

A Historical Turning Point: The Execution of Christians in Chiang Mai in 1869

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The execution of two Christians for insubordination on the orders of the Prince of Chiang Mai, at the capital city of the Northern tributary city states in September 1869, was an important incident in the local history that can also be considered as a historical turning point in that it was a key factor that persuaded the government in Bangkok that they needed to expropriate authority from the Lord of Chiang Mai into the central government, inasmuch as the incident involved American missionaries and concerned the government of the United States.

Keywords: Christian martyrdom, Historical turning point, Chiang Mai

Introduction

A historical study is a study of human social behavior in the past, although events and eras overlap and effects continue. Historians stress dividing history into eras, which enable the turning points from one era to another, or from one event to another, to be more apparent. Viewing history as a series of eras leads to a search for turning points that would explain both contemporary and subsequent changes.

From the scientific historical perspective, for a given event to be important enough to be called a turning point, certain principles must be met. First, history can be treated on two levels: mega-history and micro-history. Mega-history studies might render small local events too small and/or the location too remote to have had an effect on the area of history being studied. However, in the process of studying micro-history, an event might prove more prominent, so that upon further consideration, could be seen as the precipitating event or pivot point for the mega-history.

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The execution of two Christians in Chiang Mai, Thailand in September 1869, an event that national historians regard as only a very small point in history, is just such an event. Daniel McGilvary and Jonathan Wilson, both missionaries of the American Presbyterian Mission in Chiang Mai at the time, reported on the event. Wilson wrote about the execution in *The Foreign Mission* journal in May 1870 (Wilson, 1870) and McGilvary reported on the incident in the North Carolina Presbyterian magazine issue of April 20, 1870 (McGilvary, 1870). Later, the episode was included prominently in Daniel McGilvary's memoirs entitled *A Half Century among the Siamese and the Lao* (1912), which utilized material from the session record book of the First Presbyterian Church of Chiang Mai for 1868-86 and nearly all the materials from Wilson as well.

The execution of the two Christians marked a turning point in the history of Chiang Mai in the sense that the event stimulated the Bangkok government to impose change in the administration of Chiang Mai, the main capital city of the Northern tributaries, more quickly than otherwise might have been the case, an idea first put forward by McGilvary.

This study is being presented to show that the study of a historical turning point is not necessarily a study of an important event that has been recorded in a national history or world history, but that a particular event in a remote location, if studied properly, can be shown to be significant in and of itself and influential in a larger historical transition. The aspect of the execution of the two Christians that made it a turning point in the history of Bangkok and Lanna relations was the fact that it was the precipitating event, the trigger, as it were.

Discussion

American Missionaries and Christian Evangelism in Chiang Mai

American Presbyterian missionaries first came to Siam to evangelize in 1840. Later, they looked to expand their work to Chiang Mai and the Lanna tributaries. Toward this end, in 1859, McGilvary expressed the desire to come and work in Chiang Mai to Lord Kawiloros, the absolute ruler of Lanna at that time. When the Lord of the City extended permission for American Presbyterian missionaries to come to Chiang Mai, the American Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission agreed to expand its work in Siam to include Chiang Mai. Other mission groups in Siam at the time, including the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission and the American Baptists, lacked the resources to do so. Moreover, McGilvary indicated that it was the responsibility of the American Presbyterian Board to take the lead "in accordance with the will and the

call” of God. In a letter to the secretary of the Board of Foreign Mission (BFM) in 1861, McGilvary stated, “The door is open to us but could close at any time.... We should not lay ourselves open to blame later if we do not follow the leading of the Lord.... The Lord’s time is always the best time...” (BFM, February 13, 1863). In the following year, the pressure was repeated, “We should feel guilty, you and our Presbyterian Church, if we do not use this opportunity” (BFM, February 10, 1864).

Other Presbyterian missionaries were also in favor of this expansion of mission work. Dr. Dan Beach Bradley, an important American missionary at the beginning of the Rattanakosin period, attempted to implement this cause as well. For example, Bradley wrote that he “proclaimed Christianity emphatically” (the missionaries tended to use the word “evangelized” and sometimes “preached”) in 1859 and later to the leaders and government officials from the Lanna capitol, which was a central city under the control of Bangkok. Bradley says in his journal (preserved by G. H. Feltus as a monograph entitled *Abstract of the Journal of Rev. Dan Beach Bradley, M.D. Medical Missionary in Siam 1835-1873*, hereinafter ADB) that he took the opportunity to pass out tracts about the teaching of Christianity to this group several times and also prepared to earnestly proclaim Christianity to the Lanna people (ADB March 1, 1861, April 20, 1861, May 4 and 8, 1861, and May 23, 1870). The American Presbyterian missionaries in Siam began making preparations for printing in the Lanna language in 1864, but no results came of it at that time (Swanson, 1983).

The Presbyterian missionary process to establish a mission in Chiang Mai, in addition to seeing the importance of printing in order to communicate Christianity to local people, also involved preparing medical and educational supplies. For example, they stocked medicine, maps, globes and chemical equipment, as well as food, tools, and supplies for their daily life. The missionaries had followed this same procedure when they began working in Bangkok. McGilvary’s writings reflected his point of view that the expansion of the work to Chiang Mai was to bring the world of the West to the lands far from civilization, and it would require commodities of every kind from the West to communicate the Christian religion (Swanson, 1987). Thus, the arrival of missionaries in Chiang Mai introduced strange new things and Western ways of life to the Lanna people. It was similar to the experience of Bangkok at the time of the coming of the missionaries thirty years earlier, who played a role in spreading Western manners there (Pongudom, 1990).

The process by which the American missionaries prepared to come to Chiang Mai revealed that Chiang Mai was highly independent from the point of view of the Government of Siam. Chiang Mai was the major

city and the residence of the prince of the Lanna Kingdom, which was a vassal state protected by Siam. The extent to which Siam dominated Chiang Mai was precisely the issue that was about to be revised. H.M. King Chulalongkorn responded to the missionaries' request for permission to work in Chiang Mai that the authority absolutely was with Lord Kawiloros, the ruler of Chiang Mai; it was up to him to grant any such permission. At the time, the missionaries were concerned about obstacles and difficulties that arose from contacting and trying to conduct the matter through many government units. But it was observable that the higher authorities in Bangkok with whom the missionaries were working were those, for the most part, that had been close to the missionaries before (ADB, September 8, 1866; McGilvary, 1912). This facilitated progress. And then, when Lord Kawiloros granted permission for the American missionaries to proclaim Christianity in Chiang Mai, it greatly exceeded their expectations. Bradley wrote about the success, "It is the blessing of God for which we must give praise in all circumstances" (ADB, September 8, 1866). For his part, McGilvary wrote that he was surprised that this process to get the final approval could happen in so few days (McGilvary, 1912). The missionaries believed that the administration of the kingdom, which had Buddhism as its basic faith, would not find it easy to allow the proclamation of Christianity.

While no evidence remains that reveals what Lord Kawiloros said about this, he may have been somewhat swayed to want them to come to his homeland when he and his government officials learned about what the American missionaries had brought to Siam. This included Dr. Dan Beach Bradley's medical activities, Western inventions such as quinine (a more effective cure of malaria than local medicine), the printing of Thai books, and samples of Lanna printing, maps, and globes. Dr. Bradley, arriving in 1835, introduced smallpox inoculations and the printing press to the Bangkok Government. He used the printing press to print a tract for the palace to oppose the use of opium in 1839. Lord Kawiloros made periodic trips to Bangkok to present gold and silver in the shape of trees as a sign of fealty, as well as other gifts of tribute. The Chiang Mai delegation in the time of Kawiloros made these trips every three years, including a trip in 1859-60, when it is recorded in Bradley's diary that the Lord of Life personally visited the printing shop in Bangkok.

Despite the invitation in 1866, when it came time to work out a formal diplomatic agreement, which the American missionaries thought to be very important, Lord Kawiloros was unwilling to discuss it. He did not attend the appointment with the American missionary representatives, the American Consul, and the Siamese minister responsible for the Lanna

tributaries. However, he agreed with the missionaries “off the record” and accepted the objectives mentioned by the American missionaries, namely, that they would proclaim religion, establish schools, and treat injuries and sickness (McGilvary, 1912). Lord Kawiloros avoided being bound by a pact, preferring that the missionaries come to Chiang Mai at their own pleasure.

However, when McGilvary arrived in Chiang Mai, Lord Kawiloros was at war with Prince Kolan’s group, who had rebelled and rounded up people on the borders. This left the missionaries without any special duties to perform with the city elders who did not examine the Christian proclamation of religion at the time. This provided the American missionaries an opportunity to begin working directly with the locals. This was the first time villagers had seen and learned about Western science, which the missionaries introduced as a matter of importance. The American missionaries felt a greater freedom to proclaim Christianity in Chiang Mai than at the beginning of their missionary work in Bangkok. From McGilvary’s perspective, Chiang Mai residents enjoyed more basic freedom than the people of Siam (McGilvary, 1869).

McGilvary and his wife, Sophie, were the first Western couple to come to Chiang Mai with the intention of settling there. They lived in a pavilion hastily built by a wealthy citizen, on a main thoroughfare. Their dwelling was a point of interest for the public, providing McGilvary and his wife, who could both use Thai fluently, with opportunity to spread the word about Christianity. Later, the two also built closer relationships with high officials in Chiang Mai.

However, the American missionaries soon encountered trouble with the Chiang Mai administrators, stemming from their fear and suspicion about the proclamation of Christianity, leading to the execution of two of the mission’s leading converts, Noi Suya and Naan Chai, in Mae Pukha village on September 14, 1869 (as described below). Given that this execution compounded the risks of international intervention into Siamese affairs in an era in which the Western powers were searching for colonies, this provided an important inducement for the Government of Siam to become more involved in the political activities of Chiang Mai. Intervention was an increased concern after the signing of the Bowring Treaty in 1855 (Sethkul, 1989) and the completion of a similar treaty between Siam and the United States in 1856.

The death of the American missionaries’ protégés brought the immediate involvement of the American Consul in Bangkok, who had never before been interested in taking political action regarding Siam. Already facing charges concerning a forest concession made with England, another

Western power, this compounded Chiang Mai's problems under the leadership of Lord Kawiloros. Siamese leadership grew more anxious about Chiang Mai as a result, and this was a factor in the historical turning point that will be presented next.

The Proclamation of Christianity and the Reaction of Lord Kawiloros

The American missionaries came to Chiang Mai in a different manner than other groups entering the territory, who were more apt to be government officials, merchants, and explorers. The missionaries came as religious teachers and physicians. At the same time, they were strange Western foreigners (whom the local folks called "white people"), attracting the attention of Chiang Mai residents as well as conscripts from Lampang and Prae, who came out of curiosity to gaze at the foreign missionaries. It put the people in touch with many aspects of the lifestyle of the Western world, including Western medicine. As the locals became more familiar with the Western missionaries, some became interested in the teachings of Christianity and wanted to study more seriously.

The local people who were first interested in Christian teaching were, for the most part, men with the titles of "Naan" or "Noy," signifying that they had gone through Buddhist ordination training. There were some in this group that McGilvary said had come to "faith" in the Christian teaching but because they were officials, they were not apt to let it show. While those who had formerly been ordained were studying, a group of high-ranking Buddhist priests and some upper-level officials were also interested in making contact with, and deeply studying, the American missionaries' Christian religious teaching. Thus, there were two approaches: those making contact with the American missionaries to exchange religious knowledge without any thought of changing religion, and those coming for help from the American missionaries and to debate religion leading up to changing religion in the end.

The first Chiang Mai person to change to the Christian faith openly was Naan Inta from a village in the Yang Nung jurisdiction (Sarapi District, Chiang Mai Province). McGilvary said he was about 40 years old and a person of good social status given he was related to Chiang Mai royalty. He had studied for Buddhist ordination and had been an abbot. After demitting the priesthood, he remained a lay leader in the temple. Naan Inta was interested in discussing religion and Western scientific inventions, which the Western missionaries had brought to disseminate (McGilvary, 1912). Naan Inta's change of religious faith came as a result of McGilvary's challenge to Naan Inta to test the truth in a new way, through direct experience of the eclipse which occurred on August 18, 1868, which was

a natural occurrence that science could explain, and not the result of the power of any demon giants or the god Rahu as the Lanna people believed. Convincing knowledge like this made Naan Inta interested in serious study of Christianity, to the point that he was baptized into the Christian faith on January 3, 1869.

McGilvary said that Naan Inta's change of religion was a "revolution" of thought, a radical abandonment of traditional venerations (McGilvary, 1869; McGilvary, 1912); for instance, acceptance of the idea that there is a creator of the universe, which did not just happen by itself as propounded by Buddhism, as well as the concept of the washing away of sin by Jesus Christ who had enormous merit and was capable of washing away the sins of others, and not by erasing them through one's own acts of merit as taught by Buddhism. Naan Inta's change of religion is a case of a type of intellectual collision in the area of cosmology between the American missionaries and locals. Swanson (2001) points out that the clash over cosmology between the Western missionaries and local sages of Thailand came to an end when Thai sages in Bangkok began to use Western cosmology to interpret the universe in a Thai manner while at the same time, rejecting the Christian way of thinking and religion; a key signal of this was the publication of a book to this effect, entitled *Kitchanukit* by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chaophraya Thiphakorawong (Kham Bunnag). But the cognitive clash over cosmology between Western missionaries and Lanna culture was just beginning with locals like Naan Inta, those who gathered around the missionaries, and those of high status like H.S.H. Buakham (mother of Lord Intawichaiyanon, the 7th Lord of Chiang Mai), and the abbot of Wat Umong. These Lanna intellectuals were interested in the new cosmology and its implications. By using knowledge and understanding to explain the new religion, Western scientific equipment and rational debate utilizing the investigation of truth in the way Francis Bacon did, and the scientific principles of Isaac Newton who dominated the scientific worldview of the time, the missionaries sought to lead people to the conclusion that Christianity is the truth.

The change of worldview and acceptance of the teaching of Christianity by Naan Inta was an important example that influenced locals who were interested in the teaching of the American missionaries to have the courage to come to study and to change religions openly (McGilvary, 1912). As of August 1869, there were seven converts (inclusive of Naan Inta), some of whom were also society leaders, including: Naan Sriwichai, a civil servant in the court of the Lord of Lampon; Noi Suya, a physician and overseer of Lord Kawiloros' herds of animals; and Naan Chai, a former abbot and teacher of Lanna language to the missionaries.

In the process of leading locals to turn to accept Christianity, the missionaries established the First Presbyterian Church of Chiengmai [sic] in April 1868. This was of symbolic importance to the work of the American missionaries. It was a “planting of the Church’s banner” (*The First Presbyterian Church of Chiengmai*, 1868-86) as a sign of the expanded borders of Christianity in accordance with the principles of expansionism in a territory which did not yet accept Christianity, and was the beginning of building a new type of “community” with Christianity at the center of the social fellowship superimposed on the villages or old-style communities of Lanna.

At the outset, the missionaries used their house as the venue for religious activities. The polity (regulations) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was used with members (*The First Presbyterian Church of Chiengmai*, 1868-86). During Baptism services, there was also a service of Holy Communion as a sign of reception of the initiate as “one of the group,” wherein those who had accepted faith in Christianity and passed an examination on their knowledge and faith in Christianity given by the American missionaries, publicly announced their renunciation of their old religion. With regard to Noi Sunya and Boonma who came to request baptism on May 1, 1869, the session (church board) record is as follows:

...They both professed to renounce all dependence on their own merit and all confidence in Buddhism. Professing not only their belief in the One Living and True One but also to have sought and obtained pardon through the blood of Jesus Christ (*The First Presbyterian Church of Chiengmai*, May 1, 1869).

With locals converting rapidly and still more showing interest in Christianity, the American missionaries conceived of a plan for the new Christians from Mae Pukha village in the area of Sankampaeng to set up a church in their home village.

This rapid conversion of locals to Christianity, with many of them leaders in their communities or society, was at odds with the understanding of Lord Kawiloros that the missionaries would teach his people about Christianity but not induce them to be Christians. Lord Kawiloros reacted to this rapid conversion, shown in his resolute opposition to the proclamation of the Christian religion (Brailey, 1968), which resulted in the execution of Noi Suya and Naan Chai of Mae Pukha village on September 14, 1869. The missionaries believed these executions were clearly at the orders of the Lord of Life (Lord Kawiloros) (*The First Presbyterian Church of Chiengmai*, January 2, 1870; McGilvary, 1912).

Based on the writing of McGilvary and Swanson's analysis (McGilvary, 1912; Swanson, 1984), many reasons and factors could have exacerbated the opposition to the proclamation of Christianity in Chiang Mai. First, the problem of the new Christian converts compounded the turmoil in Lord Kawiloros's mind from having been defeated in battle by Prince Kolan of the Red Karens who revolted against Chiang Mai rule, while at the same time, Lord Kawiloros was dealing with charges in court in Bangkok brought by the Burma Borneo Company concerning conflicting forest concessions.

Second, the American missionaries believed that a Portuguese merchant by the name of Fonseca, a Roman Catholic who disliked the Protestant missionaries (ADB, January 27, 1868, March 28, 1868, September 14, 1868), had persuaded Lord Kawiloros that he would be able to help him solve the problem with regard to the forest case in court. Fonseca advocated Lord Kawiloros expel the American missionaries because he saw it as a group that had been sent by the Government of Siam to spy in Chiang Mai. Fonseca also made Lord Kawiloros suspicious that the American missionaries could also help precipitate the great Western powers seizing Chiang Mai and Lanna much as Britain had taken charge of Burma. This occurred despite Lord Kawiloros originally having been very friendly with the American missionaries, even finding a piece of land for the missionaries and granting permission for the cutting of trees to build their houses (Curtis, 1903; Swanson, 2002).

Third, the missionaries' presence created conflict between the local and American social culture. When the American missionaries came to proclaim the Christian religion and converted locals, those who turned to Christianity had to reject their Lanna faith and traditions. This upset the system of relationships of social and traditional cultural values that had formerly been practiced by those who became Christians. Moreover, being a Christian was considered by Lord Kawiloros to be tantamount to open opposition to and defiance of the absolute authority of Lord Kawiloros and the elders, inasmuch as the Christians were taught not to work on Sunday. The American missionaries insisted upon strict "adherence to the Sabbath" (resting and worship on Sunday). Naan Inta, as a newly converted Christian, refused to be drafted for work on Sunday. On top of that, he induced his son who was still an ordained priest to demit and become a Christian, too. The opposition to both the political and traditional culture was evident.

Finally, the arrival of the American missionaries was comparable to the building of a new society with the missionaries as leaders or "patrons," and this seemed to be expanding all the time (Swanson, 2002). The chal-

lence to the system of authority of the political elders and the impact on the traditional customs of Lanna society was apparent.

The reaction in opposition to the Christian proclamation was couched in terms of the principle of faith in taboos, which was used as the excuse to obstruct the missionaries so they would have to leave Chiang Mai. A foreboding appeared in March 1869 when Lord Kawiloros sent a letter to the Royal Palace Bureau of Wongsathiraj (Sanit) Minister of Defense, who was responsible for the tributaries in the North, asking for the recall of the McGilvarys to Bangkok. He said that the proclamation of the Christian religion by the American missionaries in Chiang Mai had offended the guardian spirit of Chiang Mai. The rain had not fallen in the normal season and crops were deeply affected, with widespread conditions of poor quality rice, expensive betel nut, and famine (ADB, March 30, 1869).

The execution of the Christians was a political and traditional social reaction when facing something strange and new to which society could not adjust in time. So the society reverted to the old method to oppose and prevent the new thing which was having an impact on the old society and culture. However, this time the reversion to autocratic tradition had a backlash that triggered a change in the politics, society, and culture of Chiang Mai.

The Execution of the Christians and the Backlash as a Historical Turning Point: The Political Viewpoint

The session records of the First Presbyterian Church of Chiengmai of January 1, 1870 recorded the visit to Chiang Mai by representatives of the Siam Mission (Bangkok), the United States Consul, and a Royal Commissioner from Siam who came to take care of matters concerning the killing of the two Christians. These records reported that Noi Sunya and Naan Chai were killed because of their steadfastness of faith in Jesus Christ and their practice in accordance with duty and morals. The American missionaries emphasized the importance of the religious dimension and that the two were subjected to suffering due to spite. At the same time, the two were honored as heroes of the Christian faith in these words:

We have never been permitted to learn what were their experiences of mind during that fatal night when their sufferings were prolonged as if to add intensity to their sufferings.... And from all we know of their behavior, they met death with the true spirits of martyrs so far as holding steadfast to the faith in Christ and we doubt not that they now wear the martyr's crown (*The First Presbyterian Church of Chiengmai*, January 2, 1870).

Of necessity, the account concerning the execution of the Christians, which is the subject of this study, is taken from the writings and records of the American missionaries and associated Christian organizations, inasmuch as historical evidence in Thai documents has not appeared or is not available. Therefore, the execution of the Christians and the accounts are historical writings from American Missionary sources, or are subsequent historical studies using evidence that was composed based on those sources, which may not be free from biases imbedded in the records. Nevertheless, when studying the evidence in detail, the emotional feeling of the writers displays a great deal of fear and apprehension at the power of Lord Kawiloros. This concern about Lord Kawiloros' impulsive and autocratic nature is reflected in the epithet to which he was referred, "Cao Aw!", weakly translated "the Lord of Life," but in Lord Kawiloros' case, referring to the word "Aw!" which was the pronunciation of a summary sentence. It can also be inferred from the *ex post facto* Bangkok document cited below in which the officials try to protect themselves from blame by inferring, "We told the missionaries not to go to Chiang Mai because the Prince is hot headed." The missionaries recorded their accounts in the hopes that the coming generation would know what happened in the Chiang Mai Church if they themselves lost their lives by being "put away," whether as a result of the authority of Lord Kawiloros or otherwise. However, it was not to turn out as the missionaries had feared. Nevertheless, the missionaries steadfastly fought the absolute authority of Lord Kawiloros (McGilvary, 1912) to the point that when the U.S. Consul became involved in the matter it was understood by the officials in Bangkok and Chiang Mai that the United States had, in fact, intervened in Chiang Mai, using the excuse of protecting Americans and others they apparently considered were covered by the Harris Treaty of 1856 with Siam.

The aftermath to the execution of the Christians provided evidence of the political and social power of the American missionaries. They were able to influence the leaders of Siam to acquiesce to their needs. When the American missionaries in Bangkok heard the news of the execution of the Christians, they combined efforts with the U.S. Consul to press the Government of Siam to send a Commissioner to investigate and protect the safety of Americans in Chiang Mai. The Government in Bangkok initially took the position that they wanted McGilvary and Wilson to withdraw from Chiang Mai, having the Lord of Chiang Mai protect their safety as they traveled back to Bangkok. At the time of writing the letter that the Commissioner carried to Chiang Mai, the right to decide whether the missionaries would be allowed to remain in Chiang Mai was left to the will of Lord Kawiloros. When the contents of the letter became known,

the missionaries objected and insisted that the Bangkok government profess protection for their rights, that is, for the missionaries to decide for themselves whether to leave Chiang Mai or to stay as they desired (ADB, October 18, 30, November 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 1869).

Nigel J. Brailey's study points out the role of Dr. Daniel Bradley in pushing the Government of Siam to take charge of the problem of conflict between Lord Kawiloros and the American missionaries and Christians. Lord Kawiloros regarded himself as the Lord of the Land of Chiang Mai, with the rightful authority to manage internal affairs without being under the authority of Siam, including not accepting the interpretation that the treaty between Siam and the United States of America covered Chiang Mai. The arrival of the commissioner from Bangkok, the American Consul, and the representative of the American Presbyterian Church would have tested the authority of Lord Kawiloros, whom, in Brailey's words "the elders from Bangkok well knew was awesome as a head of state" (Brailey, 1968).

The meeting to inquire into the deaths of the two Christians appeared to be concluding easily, but before Lord Kawiloros could end the meeting, McGilvary remonstrated in front of the group that Lord Kawiloros had to take responsibility for the deaths of the Christians. At this, Lord Kawiloros said clearly that Noi Sua and Naan Chai were his subjects and they had been sentenced to death because they were guilty of apostasy (literally, refusing to give veneration); becoming Christians was tantamount to treason against him, he said. Moreover, he threatened that if any other subjects of his went over to the Christian faith, they would be executed as well (McGilvary, 1912).

By interceding to protect the local Christians as the missionaries were doing, it was an indication that locals who changed religion to become Christians were under the protective umbrella of the United States, the same as Americans who had extra-territorial rights under the treaty of 1856. The American Consul had not shown much interest in extra-territorial rights since Hood, the American Consul in Bangkok (1865-69) at the end of the reign of Rama IV (1851-68), had undertaken the registration of Chinese in Bangkok as being under the protection of America, and H.M. King Rama IV had criticized this as improper. Hood's behavior in this matter split the Americans into two camps with regard to American extra-territorial rights, with the American Presbyterian missionaries largely in support of Hood. Thus, as the missionaries cited the right to protection of Christians in Chiang Mai, it should be taken to mean they were thought of as persons under American control as well (Bradley, 1981; *The Historical Commission of the Prime Minister's Secretariat*, 1994).

With the Lord of Chiang Mai becoming a litigant in a conflict

with American citizens, the level of alarm within the Government of Siam increased. This was in contrast to the past when the Bangkok-based government sought to slowly solve the problems of the ruler of the Lanna tributaries, such as the one he had with England. England itself had tried to get the Siamese government in Bangkok to fully administer Chiang Mai and the Lanna city-states and to have the Bowring Treaty clearly cover those areas, but the Government of Siam consistently dodged this (Sethkul, 1989). The government in Bangkok first considered the case of the killed Christians as outside the bounds of the responsibility of the Siamese government as covered in the Bowring Treaty, which included a provision that prevented Europeans and Americans to travel farther from Bangkok than they could go and come in 24 hours; and this conflict had taken place in Chiang Mai, with its own strict laws, which according to the letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs:

...For as the government of Siam has included in the agreements with every country, that any distance farther than 24 hours that a European or American wishes to reside, the government of Siam shall give permission to be able to live there. Since it seems that those lands are thick forests, it is feared that incidents could occur that could damage the governmental friendships (international relationships) at such times. Mister McGilvary and Mister Wilson moved to reside in Chiang Mai without requesting such (permission) from the government of Siam (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1868).

The document criticizes the American missionaries for exceeding the terms of the agreements, whereas the material recorded by the American missionaries shows that the missionaries only proceeded when they got permission from H.M. King Chulalongkorn and Lord Kawiloros, as well as after passing the ministries responsible for these matters (McFarland, 1928). In any case, the content in this reply letter, apart from reflecting a lack of understanding and procedures within units of the government in Bangkok, shows the nature of the problems and lack of clarity about extra-territorial agreements. Still, the American missionaries understood the treaties to mean that the agreements had the effect of providing protection for persons under American and English control everywhere.

The execution of the Christians was one of the factors that led to political change in Chiang Mai, as the government in Bangkok saw an increased need to become involved with Chiang Mai and the Lanna tributaries, given the need to solve the problem of the conflict between the American missionaries and the Lord of Chiang Mai (Brailey, 1968). McGilvary wrote:

Up to the time when Prince Kawilorot gave his public and official promise before the United States Consul and the representative of the Siamese Government, in the little sala at the landing-stage of Wat Cheng in Bangkok, no foreign power other than the English had had any claim on the Lao or any contact with them. It was only the impolitic act of killing the Christians which brought the Lao Prince into conflict with the representative of the United States Government (McGilvary, 1912).

Similarly, Bradley encouraged the government in Bangkok to counter the authority of Lord Kawiloros in the matter of the execution of the two Christians. Whereupon, the leader of Siam promised to protect the American missionaries and prepared to have the Lord Uparacht (“second king”) Intawichayanont (a friend of the missionaries) become the overseer of Chiang Mai. Bradley is reported by McGilvary to have said:

“...This I regard as good news, indeed, and too good to be held a day longer from the public. Who will not agree with me that the Siamese government is worthy of a great deal of praise for what it has done in the matter of the Chiangmai Missions? But let us see to it that the King of Kings, as well, receives our highest praise for all these gratifying events of His Providence. (McGilvary, 1912).

This situation exposed the problem of increasing conflict between the Westerners and the Lord of Chiang Mai and resulted in the Westerners gaining a firm agreement concerning extra-territorial rights covering the Lanna city-states. As a result, the government in Bangkok would have to fully rule over the Lanna tributaries. This was in line with the desires of H.M. King Chulalongkorn, who wanted to build up his power as a defense against the “Old Siam” group, which had Somdet Chao Phraya Sri Suriyawong (Chuang Bunnag) as the Regent. He would subsequently make a stand with the Westerners that the Lanna city-states were part of the territory of Siam (Sethkul, 1980).

When H.M. King Chulalongkorn fully ascended the throne (at the end of the regency) in 1873, he implemented the policy of intervention, exercising strict control over the Lanna city-states, whereas in previous reigns and at the beginning of his reign, the Lanna city-states had a large measure of independence. However, in 1869, Somdet Chao Phaya Sri Suriyawong (Chuang Bunnag) still was the one who designed and implemented policy for the city-states. The conditions, rationale, and the need presented by the difficulty in Chiang Mai were seen as justification for taking authority for the Lanna city-states under Bangkok’s central control. This, in effect, marked the initial move to vest all authority in the King and to restore the absolute monarchy.

Lord Uparach Intawichayanont, with the support of Bangkok, stepped into this political conflict to take charge of Chiang Mai. While he lacked strength and decisiveness, the side opposed to the policy of Bangkok countering the authority of the ruler of Chiang Mai also had insufficient strength to prevail, so it left H.M. King Chulalongkorn unopposed to proceed steadily and decisively with the policy of taking charge of Chiang Mai. The need for Bangkok to intervene in Lanna affairs first appeared with regard to the dispute between the Lord of Chiang Mai and England, which later resulted in an agreement between the Government of Siam and the Government of England in 1873. At the same time, the government in Bangkok proceeded to have Lord Uparach Intawichayanont accept the absolute authority of Siam by suggesting he sign the “R. S. 92 Agreement by which the Lord of Chiengmai will Preserve the Nation City of Chiengmai,” which was equivalent to giving Chiang Mai the status of a colony of Bangkok (Sethkul, 1980). This opened the way for the government in Bangkok to come in to administer the affairs of the country continuously from then on.

Conclusion

The American missionaries came to Lanna not only with technological and academic contributions to make, but also with a cultural perspective and religious organizational model that was inconsistent with Lanna traditions. This threatened the established political powers and the social role of the rulers, while affecting the unity of the traditional Lanna society. Initially, the local authorities’ opposition to the missionaries was violent. But in the political aftermath of the execution of two Christians in 1869, the Government of Siam established its rule over the Lanna city-states, enabling the American missionaries to utilize the government in Bangkok to defend them (and to some extent their charges) and see to it that they could proceed with their mission. The executions served as a political turning point in the relationship between Siam and Chiang Mai.

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