¹ The missionary generally thought that the agriculture-based economy and the commerce of Siam were very primitive, indigenous and simple and therefore needed certain improvement and reforms in various aspects for modernization, despite that Siam was full of natural resources including the valuable mineral and energy resources.

D. Evangelical Works of the American Missionaries in Siam

The American missionaries particularly the missionaries of the two American missionary organizations, the American Baptist Mission and the American Presbyterian Mission had been conducting considerable evangelical works among the Siamese and the Chinese in Siam since 1830s. The two missions established missionary bases on both shore of the River of Bangkok. The upper Presbyterian mission-station was located on the right shore. It had a girls' boarding-school, the first in the kingdom of Siam. A chapel connected with the school was built by gifts from the American women. The Baptist mission to the Chinese was located on the left shore. It had a little English chapel, where English service was conducted by the missionaries every Sabbath afternoon. As Mary Backus commented, Dr. Jones of the American Baptist Mission “was a man of excellent judgment, piety and culture, and had a rare mastery of the Siamese language with its curious idioms that made him most acceptable to the natives as a preacher and writer.” His translation of the New Testament and some tracts that he prepared reflect his outstanding scholarship in Siamese and strong ability to preach and teach.¹¹² In 1852, See Teug, an amiable young Hainan Chinese who had been baptized by Mr. Mattoon of the American Presbyterian Mission, in whose family he long had lived, became the first Protestant Christian of the Hainan

¹¹¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp.91, 93, 117-118, 120.

¹¹² Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 95, 371.

Chinese. He manifested a strong interest in bringing his fellow-countrymen to the knowledge of the gospel. A Sabbath evening-service was held for their benefit and the new converts acted as Bible-readers and interpreters. Great numbers came to the houses of the missionaries for books and conversation on religious matters, fifty or sixty in a day, attendance upon whom required the whole time of one of the brothers. Over a thousand Christian books were put into the hands of intelligent readers within one month. Young priests and boys from the neighboring wats were frequent visitors. As no second volume was given until they had been questioned on the contents of the first, many received the whole series of the publications of the mission. Undoubtedly, much Scripture truth was imparted.¹¹³

Mrs. Smith of the Baptist mission, being familiar with the language, taught a boarding-school of forty-two pupils at private charges in 1857. The Bible and religious works were the principal text-books. Her pupils numbered sixty-six in the next year. Her husband Rev. S. J. Smith, as interpreter for the Siamese government, owned an extensive printing-establishment at his own expenses, and labored as he had opportunity in the gospel without being dependent on the funds of the Baptist Missionary Union.¹¹⁴ In 1861, Nai Kawn, a native Siamese from a village near Petchaburee, called upon the Presbyterian missionaries to place his son under their instruction. The boy had already known the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. The father also surprised the missionaries by his ability to quote Scripture and repeat whole chapters of Romans by learning only a few portions of the Scripture and Christian tracts distributed by the missionaries. He had been able to gain and accept a very clear view of salvation, and then received other portions of the bible and was further instructed, he became an efficient witness for the truth before his countrymen of high and low level. What's more, Esther, a young native woman who had been brought up in the family of Mrs. Mattoon, was also baptized in the end of this year. She became the first native female member of the Presbyterian mission church of Siam.¹¹⁵ In fact, considerable colporteur work in the city and suburbs was done by Mr. Wilson of the Presbyterian mission in 1862. The missionaries were made to Camburi and Prabat by him and other missionaries. In December, Messrs. McDonald and House, with Mr. Telford of the Baptist mission, made a coasting trip to Chantaboon, distributing many Siamese and Chinese books and tracts there. As a result, Kao, a young Siamese was baptized in February 1863. He was the first

¹¹³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 374.

¹¹⁴ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p.182.

¹¹⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 383-384.

fruit of the labor of the Petchaburee missionaries. He entered Mr. McFarland's service that he acquired the knowledge of English and the way of life unto salvation. Besides, there were others in Petchaburee who soon renounced Buddhism and avowed themselves Christians. In May of this year, a Siamese man and his wife, who had been long in Mr. McGilvary's employ, and a young Siamo-Chinese in Mr. McFarland's, were baptized and a church formed in Petchaburee.¹¹⁶

1868 was a year of precious ingathering especially for the Baptist mission. Forty-five Chinese converts were baptized, a number equal to all that had been baptized during the preceding thirty years of the mission. Many of these converts resided at the out-stations, and they were the garnered fruit of the labors of many missionaries. In 1869, the work for the specific benefit of the Siamese was suspended, for the reasons that no very satisfactory results of labor had been reported for several years. On the other hand, the work for the Chinese in Bangkok was far more encouraging, and other fields of more promise claimed all the funds that were at the command of the Committee. Through Mrs. Dean and Mr. and Mrs. S. J. Smith, all of whom understood the Siamese language, the seed of gospel continued to be sown among the Siamese, in the hope that the seed bring forth fruit unto eternal life.¹¹⁷ Although the Baptist missionaries did not make significant progress in the evangelical work in 1872, thirty were baptized and three or four young men were instructed in a theological class, with reference to future usefulness as preachers in 1873.¹¹⁸

The Baptist missionaries had gathered considerable fruits in their evangelical work in 1874. The spirit of inquiry was awakened among the Siamese. Many women and even Buddhist priests came to Mrs. Dean for instruction. Many others abandoned idolatry and were baptized, affirming their purpose to pursue Christian lives. More and more were baptized at different stations. The additions by baptism to all the churches were one hundred and forty. The pastor's heart was filled with joy. The good work continued into the next year, and ninety more were baptized, making the whole number three hundred and seventeen.¹¹⁹ As Mary Backus mentioned, there was one among the converts reported in 1875 long in the employ of the different missions as a printer, who had hardened his heart against the truths and grown old in sin, but finally constrained to yield to those

¹¹⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 385-386.

¹¹⁷ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, pp.183-184.

¹¹⁸ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 185.

¹¹⁹ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 185.

truths and enter on a Christian life. Furthermore, two sons of Quakieng, the old native Chinese assistant of the A. B. C. F. M. were also received, and the younger became a candidate for the ministry. Mr. McDonald of Presbyterian mission also remained at his post to preach, superintend the press and translate the Old Testament, despite that her wife left for the U.S. with her children in April of this year.¹²⁰ Dr. Dean of the Baptist mission had long been laboring as the most important leader among the natives and even the native pastors. S. F. Smith has made a summary of his fruitful labors up to 1876:

In his forty years of service, Dr. Dean has gathered six Chinese churches, superintended the building of four Chinese chapels, ordained three Chinese pastors, besides training two who were ordained by others, and baptized three hundred and thirty-nine Chinese disciples, of whom twelve became preachers of the gospel.¹²¹

As briefly mentioned above, the year 1877 was so fruitful that the Baptist mission had six churches, 418 members, and 61 baptized. 24 were baptized at one of the out-stations, and 80 sat down together at the Lord's Supper. Every newly baptized gave his contribution towards the building of a new chapel. Seven were baptized at another out-station. Another chapel in the place of one that had been burned was projected and built. The chapel pastor was a Chinese convert, the first baptized at that point. A very effective force of native preachers was being raised up in this year and one of the native preachers was supported by the church, another by Dr. Dean. There were seven chapels, two ordained and six unordained native preachers, six churches, and five out-stations. The Chinese work in Bangkok was crystallizing into permanent form, and with an increase of laborers became more fruitful.¹²²

During the late 1870s and the early 1880, the Presbyterian mission also accomplished the evangelical works quite successfully. During 1878, the Presbyterian mission press under Mr. Culbertson's energetic supervision issued over a million pages of Scripture and other truth.¹²³ Maa Tuan, an efficient and earnest Christian missionary lady of Presbyterian mission who served as the matron of the girls' boarding-school in Bangkok had been a "living witness" among the Siamese. In 1880, a nobleman, the brother of Koon Lin and her sister Koon Juan, a wife of the Siamese king asked Maa Tuan to come to the palace and teach Koon Lin and Koon Juan to translate Siamese into

¹²⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp.405-406.

¹²¹ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, pp. 185-186.

¹²² Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 186.

¹²³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 409.

English during the two months of vacation. Maa Tuan lived in the harem with the women, and shared the gospel with them. The palace women who believed Buddhism were quite friendly to Maa Tuan, though they knew that she had given up their religion. Maa Tuan shared with them the religion of Jesus. Both girls were originally the pupils of Mrs. And Dr. House. Koon Lin still had the English Bible that Mrs. House gave her, and translated from it every day.¹²⁴ Notwithstanding the strong resistance from the natives and cholera attack in 1881, the schools of the Presbyterian mission prospered. Two useful Christian tracts in Siamese, composed by native church members, were put in circulation. Dr. Sturge was married to Miss Turner in September and became a valuable accession to the station at Petchaburee.¹²⁵

In 1882 Rev. L. A. Eaton went out to assist Dr. Dean in his work for the Baptist mission. Dr. Dean still remained on the field in 1883. The Chinese, among whom they labored, rapidly increased in numbers and in commercial and political strength in Siam. They provided an encouraging field for missionary work, but formed protective societies among themselves, which had the power of life and death over the members. These societies were hostile to Christianity and hence the mission labored under considerable disadvantage.¹²⁶ Rev. Eaton became the acting Consul of the U. S. Government in Siam later. In 1893, he sold the Baptist property near the Portuguese Consul and the Cemetery. The evangelical work of the church was then under the care of Dr. Hans Adamsen. Dr. Adamsen was born in Siam and was adopted Rev. S. J. Smith. He studied medicine in the United States and returned to Bangkok to practise medicine. He spent his spare time preaching and helping the local church, particularly the Peguan church. From that time onward, no Baptist missionary was assigned to work full-time in Siam until 1952. The evangelical work of the Baptist mission had almost ceased in Siam.¹²⁷

Similarly, the Presbyterian mission had also achieved little progress in its evangelical work in Siam. In 1912, the population of the Siam mission field was 6,932,670, distributed among the five stations as follows: Bangkok, 5,038,672, Petchaburee, 419,714, Pitsanuloke, 608,712; Nakon, 636,603, Tap Teang, 228,969. With the exception of one period in 1883 in Petchaburee, the growth of converts had been very

¹²⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 334-336.

¹²⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 413.

¹²⁶ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 188.

¹²⁷ Samuel Kho, *150 Years of Thankfulness: A history of the Maitrichit Chinese Baptist Church (1837-1987)*, pp. 9-10.

slow, and much of the growth at Petchaburee at the special time referred to was lost afterwards through the falling off of the new converts in disappointing ways. In 1860 there were five communicants, in 1880, 157, in 1900, 292, and 1915, 819. The Presbyterian missionaries pointed out the only outward causes for this slow growth were “the character and influence of Siamese Buddhism and the general character and disposition of the Siamese people.” Although the Presbyterian missionaries had been at work in Siam for more than sixty years, there were many parts of the field of the southern mission which had never been visited by any missionary or Siamese evangelist. The missionaries believed that it had never been possible for the mission to work effectively even the stations occupied and the immediately adjoining country. There had been periods of some years when the whole mission had been unable to do as much itinerating work as.¹²⁸

The Presbyterian missionaries claimed that the Siamese were very difficult to reach. Most of their church members were Chinese and the rest were Eurasians. The only hope that they entertained for Siamese was to take them as little children into their schools and teach them the gospel. The missionaries put much effort in preaching to the Siamese children. Some missionaries translated into Siamese a number of story-hooks which were familiar to American children. Plenty of familiar Sabbath-school hymns were translated and used in the Sabbath-school and church services. Their Christian books were also widely distributed to the children, and sometimes they were found in the hands of the wat-boys under the Buddhist education. Even then, when they grew up they were usually lost, unless the girls married Catholic husbands or the men were in the service of the church. Actually, the mission had no Siamese priests who were in the priesthood, but only boys whom the missionaries had educated for the priesthood in their schools. Their evangelical work was very hard. Although the missionaries hoped that Christianity will supplant Buddhism, they considered that the great difficulty was not Buddhism but the character of the Siamese people and the hostility of the Siamese government, as they could no longer get any more land from the government in 1910s. Their evangelical work extended only from Paknambo, a hundred miles north of Bangkok, to Ratburi, seventy-five miles southwest. The missionaries enjoyed no privileges whatever in the way of the exemption of their church members from Buddhist oaths or ceremonies

¹²⁸ Robert E. Speer et al., *Report of Deputation of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to Siam, The Philippines, Japan, Chosen and China April-November 1915*, pp. 80-81.

expected of officials. The missionaries believed that the political influence was hostile to Christianity, and there was no real religious freedom in Siam in 1910s.¹²⁹

Despite the above difficulties, the Presbyterian missionaries adopted plenty of effective ways to preach. For instances, the missionaries frequently went in boats into the country in the cool season such as December and January. They lived in their boats day and night as there were no hotels in Siam. They brought with them hundreds of religious books and tracts in Siamese and distributed them as they travelled from village to village, preaching and giving instruction to the people who listened to them. As demonstrated in the account of the mission tours taken by Dr. House and Mary Backus of the Presbyterian mission, the Presbyterian missionaries usually did not give anything to the old priest considering that they would perhaps spread the thing over the idol to make merit. In the listening group, the missionaries usually shared with the natives the gospel, the religion of Jesus who was the only Saviour from sin, gave them gospel tracts on prayer, and encouraged them to pray for more. By this, the missionaries succeeded in conversing with hundreds of the people and giving away all the Christian books.¹³⁰ The missionaries also preached near the Buddhist wats or monasteries. Hundreds of bamboo huts were built for the accommodation of the multitudes assembled there. Some people often heard the message brought by the missionaries in that afternoon and then visited their house in the evening. Many of the visitors were the poor who always told the missionaries their sufferings and inability to earn a living, and even begged for money. The missionaries usually gave them money with blessings in order to compliment generosity and spread the gospel. Besides, they reached hundreds of people through the morning worship of the Sabbath offered by them. They also visited the villages on the banks of the river, distributed books from house to house, and talked with the people in their homes and the priests in their wats or temples. Sometimes they walked on the road leading through rice-fields to give the farmers a tract or one of the Gospels for preaching. Some missionary families went to spend a few weeks at a mission-station for preaching.¹³¹

Fellowship with the natives in their own homes or on the long journeys between stations or in the mission conferences was another effective means to preach particularly

¹²⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 188, 190, 211; Robert E. Speer et al., *Report of Deputation of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to Siam, The Philippines, Japan, Chosen and China April-November 1915*, pp. 87-88, 137-138.

¹³⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 96, 100-102.

¹³¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 106, 109-111, 115-116, 121, 124.

in 1910s. The conversation in the fellowship was mainly about the central business of the missions, and the making of Christ and his gospel known to the participants. After the fellowship, the missionaries met the participants and heard their stories from their own lips, which was like re-living the actual life of the early church. The missionaries had gained the wisdom of appreciating the native people, of believing in their capacities and resources, and of laying responsibility upon them, and the reward that came from understanding the people, mastering the language and the literature of the native religion, and more important, the positive response which the manifestation of Christ in life called forth in human hearts these and many other good things like them seen in the missions in Siam.¹³² Furthermore, the missionaries also preached through their advanced medical service. For example, as mentioned by Mary Backus, a Chinese fisherman who had been hurt by a huge crocodile and was then healed by a missionary physician gave up his idol worship and founded a native church which had many Chinese communicants at Bangplaso, an important mission-station among the Chinese in Siam. However, the Presbyterian missionaries had done no special work among the Chinese proper in Siam. Many of the elderly Chinese in the mission churches were Siamo-Chinese.¹³³ The missionaries also preached by providing school education. For instance, Leang, Mary Backus's little friend joined the children school under Mrs. House and then became a member of the Presbyterian Church.¹³⁴ Moreover, the missionaries could preach to the royal family members in the palace upon the invitation of the king. Maa Tuan, the above mentioned missionary lady of Presbyterian mission who taught the wife of the king English was an example. Mary Backus also mentioned that their missionaries had been allowed to visit the royal family including the sisters of the king for three years. Some palace ladies became interested in Christianity. They were frequently led to acknowledge the superiority of the Christian customs over theirs. For instance, they acknowledged polygamy as a very bad custom, and the king seemed happy in saying that he had fewer wives than any of his predecessors. He also acknowledged his belief in the true God, the "Supreme Agency," as he termed.¹³⁵ The teaching of the missionaries in the palace had spread the gospel and the Christian morals to the royal family and changed their mind and customs to a certain extent.

¹³² Robert E. Speer et al., *Report of Deputation of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to Siam, The Philippines, Japan, Chosen and China April-November 1915*, p. 98.

¹³³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 160; Robert E. Speer et al., *Report of Deputation of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to Siam, The Philippines, Japan, Chosen and China April-November 1915*, pp. 126, 128.

¹³⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 164.

¹³⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 331-334.

In reviewing the evangelical missionary work in Siam since the mid-19th century, despite the little progress achieved, as Mary Backus remarked, the American missions particularly the Presbyterian mission should “thank God and take courage”. There were men and women “willing to endure all things for the elect's sake”. The Presbyterian board never gave up, and therefore reinforcements were sent out and new fields opened and operated, and schools for girls and boys established and maintained, and Bible translation carried on to completion, and Christian hymnals prepared, and catechisms and tracts, and the printing-press kept busy, and its issues distributed throughout the city and the gospel preached in mission-chapels and idol-temples and by the wayside. The truth of gospel had taken root in Siam, and many native people, once idolaters, became Christians and served God.¹³⁶

E. Social Works: Modernized Education Works of the American Missionaries

The American missionaries particularly the Presbyterian missionaries usually upheld the educational principle that “Christianity implies knowledge”, and strongly believed in school education. They criticized that the Oriental mind of the Siamese was quick in childhood, but early stopped its growth, and hence to civilize and Christianize them the most effective plan was to begin with the children. Therefore, wherever a Presbyterian mission had been established in Siam the church and the school had grown up together.¹³⁷ Early in 1852, the Presbyterian mission opened a boarding-school with free tuition for Siamo-Chinese boys, and put Quakieng, who was an experienced Chinese teacher in charge of it. The pupils were supposed to receive half of each day in their mother tongue in order to attract such pupils within the reach of Christian instruction. Unfortunately, these attempts to gather Siamese boys in a school had failed although some individual Siamese scholars had been taught, because the wats gave free tuition to all, and merit was made by providing the priests with their pupils. Furthermore, the mission hired a Hainan-Chinese teacher and maintained a Hainan-Chinese department of the boarding-school for many years, in the hope of bringing under saving Christian influences the Chinese in Siam from the island of Hainan, which had been hitherto

¹³⁶ Smith, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 188; Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 417-418.

¹³⁷ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 213.

unreached by the Protestant missionary. Mrs. Mattoon, who had some native girls in her family under Christian training, also started a day-school for the Peguan girls in the neighborhood.¹³⁸ The missionary reported that in the Presbyterian boarding schools for boys more than half of the number were the Chinese, and they were regarded as “the brightest and most encouraging pupils.” So many of the missionaries held the opinion that China proper was the legitimate field in which to teach Christianity to the Chinese. However, it was very difficult to get educated Chinese teachers in Siam.¹³⁹

Since the formation of the Presbytery of Siam in 1858, the new missionaries had busied themselves with studying the Siamese language and aiding in the instruction of the pupils in the boarding-school and in tract-distribution. Signs of more than usual religious interest appeared at this time. Nai Chune, a native teacher applied for Christian baptism. However, so many who professed interest in the teachings of the gospel were actually influenced by their selfish motives. The missionaries distrusted their sincerity and put them off until fairly compelled to admit that they had really believed Jesus Christ and should be baptized. With the death of Quakieng, the faithful Chinese native assistant of the A. B. C. F. M. Mission, the Hokien-Chinese instruction in the mission-school stopped, and soon after the teaching of the Hainan Chinese in their native tongue. The school was too well established to need to hold out this inducement to attract pupils.¹⁴⁰ As the families of Messrs. McGilvary and McFarland of the Presbyterian mission removed to Petchaburee in 1861, a school was opened on their premises, with the sons of the governor and lieutenant-governor enrolled among the pupils. In 1866, the industrial school for girls which had been commenced by Mrs. McFarland in Petchaburee in 1865, and since then brought many women and girls of that city under daily Christian instruction and training in industry, was an established success. Furthermore, the boys' boarding-school in Bangkok also prospered under the superintendence of Mr. George, the Presbyterian missionary.¹⁴¹

In 1872, the women of the Presbyterian Church in the United State began to realize their special privilege and duty to work and pray for the women and children of Siam. The ladies of the Troy branch of the Albany Synodical Missionary Society became interested in Siam and established a female boarding-school in Bangkok. A little before

¹³⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 373-374.

¹³⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 160.

¹⁴⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 380-381.

¹⁴¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 383, 388-389.

this the lower station on the west bank of the river, opposite the palace, had been secured by the mission, and a dwelling-house partially completed on it. The Presbyterian Board tendered the place and the building to the Troy ladies for their school purposes. Dr. and Mrs. House and Miss Anderson occupied it in December 1873. The school was opened in May 1874, in charge of Mrs. House and Miss Anderson, and by the end of the year had a large number of boarding pupils including some noblemen's daughters. In February 1876, Miss Arabella Anderson was married to the Rev. Henry V. Noyes of the Presbyterian mission and left Siam. The place she had well filled in the girls' boarding-school at Bangkok was taken by Miss Grimstead, and then the pupils numbered twenty.¹⁴²

Regarding the missionary schools for boys in Siam particularly in Bangkok, they were opened in the early days of the missionary work. The schools had been doing a grand work in educating the children of the church and those brought to it from the local families, who often brought the gospel to their homes. In Siam, the native mind became roused to seek for knowledge. There was a growing desire to learn the English language, which drew many into the boys' school. Trade and commerce also called for clerks and assistants who had a knowledge of English. However, this often made the students leave school early before he was fit for a business-life, which was a great detriment to the missionary schools. Therefore, the schools always required the boys to make a written promise to remain a specified number of years so as to ensure a reasonable knowledge of English and the gospel. The boys who received modernized education in the missionary schools found it more easier to get a good job in the business-houses particularly in Bangkok. The business companies usually had some Christian staffs, who were willing to preach as he could. They became a credit and an honor to their missionary schools.¹⁴³

As mentioned above, girl education was deemed unnecessary and even injurious to girls, the missionary ladies who tried to enroll pupils for a girl school met with all kinds of objections from the parents. Worse still, at once evil-minded persons spread infamous titles and affirmed that the missionary school education was a trick to secure the children, and they were sent to America and sold as slaves. The parents also worried that when their girls went to school, they would be against the custom like not honoring and respecting their parents, and more important, they could no longer seek a living for the family. So most of the parents hated Christianity and despised the missionary education.

¹⁴² Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 401-402, 406.

¹⁴³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 213-214.

To solve this problem, the missionaries set up industrial schools for girls. For instance, the Presbyterian missionaries established an industrial school for girls in Petchaburee, in which the girls spent half the day in learning to read and the other half in working for payment. It was a day-school mainly for the working classes. The parents gradually accepted the industrial schools, and the pupils served as a good advertisement of these new fashioned schools. The industrial school education had the important impact that many of the pupils became industrious and pious wives and mothers at the head of the Christian families. Later King Chulalongkorn showed his appreciation of what this school did for his people by giving a donation of two thousand dollars to help furnish the new school-building. Furthermore, few years later, Presbyterian missionaries set up a new school for girls in Bangkok, which was a boarding-school for a higher class of pupils. In this school instruction was given in both the native and English languages, and the industries were principally ornamental. Some specimens of the work produced in this school were displayed in the Centennial Exhibition in 1882, and the king paid a compliment to the school by purchasing the entire lot for use in the palace. The benefits of these innovative missionary schools inspired the king to have the idea of inaugurating something in the way of government schools that would be after the American model and different from the wat-schools. As a result, upon the king's request, the "King's School" was planned and placed in charge of an American missionary. Since then this school had been running successfully, which strengthened the confidence and trust of the king and the government upon the American missionaries.¹⁴⁴ The missionaries believed that by taking charge of the school under the king's patronage they could secure the vantage ground and more liberty for Christianity in Siam, and disarm prejudice and conciliate the minds of the Siamese Buddhists, and especially prove to them that "the missionaries are true friends, who labor for the highest welfare of the country."¹⁴⁵

Actually, the American missionaries were eager to preach to the upper class especially the royal family in order to strengthen their missionary influence and the impact of the gospel. As briefly mentioned above, upon the invitation of King Mongkut who pursued modernization through English education, Mrs. Mattoon, Mrs. Bradley and Mrs. Jones, representing the American Presbyterian Mission, the American Board of Foreign Missions and the American Baptist Mission respectively in the field, had entered upon their work—"the first zenana-teaching ever attempted in the East" to teach a class

¹⁴⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 214, 216-220.

¹⁴⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 221.

composed of twenty one young wives of the king and some of his sisters for three years since 1851. During the three years, these labors continued and considerable Christian and secular knowledge was taught to the secluded royal families, which also largely contributed to the relationship between the American missionaries and the king.¹⁴⁶ In 1877, King Chulalongkorn manifested his interest in the work of female education by offering a thousand dollars toward the building constructed by the Presbyterian mission in Petchaburee for this purpose. This donation was supplemented by twelve hundred and sixty dollars more, contributed by some higher princes and nobles. Mary Backus, the Presbyterian missionary also mentioned that she had visited a princess and convinced her to stop the ritual of crouching as a servile custom. In 1878, Rev. J. M. Mc-Canby arrived and Miss Jennie Korsen took Miss Grimstead's place in the girls' boarding-school. On the other hand, Dr. McFarland withdrew from his connection with the Presbyterian mission to take the presidency of the newly-planned King's College at Bangkok upon the invitation by King Chulalongkorn. In this year, Miss Korsen became Mrs. McCauley and removed to the lower station of the Presbyterian mission to assist her husband in charge of the boys' school. Miss Caldwell took her place at the school for girls. The boys' school under McCauley had a membership of fifty-five, and achieved good progress in study. Miss Mary E. Hartwell, who arrived with the McDonalds in 1879, assisted Miss Caldwell in the girls' boarding-school. Miss Hattie H. McDonald, who was a missionary teacher, taught in the boys' school, which came under her father's supervision when the McCauleys were compelled to remove to Petchaburee because of their failing health. Under the care of Misses Coffman and Cort, the lady teachers in Petchaburee, seven different schools in and near that city numbered nearly two hundred pupils. In 1880, the boys' school, under Miss H. H. McDonald of the Presbyterian mission, numbered sixty-seven, of whom forty were boarding scholars.¹⁴⁷

From the late 19th century to the early 20th century, the Presbyterian mission continued to develop the missionary school education as both the government and the leading men of Siam were glad to recognize it. The education work was getting very fruitful. The missionaries opened more and more schools for children in different missionary stations in Siam. Their school education received plenty of positive feedback from the society. For instances, Miss Moller of the Presbyterian mission conducted the boys' and girls' schools together in Mr. Eckles' Siamese house on the east coast of the

¹⁴⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 372.

¹⁴⁷ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 328-329, 408-411.

Peninsula of Siam in 1910s. The little son of the Governor, the children of the first and second judges and the merchants together with the common people met there for good teaching which also included the daily study of the Bible. The Governor expressed his highest appreciation of the missionaries and the gratitude of Siam for the modernized school education they provided. As a token of his appreciation, the Governor sometimes let the missionaries use his automobiles and elephants. The missionaries even commenced the government schools at the request of the Siamese government. Missionaries began and led in the education of girls. At that time, Prince Damrong, the leading statesman of Siam told the American Minister that the king wanted to express to the American missionaries that “we have great respect for your American missionaries in our country and appreciate very highly the work that they are doing for our people;” “the work of your people is excellent.” The excellent modernized education works the king mentioned particularly referred to the Bangkok Christian College and the Wang Lang School for Girls, the best educational institutions for character building in Bangkok.¹⁴⁸

Prince Royal’s College, a missionary school adopting the government school system for boys under Mr. Harris of the mission was another successful example. The government course of study was divided as follows:

Pratome course, 3 years, primary school work.

Pratome course, 2 years, industrial work.

Matayome course, 8 years.

The two years' industrial work was optional for the boys who wished to go on through the Matayome course. The industrial course was given in a limited number of government schools. The Matayome course carried boys into work done in many American colleges in Freshman and Sophomore years. The final examination was considered as stiff as the “London Matriculation,” and much stiffer than the Oxford “Little Go” at that time. The later years of the Matayome course offered two courses: (a) Humanities including English, French, History, Sanscrit, Logic, Psychology, etc.; (b) Sciences including Algebra, Trigonometry, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, etc. The scheme involved the matriculation of the student at the age of seven, and the completion of his Arts course or Science course at the age of 18 years. The course covered a large amount of English. As the leading Siamese officials in the Education Department were educated in England, English was a required to a certain extent. Not only the English language, the government

¹⁴⁸ Robert E. Speer et al., *Report of Deputation of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to Siam, The Philippines, Japan, Chosen and China April-November 1915*, pp. 11, 13, 14, 27-28.

left the missionary schools free to introduce as much Christian teaching into our curriculum as they wished. Largely influenced by the American missionary particularly their modernized missionary education, the courses of the primary and secondary schools designed by the Minister of Public Instruction of the government became more sensible, modernized and practical.¹⁴⁹

In fact, the modernized school education implemented by the American missionaries brought significant impacts on the development of the education and modernized thought of the Siamese people including both the upper and lower classes. The missionaries had stimulated philosophical inquiry, paved the way for foreign intercourse with civilized nations, given a great shock to the grosser forms of idolatry among the enlightened, leavened the social and intellectual ideas of the “Young Siam” party, and steadily undermined the traditional Buddhist theories particularly with the regenerating force of the gospel. The progress of their modernized school education work also marked the condition of things in Bangkok. Influenced by the modernized missionary education, King Chulalongkorn became one of the most advanced sovereigns of Eastern Asia. He studied the laws and institutions of Western civilization, and had an ambition to make the most of his country. He devoted much time to state business, assisted by his brother and private secretary, Prince Devan, who was a keen and thoughtful statesman. Another younger prince also studied at Oxford and was eager to receive advance western education.¹⁵⁰ The common people were also widely influenced by the modernized education. For instance, as mentioned above, Leang, the native girl who received the modernized education by the Presbyterian mission refused to follow the traditional marriage custom and had a marriage ceremony containing the Christian part witnessed by the missionaries.¹⁵¹

F. Social Works: Modernized Medical Services and Westernization by the American Missionaries

In 1851, King Mongkut, a pupil of Mr. J. H. Chandler of the Baptist mission, constructed a well-furnished machine-shop under the supervision of his teacher, as did also a young

¹⁴⁹ Robert E. Speer et al., *Report of Deputation of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to Siam, The Philippines, Japan, Chosen and China April-November 1915*, pp. 93-95.

¹⁵⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 6, 35.

¹⁵¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 164-165, 170, 172.

Siamese nobleman of progressive ideas who became master of the mint later.¹⁵² The shop was undoubtedly a fruit of the modernization spirit of the American missionaries in the Siamese ruling class which helped promoting Christianity. Undoubtedly, Siam owed the introduction of printing, European literature, vaccination, modern medical practice, surgery and many useful mechanical appliances to the American missionaries at that time. The Europeanization or westernization of Siam was quite obvious. Particularly Bangkok, the traditional capital of Siam was changing rapidly. European architecture and fashions were introduced among the Siamese especially the nobility and wealthy in there. The new palace was a mixture of European architectural styles, retaining the characteristic Siamese roof. The furniture was imported from England at an expense of some seventy-live thousand pounds. The large library was filled with books in several languages and furnished with all the leading European and American periodicals. The royal guards were in European uniform. The spacious drawing-room adjoining was furnished in the most luxurious European style. The palace of the second king which was named George Washington by his father was also European in many of its appointments, with mirrors, pictures and English and French furniture. This prince devoted a great part of his time to scientific pursuits, and collected in his palace plenty of machinery, including a small steam-engine built by himself. He liked entertaining European guests in European style. The summer palace built by the king a few miles below Ayuthia, was a large building in semi-European style. The royal wat opposite this palace was a pure Gothic building fitted with regular pews and a stained-glass window.¹⁵³

Similarly, some of the entertainments of the Siamese particularly the nobility were in the European style. Miss Coffman describes one entertainment given to the foreign residents by Minister of Foreign Affairs to celebrate the birthday of the king:

The city was illuminated. We left home about eight and returned at eleven p. M. In front of the house was latticework with ail archway brilliantly illuminated. A strip of brussels carpet was laid from the archway to the steps. The house was elegantly furnished in foreign style. In the reception-room were three flower-stands, the centre one of silver and the other two glass, each having little fountains playing.....¹⁵⁴

In addition to the western-styled entertainments, the dress and habits of the Siamese

¹⁵² Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 359.

¹⁵³ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 6, 28, 30.

¹⁵⁴ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 31.

court-circles had also undergone an entire revolution in 1880s. The men wore neat linen, collar and cravat; an English dress-coat, with the native *p'anoong* arranged much like knickerbockers; shoes and stockings. Since the introduction of the western jacket, instead of the many chains they wore valuable belts of woven gold with jeweled buckles, and instead of a number of rings on every finger.¹⁵⁵ As Mary Backus commented,

Through the influence of foreigners coming to Siam and visits to foreign lands, have raised themselves in the scale of living, and have foreign houses filled with foreign furniture and conveniences, order sumptuous meals from foreign bakeries, and have them placed upon their tables and served in modern style.¹⁵⁶

The Presbyterian mission established a sanitarium for natives and Europeans in Petchaburee on the western side of the gulf. The Presbyterian mission compound was located there, and on the summit of a neighboring hill was the king's summer palace. Influenced by the work of the missionary sanitarium, the government set up another sanitarium at Anghin, a little village frequented by foreigners for surf-bathing in February or March.¹⁵⁷ An advertisement about the sanitarium appeared in the Bangkok newspaper in August 1868:

His Excellency Ahon Phya Bhibakrwongs Maha Kosa Dhipude, the Phra KlangT Minister of Foreign Affairs, has built a sanitarium at Anghin for the benefit of the public. It is for the benefit of the Siamese, Europeans or Americans to go and occupy when unwell to restore their health. All are cordially invited to go there for a suitable length of time and be happy.¹⁵⁸

Particularly in appreciation of the contribution by the missionaries, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the king and his government, adopted a very friendly attitude towards the Americans and Europeans in Siam, and always cared for their health. In August 1880, Dr. Sturge sailed for Siam as a medical missionary of the Presbyterian mission, to be stationed in Petchaburee. As mentioned above, the missionaries and their school pupils suffered from cholera in 1881, and Dr. Sturge was the only missionary doctor to treat the patients. He treated 4552 cases, twice the number of the previous year. He built a small but modernized hospital with the funds raised mostly by himself.¹⁵⁹ The Presbyterian missionaries often used their well-equipped mission boats to preach along

¹⁵⁵ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 31, 34.

¹⁵⁶ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 183.

¹⁵⁷ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 36, 38, 40.

¹⁵⁸ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 42.

¹⁵⁹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 411, 413-414.

the river. It had drawers and cupboards and shelves for storing away food, clothes,..., etc. Their mission compound on the bend of the river was quite modernized that it had everything one expected to find. It consisted of three large brick houses and one smaller. Two of the houses were occupied by the mission family; the third was the Petchaburee Home for Siamese girls, in charge of the missionary ladies. The chapel front was used for worship in each morning. The small house was Dr. Sturge's hospital.¹⁶⁰

More important, the western medical science introduced and skillfully used by the American missionaries in their occupied areas exerted beneficial and far-reaching influence in Siam, especially in the aspect of the modernization of medical facilities. As mentioned in Bangkok newspaper at that time, Dr. Tien Hee, a Siamese graduate of the Presbyterian mission boarding-school had received a diploma from the New York University School of Medicine some years ago. He was the first Siamese physician, and he established a modernized hospital in Siam. It was also the first and only hospital organized and controlled by the Siamese within the kingdom of Siam at that time. More important, he successfully performed a very difficult and delicate operation upon a distinguished Siamese official. Since then, the king has graciously permitted him to practice in the palace. The hospital was a large, airy, two-storied building, located within the city-walls, near Sampeng market-gate, and had capacity for sixty patients. It was a hospital devoted to the exclusive care of soldiers. Siam owed the establishment of its first hospital to the energy of an intelligent nobleman, Pra Nai Wai, who completed and presented the building for it to the Siamese government. The king had accepted the gift and promised to support it. Dr. Tien Hee, as a cultivated and capable physician and the director of the hospital, was able to give the patients the benefits of the modernized western medical and surgical science.¹⁶¹

G. Conclusion

The American missionaries including those of the A. B. C. F. M., the American Baptist Mission and the American Presbyterian Mission had been laboring in Siam since 1829. Their pioneer works for twenty years laid the foundation for the stable development of the American missions in Siam from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century. During this period, the American missionaries particularly the Presbyterian mission and

¹⁶⁰ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, p. 112.

¹⁶¹ Backus, *Siam and Laos as seen by American missionaries*, pp. 239-240.

the Baptist mission were steadily establishing churches and schools, extending the missionary centers and preaching places, and developing various kinds of evangelical and social works particularly in Bangkok and nearby, and by this deepening the relationship with the society including the royal family and leaders in Siam, as the king and the government of Siam gradually adopted a favorable policy towards them because of the great contribution of their beneficial works to the country. The American missionaries had broadened their views on the society of Siam and deepened their understanding of the Siamese people and their culture through the long and close contact with all classes.

Regarding the daily life of the Siamese, the missionaries adversely criticized that the Siamese lived a sluggish life without godliness, lacking personal hygiene, cleanliness, social life, table manner, knowledge of music and modernized facilities like basic furniture for a decent life. Their food culture and home life were also very primitive and inferior compared to those of the western countries or the Christian world. Worse still, they suffered from various evil customs and practices such as polygamy and child abuse. The children received inappropriate home education, and they together with the infants were lack of parental care. Even their pastimes were cruel and uncivilized in the eyes of the missionaries. The American missionaries believed that they, as the citizens of a highly modernized state, possessed superiority over the Siamese in many aspects. The missionaries also had a similar view on the Chinese in Siam as they always called them “Chinamen”, a derogatory term for the Chinese who favored gambling. They thought the western culture or the Christian culture was superior to the eastern culture they experienced in Siam at that time.

As for the Siamese customs, the missionaries denounced their traditional tales, historical ruins, wedding customs, traditional holidays, Hair-Cutting festival, spirit offering and worshipping, the Second New Year festival and merit-making funeral ceremonies as superstitions or idolatry, condemned new-born infant custom, allegiance oath service and popular idolatry as evil practices, and condemned the Siamese Buddhism and its customs as anti-Christian religion and the united influence of Buddhism and traditional education of Siam fastened superstition. They were mostly dissatisfied with the inhumanity, gender bias and ineffectiveness of this temple-centered education, and hence called for education modernization. Regarding the agriculture-based economy of Siam, they looked down upon it as a primitive and indigenous economy which also needed reforms for modernization. Their strong dissatisfaction and criticisms of the negative aspects of the Siamese culture highly motivated them to be committed in

the development of their evangelical works and modernized social works in Siam so as to transform the Siamese culture which they regarded uncivilized and anti-Christianity.

The American missionaries particularly those of the American Presbyterian Mission and the American Baptist Mission had been conducting various evangelical works among the Siamese and the Chinese since 1830s. Preaching to the Siamese was very difficult, and most of their church members were Chinese. Despite numerous difficulties and obstacles encountered, the Presbyterian missionaries adopted some effective approaches to preach, and focused on the school education for children. As a result, both missions had achieved little progress in their evangelical works in Siam during this period. In addition to their evangelical work, the missionaries also put much effort in conducting social services particularly the modernized education works and the advanced medical measures. Being dissatisfied with the Oriental mind of the Siamese, the missionaries considered school education as an effective means to civilize and Christianize the Siamese through the systematic and modernized missionary school education for children, in partnership with the church. The Presbyterian mission particularly succeeded in developing the missionary school education with the recognition of the government and the leading men of Siam. The education work was getting very fruitful. They even established the government schools upon the request of the Siamese government. Influenced by their education work, the courses of the primary and secondary schools became modernized. The modernized school education introduced by the American missionaries undoubtedly quickened the pace of modernization of education and the government school education in particular in Siam, and the pursuit of modernization among the Siamese people.

As for their modernized medical services and westernization influence, Siam and especially Bangkok undoubtedly owed the Europeanization or westernization to the American missionaries at that time. European architecture, fashions, entertainments and habits were getting popular among the Siamese and even more in the upper classes. Their standard of living increased remarkably. The missionaries established modernized sanitarium, mission compound which inspired the government to set up its own sanitarium and adopted a favorable policy towards the westerners particularly the missionaries in Siam. More important, their introduction of the western medical science exerted significant influence in Siam, speeding up the pace of the modernization of Siamese medical and surgical services there. Despite the fact that the missionaries might have some bias against the Siamese culture and their Buddhist religion and customs, the

evangelical works and close contact of the missionaries with the Siamese had fostered a better relationship between the Siamese and the westerners or the Christians at that time. The modernized social works of the missionaries particularly had significant impacts on the modernization of Siam.