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ASSIMILATION OR SEPARATION; THE KARENS 1824-1918

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement  
for the degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

April 1976

## ABSTRACT

PATRICIA MENON

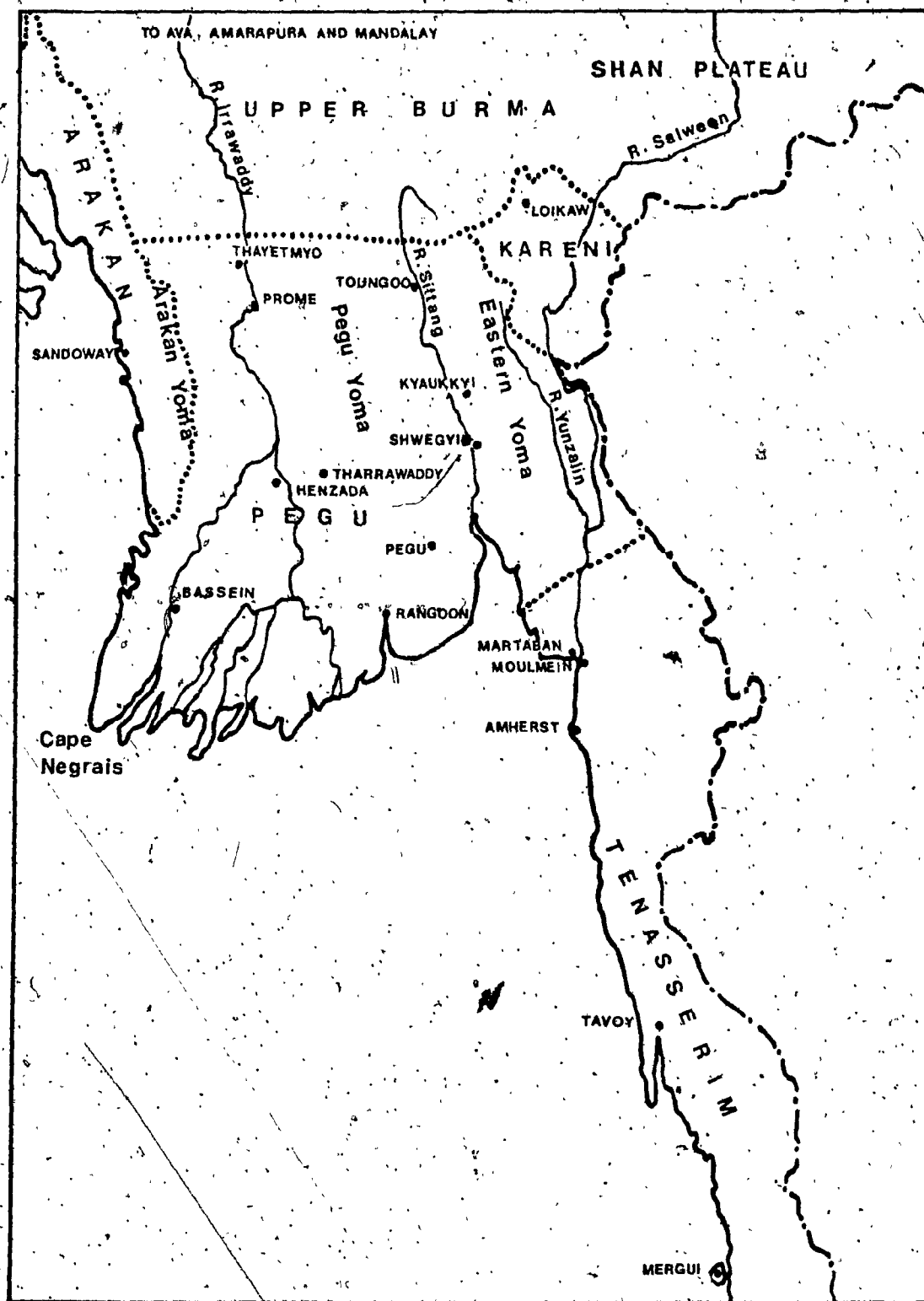
### ASSIMILATION OR SEPARATION; THE KARENS 1824-1918

The Karens National Defence Organisation joined the Insurrections against the Burmese Government in 1948, but the origins of Karen disaffection lay in the past.

The annexation of Tenasserim by the British in 1826, and their subsequent policies, in conjunction with the evangelisation of the Karens by American Baptists, profoundly affected the Karens.

The annexation of Pegu in 1852 enabled the missions to extend their influence in conjunction with British power. Changes in culture, language, occupation and religion were intensified by the movement of hill Karens to the plains.

The war of 1886 increased hostility between Burmans and Karens and encouraged the missionaries, supported by a British official, to call for the nurturing of a Karen nation. By 1918, however, it was not clear which trend, one towards the disappearance of the Karens through assimilation, or another towards assertion of the Karen identity, would become the stronger. Later events would decide.



Map 1. Lower Burma

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Patricia Menon

## INTRODUCTION

"The Union is standing on the edge of a precipice; a slight tilt would plunge it headlong into the abyss .... The whole world has opined our days are numbered."

U Nu Speech, February 27, 1949<sup>1</sup>

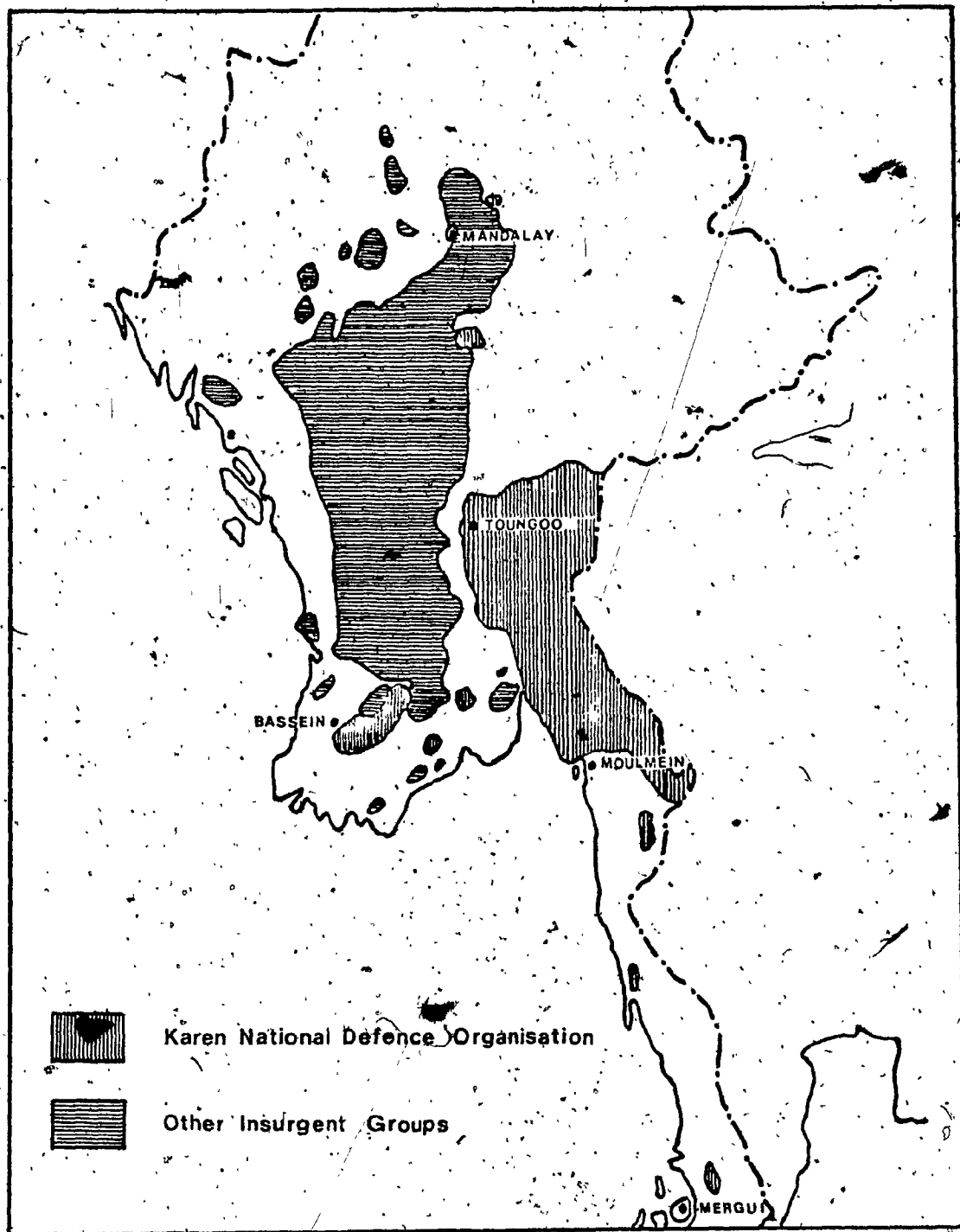
Just how close to the edge of the precipice Burma came in 1949 can be seen by reference to Map 1 which shows that the Burmese Government was not exaggerating the seriousness of the situation. The country, which had only achieved its independence in January 1948, had been torn apart by the insurrections and large areas were under the control of various groups hostile to the government.

One of these groups, the Karen National Defence Organisation, held, as can be seen from the map, considerable parts of the south and southeast of the newly independent state, as well as significant areas in the Delta region. It was demanding a Karen National State with boundaries which coincided roughly with the countryside it held and which exceeded anything the government was prepared to grant.

A century and a half earlier the Karens had been a loosely related group of clans; speaking a variety of dialects; following customs which differed widely from village to village; considered to be wild and savage or shy and retiring, according to their location; lacking a common religion; and widely, and often thinly, scattered through much of lower Burma.

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Frank N. Trager, Burma, From Kingdom to Republic (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 10.



Map 2. Areas held by the insurgents during the period February - April 1949.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the origins of Karen separatism in the period up to, and including, the First World War; and to try to identify the influences which contributed to and worked against the development of a common Karen identity. The period under study encompassed many significant events, including the three Anglo-Burmese wars of 1824-6, 1852 and 1885; and the annexations that followed each, first of Arakan and Tenasserim, then of Pegu, and finally of Upper Burma. It also saw the arrival of the American Baptist Mission, its first attempts to convert the Buddhist Burmese and later, and more successfully, the animist Karens. This, too, was the age of nationalism, culminating in World War One, with consequences not only for Europe, but for all those cultures with which Europe came into contact.

It is not the purpose of this paper to claim that there was an irreversible trend towards Karen nationalism by the time of the First World War, nor that the Karen insurrections following the achievement of Burmese independence were already inevitable by 1918. Many developments were to affect profoundly the course of Karen history in the period after World War One, among them being the various changes in the governmental structure of Burma, which helped emphasise Karen-Burman<sup>2</sup> conflicts in the struggle

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<sup>2</sup>The term "Burmese" has been used throughout this paper to describe all the inhabitants of Burma, while "Burman" has been used to describe a specific racial group, and to distinguish it from other ethnic groups such as Karens, Kachins, Shans and Chins. This rule does not necessarily apply to quotations, where the original usage has been retained. The spelling "Karen" is now standard, but early sources used a variety of forms: Carian (Sangermano); Carayners or Carrianers (Symes); Carrians (Cox); Karian, Karyens, Karen (Crawford); also Karenn, Karaian, Karianes, Kayen; and Kayin (Burmese). The Karen name for themselves was Pgha K'Naw, which means "men", and seems to be of Chinese origin.

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for political representation; the events of the Second World War itself with the disastrous clashes between the B.I.A. and the Karens; Karen co-operation with the British against the Japanese; and the complexities of the post-war issues.

Nevertheless, influences were at work in the period before World War One which both encouraged and inhibited the growth of Karen nationalist sentiments. It is with that limited, but crucial, period that this thesis is concerned.

## CHAPTER 1

### BEFORE THE INTERVENTION OF THE WEST

Theories concerning the origins of the Karens are "largely conjecture",<sup>1</sup> although the most generally agreed seems to be that they originated in China. Their language is tonal, and tradition states that their lost writing resembled the "scratching of a chicken's foot".<sup>2</sup> They may have arrived in Burma in about the sixth or seventh century A.D.,<sup>3</sup> but references to their early life in Burma are rare. There is some indication in the Burmese Chronicles that the Queen of the first Mon king of Pegu (825-837) was a Karen woman, but, other than this reference, there is very little evidence available.<sup>4</sup>

More relevant to the subject of this paper than their real origins, however, are the theories which arose concerning the supposed origin of the Karens. Many of the Karen legends about their past portray the Karens as having lost knowledge, land and prestige through their own carelessness and laziness, a theory which justified their sense of inferiority. Some of the earlier missionaries believed that their converts were descendants of one of the ten lost tribes of Israel, on the strength of legends which will be

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<sup>1</sup>F.M. Lebar et al., Ethnic Groups of Mainland South East Asia (New Haven: Human Relations Files Press, 1964), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup>J.W. Baldwin, "The Karens in Burma," Journal of the Royal Central Asiatic Society, 36 (1949), 103.

<sup>3</sup>H.I. Marshall, The Karens of Burma (Calcutta: Longmans, 1945), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Burma Gazetteer, Pegu District, by A.J. Page (Rangoon: Supt. of Govt. Printing, 1917), p. 11; W.S. Desai, A Pageant of Burmese History (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1961), p. 8.

discussed later in this chapter. The Karens assumed a very important position in missionary work, and the effort put into converting them was thus obviously justified, even though the original aim of the mission to Burma had been to convert the Buddhist Burmese. The most entertaining theory was that of a certain Captain Foley, who suggested to the missionary Dr. Mason that the Karens were a remnant of the ancient Huns "preserved during the lapse of 1788 years, uncomminted with the blood of strangers" on the strength of their resemblance to an illustration "drawn by Gibbon in his immortal history".<sup>5</sup>

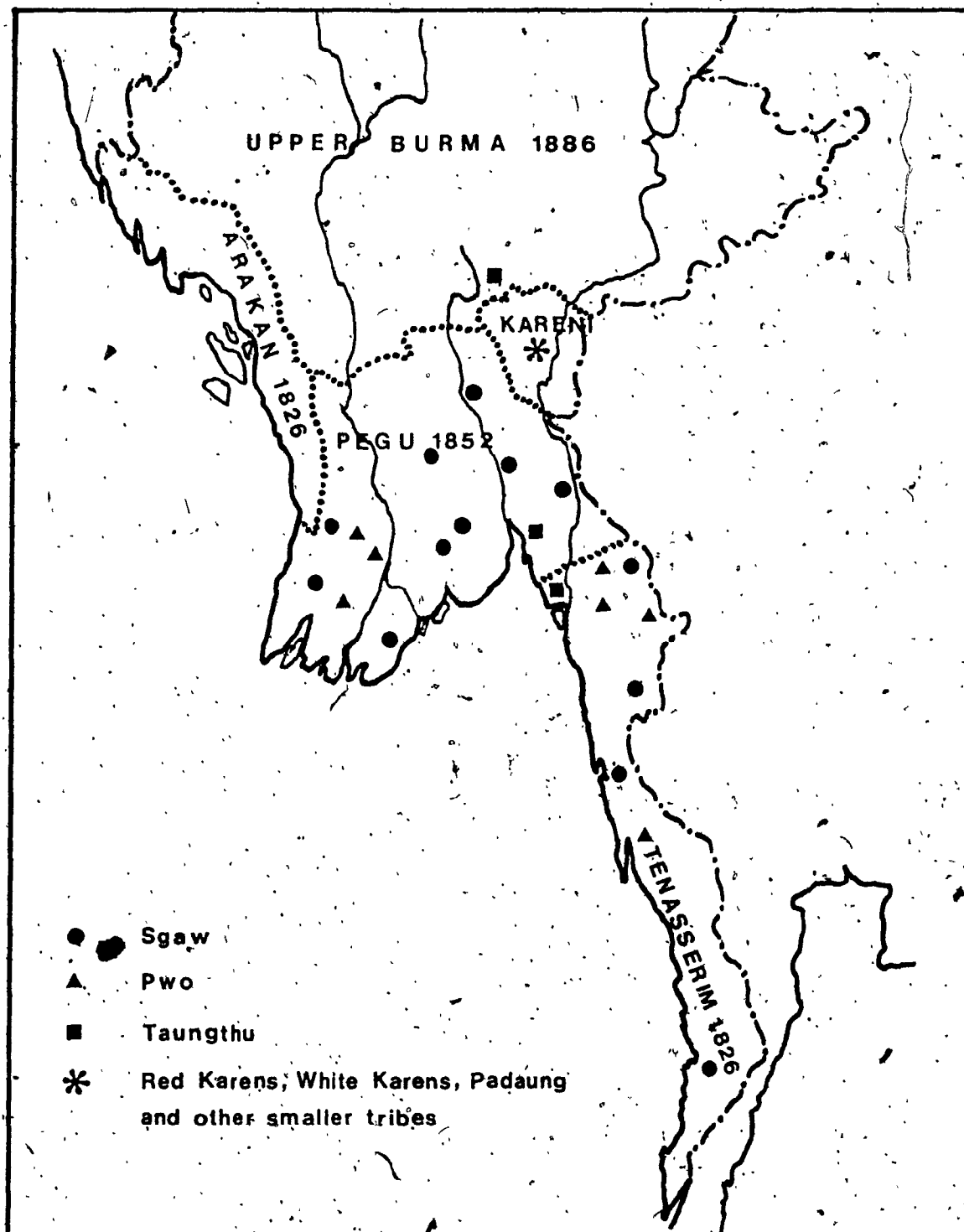
Captain Foley apart, it is noteworthy that most of the theories held in the nineteenth century were in some way related to missionary ideas. This was important as it was the missionaries who encouraged the Karens to relate their legends; collecting them and disseminating them back to the Karens through preachers and publications. The idea of a Karen nation, with a shared origin and shared beliefs, was thus nourished, if not created, by the missionaries themselves.

In the period preceding the First Burmese War the various groups of Karens inhabited three main areas. The majority could be found in the almost inaccessible mountain areas east of Toungoo. Others lived in the secluded hill areas of Tenasserim, while a few were located in the swamps and jungle of the Delta region.

The rugged mountains east and northeast of Toungoo, and the Kareni, had always been largely outside the jurisdiction of the Burmese monarchy.

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<sup>5</sup> A.R. McMahon, The Karens of the Golden Chersonese (London: Harrison, 1876), p. 349.



Map 3. The British annexations of Burma and the location of the larger Karen tribes

Those parts of the Kareni which had never been dominated by the Burmese retained their Karen names, while a few villages were known by Burmese names and showed influences of having been overpowered by the Burmese at some time.<sup>6</sup> Even during the British period much of this area did not form a part of British Burma. The three Karen states of Bawlekeh, Kyetpogyi and Kantarrawaddi, which made up the Kareni, had treaty relations with Britain, established by the early Deputy Commissioners of Toungoo, but were not under direct rule. This was the only area where the population was almost exclusively Karen.

The Karens of this region were made up of a number of tribes, distinct in customs, dialect and dress from each other. However, the missionaries, while noting these differences, classed them all as Bwes. Among these groups were the Red and White Karens, so called because of the colours of their smocks,<sup>7</sup> Padaungs, Bres and many other small tribes which were never adequately classified.<sup>8</sup> Some sources refer to all these groups as Red Karens. Though convenient, neither the term Bwe, nor that of Red Karen, has been accepted as a satisfactory scientific classification,<sup>9</sup> but both appear frequently in nineteenth century missionary and official accounts.

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<sup>6</sup> Marshall, Karens of Burma, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> James G. Scott, Burma: A Handbook of Practical, Commercial, and Political Information (London: Alexander Moring, 1911), p. 120.

<sup>8</sup> James Lee Lewis, "The Burmanisation of the Karen People," (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Univ. of Chicago, Dept. of Practical Theology, 1924), p. 7. He includes a map of the Kareni, indicating the locations of various tribes.

<sup>9</sup> C.C. Lewis, The Tribes of Burma, Ethnographic Survey of India, no. 4, Burma (Rangoon: Supt. of Govt. Printing, 1949), p. 44; Lebar, op. cit., p. 58.

The nature of the terrain in this area deeply influenced the lives of its inhabitants. In addition to protecting them from the incursions of the Burmans, it isolated them from each other, accelerating the development of differences between the clans in dialect, dress and customs, encouraging endogamy and increasing the likelihood of warfare between different groups of Karens.<sup>10</sup> Trade between villages was limited by the difficulty of the terrain, and the transfer of ideas was similarly prevented. Different types of social controls existed from village to village and customs varied considerably.<sup>11</sup> Two groups which had originally been part of the same clan might, after several generations of separation, be unable to understand each other's dialect. Crop failures and rat plagues not only emphasised the separateness of each village group, which could not turn to others for assistance, but also accentuated the hostility between clans in the competition for survival.

In general, therefore, the nature of the terrain in which the majority of the Karen people lived, before the coming of the British, was not conducive to the development of any kind of cohesive sentiment.

Not all of the Karen people lived, however, in the area north and east of Toungoo. A significant number had drifted southwards into the Tenasserim area, a movement which was later to be somewhat accelerated by the British annexation after the First Burmese War. There, in the hills and jungle adjoining the border with Siam, and across the border in Siam

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<sup>10</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 44; Lowis, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup> In some areas, for example, young men lived in their father's room in a multi-family house, while in others they lived in separate bachelor halls. Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 30.

itself,<sup>12</sup> lived Karens of the two tribes which the missionaries called Sgaws and Pwos.

The forested nature of the area provided some protection from the Burmans but the wars between Burma and Siam made the location in other ways unfavourable. Mergui itself had been under Siamese control from 1373-1775, until the Burmese seized the area, "burning and pillaging every village and hamlet" and driving the Siamese back over the mountains. Sporadic conflict continued, "ravaging the area" until the British conquest.<sup>13</sup> Indeed there were reports of Siamese deprivations continuing after the arrival of the British, with "villages plundered and the inhabitants carried into captivity".<sup>14</sup> The Karens took refuge in the mountains to avoid, as far as possible, the destruction as well as the labour services engendered by the wars.

The Tenasserim Karens seem, by force of geography, to have been somewhat less isolated from their Burman, Mon and other Karen neighbours, than those of the Kareni, less fiercely independent, more cowed and retiring. However, they maintained their distance as much as possible, their "isolated colonies and solitary huts" being found in secluded valleys and in areas "many miles from other human beings".<sup>15</sup> The Karens from this area were

<sup>12</sup> A significant number of Karens still live in Thailand. See Peter Kunstadter, "Spirits of Change Capture the Karens," National Geographic (February 1972), pp. 267-284.

<sup>13</sup> Burma Gazetteer, Mergui District, by J. Butler (Rangoon: Govt. Press, 1884), p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Selected Correspondence of Letters Issued from and Received in the Office of the Commissioner of Tenasserim Division, 1825-6 to 1842-3. (Rangoon: Supt. of Govt. Printing, 1928). Information about the Siamese raids came from a Capt. Briggs, who was conducting a preliminary exploration and survey of the newly annexed area. The report is dated Aug. 1, 1825.

<sup>15</sup> J.W. Helfer, Second Report: The Provinces of Ye, Tavoy and Mergue on the Tenasserim Coast (Calcutta: Huttman, 1939), p. 13.

appropriately described as "the wild cattle of the hills".<sup>16</sup> Geographical factors, although permitting more interaction with other Karens, made the development of cohesiveness no more likely in this area, by reason of the retiring and subservient nature developed by the Karens in order to survive.

The third area in which a small number of Karens lived before the First Burmese War, was the region of the Irrawaddy Delta. As in the case of the Tenasserim Karens, the lives of those in the Delta were also shaped by war and geography.

The war, in this case, was that between the Mons and the Burmans, which largely depopulated the Delta region, Alaungapaya's capture and destruction of the Mon capital of Pegu in 1757 causing many of the defeated to flee to the southeast part of Tenasserim and Siam. Much of the Delta tract became "an almost uninhabited wilderness; with a few scattered hamlets of timid Karens hidden away in quiet corners. Later on, and prior to the British occupation the Karen settlements extended, and cultivation appeared in scattered patches."<sup>17</sup>

Much of the evidence for the state of this region in the period before the First Burmese War comes from the reports of British delegations travelling up river to the Court of Ava. Symes found a country "desolated,

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<sup>16</sup> Edward Judson, Life of Adoniram Judson (New York: Randolph, 1883), p. 379.

<sup>17</sup> Burma, Settlement Department, Report on the Settlement Operations, Bassein and Thongwa 1888-9 (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1889), p.23.

not yet recovered from the ravages of war", with the "vestiges of a former culture and population". During "a walk of two hours the eye was not gratified by the sight of a house or inhabitant", and despite land evidently well suited to the production of excellent crops, the area had become "the undisputed domain of the wild beasts of the forest".<sup>18</sup>

However his companion Buchanan, with greater persistence, followed paths leaving the river bank and leading to Karen villages. About three miles from the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, along a narrow rocky road, he found a village surrounded by gardens. Apparently he expected to find both Talaing (Pwo) and Burman (Sgaw) Karens in the area, although he only succeeded in locating the former.<sup>19</sup>

Father Sangermano seems to have had more success in locating the Karens of the Delta. He told Symes, during the latter's visit in 1795, that there were "Carianers" around Rangoon, Dalla and Bassein, leading industrious pastoral lives, who were "exceedingly hospitable to strangers".<sup>20</sup> Cox was not so fortunate. On his return journey from Ava to Rangoon he reported "we saw neither habitations nor cultivation, all a gloomy jungle, but I am told that in the midst of the recesses of the jungle are little villages of the Carians, who appear to me to be the aborigines of the

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Symes, An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava. Sent by the Governor General of India in the Year 1795 (London: Bulmer, 1800), p. 207.

<sup>19</sup> F. Buchanan, Copy of a Journal of Progress and Observations during the Continuance of the Deputation, from Bengal to Ava in 1795, In the Dominion of the Burma Monarch (Ind. Off. MSS Eur.C.13), p. 236.

<sup>20</sup> Symes, p. 207.

country".<sup>21</sup>

Snodgrass, as a member of the invading British forces during the First Burmese War, saw something more of the Karens whose footpaths stretched in every direction, "only known and frequented by the Carian tribes". He reported that they lived "at a distance from the large rivers" and only occasionally visited the provincial towns. He too, however, stressed that the province bore "no trace of extensive population" with the "Carian tribes ... thinly scattered apart," and he speculated that "even in a time of profound peace the route we followed must have been lone and dreary."<sup>22</sup>

It would seem, from these incidental references, that Karens, both Pwos and Sgaws,<sup>23</sup> were living in the Delta in widely scattered and well hidden villages. The isolation of these settlements would seem to preclude the development of Karen cohesiveness among the Delta Karens as it did among the Karens of the other areas. Indeed the widespread nature of Karen settlement in three distinct areas of Lower Burma, and the tribal differences within each of these areas, seemed to make such a development highly unlikely.

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<sup>21</sup> Hiram Cox, Journal of a Residence in the Burmhan Empire and more particularly at the Court of Amarapoorah (London: Warren, 1821), p. 430.

<sup>22</sup> J.J. Snodgrass, Narrative of the Burmese War: Detailing the Operations of Major General Sir Archibald Campbell's Army from its Landing in Rangoon in May 1824 to the Conclusion of a Treaty of Peace at Yandabo in February 1826 (London: John Murray, 1828), p. 141.

<sup>23</sup> The Pwos came more into contact with the Talaings or Mons, and learned their customs from them, while the Sgaws adopted the customs of the Burmans, Burma Gazetteer, Bassein District, by H.P. Clewett and J. Clague (Rangoon: Supt. of Govt. Printing, 1916), p. 28.

Geographical factors tended to divide the Karens from each other. Religion, on the other hand, did not actually keep them apart, but it did fail to draw them together.

The great majority of the Karens were animists; fearing the evil spirits which could cause illness, crop failure, and all the many disasters to which they were subject; and attempting to appease those spirits with offerings of pigs and fowls. Beliefs varied from clan to clan, but the use of chicken bones for divination was often mentioned by observers.<sup>24</sup> The lack of an organised religion may have made the animist Karens more receptive to Christianity than were the Buddhist Burmans. "Their minds are vacant and open for the reception of whatever contains a relish, and it is not a little gratifying to see so many of them finding that relish in religion."<sup>25</sup>

Long before Karen contact with Christianity, however, came contact with Buddhism. It seems, from the scattered early accounts, that those Karens who lived in relatively close contact with the Mons and Burmans, were often, nominally at least, Buddhist. Even animist Karens frequently called their demons by the Buddhist name, "Nats".<sup>26</sup> Symes, reporting on Buchanan's contact with the Karens in the Delta area says "their religion is the worship of Gaudma, but in these rites they do not join with the same fervour that animates the Birmans; they rather seem to acquiesce in the doctrines of their conquerors, which they do not even

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<sup>24</sup> John Nisbet, Burma Under British Rule and Before (London: Constable, 1901), I, 320; II, 426.

<sup>25</sup> E. Judson, p. 378, quoting the early missionary Boardman.

<sup>26</sup> H.I. Marshall, "The Karens, an Element in the Melting Pot of Burma," Southern Workman, 56 (1927), 13.

profess to understand".<sup>27</sup> This may have been "largely a social conforming, that did not have a deep spiritual content" as a later missionary thought,<sup>28</sup> but evidence from Tenasserim immediately after the British takeover indicates that "most of the Kareans in the vicinity" had "embraced the religion of Buddha ...". There was "one solitary phoongee ... who received ... the homage of the simple peasantry from the surrounding Karean hamlets .... This man performs the part likewise of village schoolmaster, and he is comfortably lodged and fed."<sup>29</sup> A year later this evidence was confirmed. "They have no religion or law peculiar to themselves and encourage the Burman priests to settle among them and educate their children."<sup>30</sup>

As to the Karen legends and their relationship to the Old Testament sources, the evidence is far from clear. Various legends were said to have had a remarkable resemblance to such stories as that of the Garden of Eden; the temptation and fall of the first woman and man, in which predictably, it was the woman's fault; the Devil as a fallen angel, and an omnipotent, eternal Creator named Y'wa.<sup>31</sup> The missionaries used

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<sup>27</sup> Symes, p. 465.

<sup>28</sup> H. I. Marshall, Melting Pot, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Horace Hayman Wilson, ed., Documents Illustrative of the Burmese War: With an Introductory Sketch of the Events of the War and an Appendix (Calcutta, 1827), p. IXV, quoting the Government Gazette (April 20, 1826).

<sup>30</sup> Wilson, p. XVI, quoting Government Gazette (May 3, 1827).

<sup>31</sup> McMahon, p. 190.

these legends to great effect when writing home for money for the mission, putting forth explanations that the Karens were a lost tribe of Israel; or that there had been earlier Karen contact with Chinese Jews, or with Nestorian Christians.

It is possible that in the years between the coming of Baptist missionaries and the making of the first written records of these legends, that the Karens adapted Old Testament stories as their own, or they emphasised resemblances between their own traditional stories and those told them by the missionaries, perhaps out of a desire to please. Whatever the origins, however, it is certain that the legends were eventually recorded to the mutual satisfaction of missionaries and converts alike, and were later used to strengthen the missionaries' claim that the religion they offered was a fulfilment of the Karens' own beliefs and longings.

Various "book" legends also attracted a great deal of attention. These ranged from one reported by Buchanan that the Karens had been too busy farming to go to God and therefore did not get his book of laws, to the more complex story of the three brothers, Karen, Burman and White. The Karen brother, to protect his copy of God's book from the Burman, gave it to the White brother, who sailed away with it, promising to return one day and restore it, and with it peace and contentment.<sup>32</sup> This convenient legend could be applied both to the British and to the American Baptist missionaries, and was widely reported in many missionary letters and tracts.

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<sup>32</sup> Symes, p. 466.

One of the earliest missionaries, Boardman, did in fact encounter a group of Karens worshipping a book which turned out to be the Book of Common Prayer. Much was made of this in the contemporary missionary magazines, and in the memoir of Boardman but, as a visitor from the American headquarters of the Baptist Mission pointed out soon after, "these were but a few families; and the rest of the Karens remained ignorant of such a faith".<sup>33</sup>

Despite the obscurity surrounding the genesis of these legends, one thing is clear. They were used with telling effect by the missionaries in convincing their supporters at home of their need for funds and, perhaps more significantly, in converting some of the Karen people themselves to Christianity.

As in the case of religion, evidence for the economic and social conditions of the Karens in this period comes from a variety of sources, but once again, some of it must be deduced from accounts written by British officials and officers, and by Baptist missionaries after the First Burmese War.

As in other matters, the economic basis of Karen life varied from area to area.

In the Toungoo and Karení area subsistence agriculture of the slash and burn (swidden or taungya) type was practised throughout. All except the largest trees would be cut down in January and February, during the cool season, and the vegetation left to dry until just before the rains in May; when it would be set on fire, the ash acting as fertiliser.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Howard Malcom, Travels in South East Asia. Embracing Hindustan, Malaya, Siam and China, with Notices of Numerous Missionary Stations and a Full Account of the Burman Empire (London: Tilt, 1839), p. 233.

<sup>34</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karens of Burma, pp. 6-7.

The following year a new area would be selected, usually by chicken bone divination.<sup>35</sup> The frequency with which a clan returned to an area previously cultivated seems to have varied from about three to twenty years, and very similar procedures are still followed by the Karens of Thailand today.<sup>36</sup>

The technique of swidden agriculture was later to be regarded by the British as exceptionally wasteful, as much valuable timber was annually destroyed, and this was to play its part in the British decision to encourage the Karens to move to the foothills and Delta plains, an action which, in its turn, affected the development of an awareness of a Karen identity. In addition, the technique was not a particularly productive one, which in itself may have caused the Karens of the hills to move to the plains where the more efficient wet rice system was generally practised, as soon as such a movement became possible with the changed political conditions following the Second Burmese War and the British annexation of Pegu.

In Tenasserim the Karens were using a mixture of techniques resembling both those of the mountains and those of the plains. In a report on the economic conditions of the newly acquired province it was noted that taungya agriculture was being practised on a three year cycle. This may indicate greater fertility of the land than in the Kareni, or greater population pressure, or perhaps both. Evidently there was sometimes a rice surplus which was bartered for fish.<sup>37</sup> Another account

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<sup>35</sup> Lebar, p. 66.

<sup>36</sup> Kunstadter, pp. 267-284.

<sup>37</sup> Selected Correspondence, p. 18. Briggs to the Quartermaster General, Field Book, Tavoy to Mergui.

explained that the Karens, lacking a plough, could not use the same land in consecutive years as the earth would bake hard. Nevertheless the Karens furnished "no small part of the rice consumed in the country". Hogs and poultry were also produced "in abundance".<sup>38</sup>

The Karens in this area also practiced other forms of cultivation. Around Martaban they were growing black pepper, cardomoms and cotton,<sup>39</sup> and weaving that cotton into cloth with attractive designs, strong enough to defy thorns.<sup>40</sup> In addition rhinoceros hunting was carried on, the horns being sold to Chinese merchants, who apparently "always duped" their suppliers. Most of the meat and the hide were left to rot, though the claws were kept as talismans.<sup>41</sup> Elephant teeth were usually given as tribute to the Burman governor of the nearest town.<sup>42</sup> Some Karens washed out tin grains from streams and collected garnets, but since there was little use for money the "pretty high profit" of half a rupee a day was an inadequate inducement.<sup>43</sup> Wax and honey were also collected and sold.<sup>44</sup> Altogether the picture that emerged for the

<sup>38</sup> Malcom, pp. 230-1.

<sup>39</sup> Wilson, p. ixv. Quoting Govt. Gazette (April 20, 1826). Numerous Karen villages are mentioned as existing in this area, with a total of two to three thousand inhabitants.

<sup>40</sup> Selected Correspondence, p. 18.

<sup>41</sup> Helfer, p. 71.

<sup>42</sup> Selected Correspondence, p. 18.

<sup>43</sup> Helfer, p. 32.

<sup>44</sup> Malcom, pp. 230-1. Selected Correspondence, p. 18.

new British administrators of the province of Tenasserim was one of unrealised potential, and they, and also the missionaries, could see advantages in encouraging the Karens to come to the area, and to improve their agricultural techniques.

The agriculture of the Delta was very different from that of the hills. Buffalo-drawn wooden ploughs were used as soon as the rains had covered the ground with a few inches of water, or herds of six to eight buffalos were driven around to stir up the mud. Paddy grew in the fertile soil in sufficient quantities not only to feed the population of the area, but also to send annually to the "royal granaries for use in the less fertile provinces of Upper Ava."<sup>45</sup> Both Symes and, later, Crawford<sup>46</sup> reported that the Karens raised almost all of the rice in the area. They also kept cattle and poultry, and cultivated gardens "planted with pineapples, jack, plantain, mango and other fruit trees". In Buchanan's account he "overtook many Burmans and Talains ... who were going out with baskets to procure fruit and vegetables, and it is to the industry of the Karayn that they chiefly trust for a supply of these articles"<sup>47</sup> The Karens were thus economically independent, and could afford, since the land was so good and their "habits so simple" to move

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<sup>45</sup> Snodgrass, p. 41.

<sup>46</sup> Symes, p. 208. John Crawford, Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava (London: Henry Colburn, 1834), II, p. 245.

<sup>47</sup> Buchanan, p. 240.

"in search of better lands, of healthier situations, or from mere caprice".<sup>48</sup>

In fact, some, at least, of the Karens were able to adorn their women with "rich strings of coral, with a good deal of gold and silver".<sup>49</sup>

In later periods, therefore, that it would be in the interests of both the British and the Karens if some of the latter could be induced to move to the Delta area. If, even in the disturbed situation and under the desultory cultivation of the Karens before the British arrival, the Delta could be so productive, it would be well worth developing in a more settled era. Thus the conditions existed for potential population movements which would have long term effects in spheres very far removed from agriculture.

Despite differences in productivity the lifestyles of both the hill and plains Karens seem to have been simple in material terms, as would be expected from a semi-nomadic people. The principle of building bamboo longhouses on stilts for several families with the animals housed underneath, seems to have survived, because of its practicality, the move to the plains. There, a similar style "mere pigeonhouses perched in the air on poles", kept the occupants safe "from the deluge and tigers."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Crawford, p. 245.

<sup>49</sup> Symes, pp. 464-5.

<sup>50</sup> Snodgrass, p. 141. For Delta villages see also Symes, pp. 464-5, and Buchanan, p. 240. For Tenasserim see Malcom, p. 330. For the hills see G.C. Sconce, "Journal of the Salween Surveying Expedition", Selections from the Records of the Government of India Foreign Department, no. XLVIII (Calcutta: O.T. Cutter, 1865), p. 3, and for similar conditions today in Karen villages in Thailand see Kunstadter, pp. 267-284.

The political systems of the Karens were no more sophisticated than their material culture. In the Kareni, free of Burman control, the villages were usually the largest political units, although occasionally a strong man would combine a number of villages through the strength of his personality. Such a grouping would usually disintegrate at his death, and the villages would revert to the rule of their petty chieftains. The individual chiefs were usually men of powerful character who were usually succeeded by similarly endowed relatives. Rival headmen might secede and set up their own villages in opposition. Elders, respected for their knowledge of the past, and of the innumerable and unwritten clan laws and customs, would assist with advice at open meetings.<sup>51</sup> The rule of the elder was of great importance. "A village without an elder would be like a parish in England without a clergyman" wrote the missionary, Dr. Mason.<sup>52</sup> This comment was both perceptive and prophetic. The Christian Karen ministers who were to be trained by the missionaries would come to assume the position of the elders, and consequently their considerable power in the community. The establishment of Christian churches was therefore greatly facilitated by existing conditions.

In areas controlled by the Burmans the internal village government remained basically the same, but within the superstructure of Burman power. Generally the local chieftain would be responsible to the

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<sup>51</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karens of Burma, p. 29. McMahon, pp. 83-9.

<sup>52</sup> McMahon, p. 84. Quoting an article from the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 37, part 2, 131.

Burman Ok. Sometimes, as in the case of the village visited by Buchanan in the Deita, the Karen chief might be "appointed by the Burman government."<sup>53</sup>

Areas not directly under Burman control, such as the Kareni, sometimes paid tribute to the Burmese court; if the Burmans were at that time in a particularly strong position, or if it proved convenient to an individual Karen chief to obtain their backing for his rule. Otherwise the peoples of that area were not regularly assessed, even by their own chiefs.<sup>54</sup>

Karen complaints against the Burmans, in areas under the latter's control, were numerous. Their validity is hard to judge, bearing in mind not only the natural human tendency to complain of oppression, particularly in connection with taxation, but also the desire of the officials and missionaries to discover matters worthy of criticism in the previous Burman rule.

It is interesting to note that Symes in 1795, before the conquest, reported "they complain of being oppressed by the Birmans, but their appearance did not indicate severe oppression",<sup>55</sup> whereas Snodgrass, immediately after the First Burmese War, reported that the Karens were "heavily taxed by the Birman authorities, by whom they are treated as

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<sup>53</sup> Buchanan, p. 241.

<sup>54</sup> McMahon, p. 87.

<sup>55</sup> Symes, p. 465.

altogether an inferior race of beings from their countrymen in Pegu",<sup>56</sup> and Malcom from the A.B.M. reported, in his discussion of Burmese taxation, that "none of the tributaries to Burmah has been so oppressed as this inoffensive people."<sup>57</sup> It is possible that conditions may have changed in the quarter century between Symes' and Snodgrass' visits, but just as likely that the alteration was in the attitudes of the visitors.<sup>58</sup>

Another problem in assessing the validity of the complaints about taxation and services is that "the amount of the assessment was not the same in all provinces, and indeed, varied from time to time in the same province".<sup>59</sup> Some general principles may, however, be stated. The Karens were not subject to direct military service, instead a variety of duties were required in wartime, including the production of food, the building of fortifications and canals, the clearing of city ruins, the pulling of boats, and work as guides for the army. All these activities took the men away from their normal occupations, and naturally produced resentment. In addition, plundering by war boat crews drove many Karens even deeper into the jungle. In some areas the Karens found themselves enslaved by the Burmans and Siamese in turn.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Snodgrass, p. 21.

<sup>57</sup> Malcom, p. 232.

<sup>58</sup> Dr. Mason was an exception with this backhanded compliment to Burman rule: "Bad as the Burmese government is, the Karens that have been subjected to it are more thrifty, more civilised in every respect, and live more comfortably than those who have ever maintained their independence, which goes to prove that bad government is better for a people than no government." McMahon, p. 151, quoting Mason, J.A.S.B. 37, part 2, 131.

<sup>59</sup> Crawford, p. 170.

<sup>60</sup> Francis Mason; The Karen Apostle, a Memoir of Ko Tha Byu The First Karen Convert with notices concerning his nation (Bassein: Sgau Karen Press, 188'), pp. 10-12.

In peacetime a poll tax was levied on the Karens, because they were classed as a subject people. Such a tax was not, of course, paid by the Burmans. Although this was undoubtedly resented, it is not certain how heavy this tax really was, as it may have been levied on households, and not on individuals, which would mean that it fell quite lightly on the Karens, particularly those living in the large longhouses of the hills.<sup>61</sup> In addition the Karens paid both tribute and taxes in kind, including beeswax, elephant tusks, rice, cardomoms, seshamum oil and cloth,<sup>62</sup> and sometimes also paid taxes on their fruit trees, ploughs and yokes of buffalos.<sup>63</sup>

Whether or not these taxes, services and dues were really unfair is only marginally relevant to the subject of this paper. There is little doubt that the Karens, as soon as they had a sympathetic audience, complained that they were unduly heavy, and that the missionaries, and later some sympathetic British officials such as Smeaton,<sup>64</sup> not only recorded those complaints but kept them alive as a reminder to the Karens of their oppression under Burman rule. Thus these early complaints contributed to the

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<sup>61</sup> Hanson Tadaw, The Karens of Burma: A Study in Human Geography (M.A. Thesis, University of London, 1958), p. 24. Burma Gazetteer, Insein District, by J.S. Furnivall and W.S. Morrison (Rangoon: Supt. of Govt. Printing, 1914), pp. 110-111.

<sup>62</sup> Selected Correspondence, p. 7. F. Mason, Karen Apostle, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> Wilson, p. xiv.

<sup>64</sup> Smeaton's book, The Loyal Karens of Burma (London: Kegan Paul, Trench Co., 1887), lists many of the Karen complaints, largely gathered from missionary sources. See particularly p. 157.

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later growth of Karen separatist sentiment and hostility to the Burmans.<sup>65</sup>

The nature of the relationship between Karens and Burmans before the First Burmese War has formed the basis for considerable controversy.

The Burmese historian Htin Aung stated, for example, that "animosity between the Burmans and certain Karen groups started only after the first Anglo-Burmese War and the advent of the Christian missionaries".<sup>66</sup>

Sangermano describes the Karens of Pegu as living apart from the Burmans, noting that "although residing in the midst of the Birmans and Peguans, they not only retain their own language, but even their dress, houses and everything else are distinguished from them, and what is more remarkable they have a different religion".<sup>67</sup> One Karen stated that when his people went to Buddhist Kyoungs to try to learn to read and write, they were set to weed, build and beg, and were whipped "so that they could never learn well."<sup>68</sup> Later missionaries stated that Karens entering Burman villages and towns had the dogs set on them and

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<sup>65</sup>For contemporary accounts of Karen taxes and services see: Symes, pp. 207, 465, Buchanan, p. 245 (both for the Delta, 1795); Snodgrass, pp. 21, 41, F. Mason, Karen Apostle, pp. 8-10 (for the Delta and Tenasserim 1824-6); Selected Correspondence, p. 7 (for Tenasserim, 1826); Wilson, p. XLV (for Tenasserim 1827); Malcom, p. 232 (Tenasserim 1838).

<sup>66</sup>Htin Aung, A History of Burma (N.Y. and London: Columbia U.P., 1967), p. 312.

<sup>67</sup>Sangermano, A Description of the Burmese Empire, trans. William Tandy (London: Susil Gupta, 1966), p. 44. The book was first published in Rome in 1833, and describes Burma in the 1790's.

<sup>68</sup>F. Mason, Karen Apostle, p. 22.

were made very unwelcome,<sup>69</sup> but these reports are as hard to evaluate as the complaints about taxes, and for the same reasons.

However, the situation in the Karení was virtually the reverse of that in the Delta and Tenasserim. Karen raids on Burman settlements were frequent, and still taking place in 1855.<sup>70</sup> It should, however, be noted that the various clans often raided each others' villages as well. Burman traders were apparently cautious about entering Karen villages and preferred to trade at a specific bazaar in the hills, where the Karens bartered blankets, betel bags, mats and baskets for handkerchiefs, turbans, knives, sugar and salt. Burmans caught using false weights were instantly killed.<sup>71</sup>

While much of the evidence indicates that Karens in the Delta and Tenasserim lived apart from the Burmans, the occasional reference indicates that it was not invariably so. Snodgrass describes Outcan, a "long straggling village inhabited by both the Burmans and the Carians". At the approach of Major Snodgrass' unit the Burmans fled, but the Karens stayed to sell them food "at high prices",<sup>72</sup> and there are some early missionary references to Karen-Burman marriages.

<sup>69</sup> H.I. Marshall, *Karens of Burma*, p. 30.

<sup>70</sup> Henry Yule, A Narrative of the Mission Sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855 with Notices of the Country, Government and People (London: O.U.P., 1968), p. 297. First published London, 1858.

<sup>71</sup> Ellen Mason, Civilising Mountain Men, ed. L.N.R. (London: Nisbet, 1862), pp. 114-115.

<sup>72</sup> Snodgrass, p. 148.

The fact that Karens sometimes spoke Burmese indicates that some social interaction took place, at least in Lower Burma. Sangermano told Symes that some learned to speak the Burman tongue, and a few could read and write it to some degree.<sup>73</sup> Judson reported that the first convert, Ko Tha Byu, was "imperfectly acquainted with the Burman language", and of other Karens, "all the men understand Burman pretty well".<sup>74</sup> The pre-missionary use of the terms "Burman-Karen" and "Mon-Karen" also indicate a relatively close relationship between the races.

The evidence concerning relations between the Burmans and the Karens thus appears inconclusive. Later claims that these relations were either good, as put forward by recent Burman historians, or bad, as suggested by supporters of Karen nationalism, appear to be based more upon preconceived ideas than substantial evidence. It is apparent, however, that the Karens felt themselves to be sufficiently oppressed to complain of their treatment to the British, and later to the missionaries. This was enough to accentuate Burman-Karen hostility in later periods.

The characteristics of the Karens, as they were described by visitors from the West who first encountered them, were those of a shy and often timid people. Boardman described the Tenasserim Karens as timid, irresolute, indolent and artless.<sup>75</sup> These characteristics persisted. Fifteen years after the British arrival, despite the "impartiality" of the new rulers, they were still "so timid that they can scarcely be

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<sup>73</sup>Symes, p. 207.

<sup>74</sup>E. Judson, p. 503.

<sup>75</sup>E. Judson, p. 377.

prevailed upon to visit the towns on the sea coast."<sup>76</sup> This was not necessarily due to Burman oppression for reports from travellers in the Karení describe villages suddenly emptied at the approach of strangers.

Many Karen sayings indicate a profound sense of inferiority. "We are the eggs, other races are the rock; the egg fell on the rock and was broken; the rock fell on the egg and it was broken."<sup>77</sup> The corresponding Burman sense of superiority is attested to by many visitors and officials. One, for example, mentions that Karens were frequently made to appear as figures of fun in Burman theatrical presentations.<sup>78</sup>

Often recorded also, was the Karen virtue of honesty. In predominantly Karen areas, grain could be stored, unguarded, at a considerable distance from the settlement, and not be touched,<sup>79</sup> and lying and cheating were rare.<sup>80</sup> These traits endeared the Karens to the missionaries who were, however, less happy about their congregations' love of alcohol and dirt, characteristics which they immediately set to work to eradicate.

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<sup>76</sup> Helfer, p. 14.

<sup>77</sup> H.I. Marshall, The Karen People of Burma: A Study in Anthropology and Ethnology, Ohio State University Bulletin, 26 (April 29, 1922), p. 306.

<sup>78</sup> Nisbet, p. 423.

<sup>79</sup> Marshall, Karen People, p. 82.

<sup>80</sup> Malcom, p. 232.

It would seem, from the conditions in which the Karens lived before the First Burmese War, that certain aspects of their condition were likely to inhibit any tendencies towards the growth of nationalist or even cohesive, sentiments.

Foremost among these were the locations which they inhabited. They were to be found spread over a considerable area of lower Burma, in three regions, Toungoo and the Kareni, Tenasserim, and the Delta, which were geographically dissimilar and which caused them to develop different lifestyles suitable to the varying terrains. In the only area where they made up almost the whole population, the Kareni, the land formations separated them from each other, producing a variety of very different dialects and customs, and promoting hostility between the clans. In the other areas, in contrast to the Kareni, only two main tribal divisions persisted, but the Karens were shy and semi-nomadic, and made up a very small proportion of the population, showing tendencies to conform to the predominant Mon or Burman culture. Karen unity, or even an awareness of shared values in contrast to the other cultural groups in Burma, seemed a very unlikely development in the circumstances. Even their common origins were so obscured by the passage of time as to contribute little to any sense of cohesion.

Religion, in the case of other ethnic groups a possible unifying factor, offered little to this racial group. A few Karens, particularly in the Delta and in parts of Tenasserim, had apparently adopted Buddhism, the religion of the Byrmans, at least superficially. The remainder were animists, their practices and beliefs varying from clan to clan. In the

circumstances it might be argued that they were open to conversion by an organised religion willing to make the effort, but such an attempt had not yet been made.

Agricultural pursuits were common to the various Karen groups, but between the subsistence swidden agriculture of the mountains and the productive gardens and paddy fields of the Delta, with surplus for sale, lay a considerable gulf in techniques and lifestyles.

Nor had the Karens a shared experience of government. Much of the Kareni had never been subjugated by the Burmans, and was ruled by numerous small chieftains, some of whom occasionally gave their allegiance to a strong man among them. In the other two regions, however, the Karens had witnessed devastating wars between the Mons and Burmans, and the Burmans and the Siamese, and were themselves a subject people, whichever group held sway. While those in the Kareni paid no taxes to the Burmans or even to their own chiefs, and rarely gave tribute, the Karens of the Delta and Tenasserim paid a variety of taxes, and gave non-military service in time of war.

Relations with the Burmans varied from area to area. Karens in the region of Toungoo and the Kareni displayed an aggressive hostility born of the desire to retain their independence, while those of the other two areas were more likely to maintain a semi-nomadic and retiring life to avoid trouble.

The list of factors that might contribute to the growth of nationalism in the future, is less impressive, but nevertheless significant.

Despite geographical, linguistic and cultural differences, the Karens were recognised, by themselves and others, as a group separate from the others in Burma.

Some aspects of their lives were distinctively Karen, the longhouses, the village government of chiefs and elders, the agricultural way of life, and animism, which perhaps predisposed them to conversion by an organised religion. Also important was the Burman attitude of superiority towards them, and the attempts to make them pay tax and render services which were resented, for external pressures may be as potent a force for unity as those emanating from within a group.

Two events were to have a profound effect on the situation of the Karens. The first was the arrival in Burma, in 1813, of the American missionary Judson, newly converted to the Baptist faith on his voyage from America. The second was the war between the Burmese and the British, which culminated in the addition of the provinces of Tenasserim and Arakan to the British Empire.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE COMING OF THE YOUNGER WHITE BROTHER

1824-1852

Worsening relations between the Court of Ava and the British East India Company led to a declaration of war on Burma by Governor General Amherst on March 5, 1824.

In this "worst managed war in British military history"<sup>1</sup> British miscalculations included not only the failure to allow for the effects of the monsoon and the ensuing spread of disease, but also the belief, soon to be proved wrong, that the Mons would instantly rise to assist the British forces. Such faith was not, apparently, placed in the Karens. Either the brief references concerning them made by Symes and Buchanan had not been noticed, or their small numbers made them seem to be a negligible military asset. In fact, as was customary, the Karens were forced to assist in the Burmese war effort, throwing rocks in the river to prevent the passage of the "white foreigners" and assembling with bows, arrows and cudgels to repel the invaders. However, with the skill born of long experience, many

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<sup>1</sup>A.T.Q. Stewart, The Pagoda War (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 38, quoting D.G.E. Hall, Europe and Burma (London, New York, 1945), p. 113. The cost was £13,000,000 and 15,000 lives. A total of 40,000 troops were used. In the first expedition alone, 3,115 of the 3,586 troops who landed in Rangoon died in Burma, only 150 of these in battle.

of them escaped into the jungle and hid.<sup>2</sup>

1825, however, saw an improvement in British fortunes, and this change encouraged both Mons and Karens to give assistance to the invading forces. Near Rangoon Karen villagers brought presents of food to Sir Archibald Campbell and when he encamped at "Cariangoon where they resided" rupees were exchanged for additional food. This developed into a regular trade, the "fame of our kindness" spreading far and wide so that by evening representatives of adjacent villages were arriving. Furthermore the road being in bad order "they offered to send a number of men to assist our pioneers in preparing it", an offer which was "liberally rewarded" as a "favourable opening towards conciliating the disposition of the inhabitants".<sup>3</sup> Snodgrass gives greater detail about Karen help, which besides the sale of food and repair of roads, included the carrying of letters from one company to another, and the supply of "much useful/information" regarding the strength and situation of the Burmese Army. He records that they never deceived or disappointed their employers, and that "it certainly reflected no small honour on the good faith of our Carian friends, that our movements, known to so many, should have been so inviolably kept secret". Besides the profit motive, he stated that they were "only anxious for the expulsion of Maha

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<sup>2</sup>F. Mason, Karen Apostle, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>T. Abercrombie Trant, Two Years in Ava, from May 1824 to May 1826, by an officer of the Quarter Master General's Department (London: John Murray, 1828), p. 149.

Silwah from Mophee".<sup>4</sup> These army accounts do not mention Karen traditions concerning rescue by the "younger white brother from over the sea" which feature so prominently in later missionary writings, and in the accounts derived mainly from Baptist sources, such as those of Smeaton and Po. In these the tradition of Karen recognition of the British as their natural and heaven sent protectors is given emphatic treatment.<sup>5</sup> Army sources, on the other hand, give the impression that the relationship was markedly commercial.

When war broke out, two American Baptist missionaries, Adoniram Judson and Jonathan Price, were in Ava. Judson and his wife Ann had arrived in Rangoon eleven years before, while Price and his wife had been in Burma since 1821. Their attempts to convert the Buddhist Burmans had been depressingly unsuccessful. They had not more than twenty-five converts by 1844,<sup>6</sup> but their relations with the court and high officials were sometimes warm and generally courteous. When war broke out, however, Judson and Price were arrested as spies and imprisoned for twenty-one months in conditions which were, at times, horrifying. The experience not only prejudiced Judson and his wife against the Burmans, but was repeated and exaggerated in later missionary

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<sup>4</sup> Snodgrass, p. 142.

<sup>5</sup> Smeaton, pp. 153-7, writing immediately after the Third War, and San C. Po, Burma and the Karens (London: Elliot Stock, 1928), p. 90, writing just before the arrival of the Simon committee.

<sup>6</sup> Helen G. Trager, Burma Through Alien Eyes: Missionary Views of the Burmese in the Nineteenth Century (India: Asia Publishing House, 1966), p. 49, quoting Brockett, Story of the Karen Mission in Bassein (1891), p. 23.

literature, to the detriment of Burman-Baptist relations. Early kindnesses and tolerance were ignored, and the wartime experiences generalised into a view of Burmans as "murderers" and "bloodthirsty enemies".<sup>7</sup>

As a result of the war an alliance between the American missionaries and the British authorities was created. The Judsons on their release were welcomed by Sir Archibald Campbell "like a father", and it was entirely by his efforts that they recovered their property. His kindness had left an impression on their minds which "could never be effaced" and they daily received the "congratulations of the British officers."<sup>8</sup> In a gunboat provided by Campbell they went to Yandabo where Judson assisted with the negotiations. Price was also present in the role of representative of the Court of Ava. As a negotiator on the Burmese behalf he was not ideal as he made a series of "extravagant proposals to which it is evident he himself did not expect us to accede," and agreed that the Royal Family might be able to pay the amount of the indemnity from their own private funds."<sup>9</sup>

Judson continued to assist the British, subsequently accompanying Crawford to negotiate a commercial treaty. He hoped to persuade the Burmese to accede to a clause promising religious liberty in their

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<sup>7</sup> H. Trager, p. 70. The book includes a detailed analysis of the growth of the exaggerations, with extracts from the various accounts.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Wayland, A Memoir of the Life and Labours of the Rev. Adoniram Judson D.D. (London: Nisbet, 1853), I, 297.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Campbell Robertson, Political Incidents of the First Burmese War (London: Bentley, 1853), p. 196.

dominions. He was unsuccessful, and furthermore convinced the Burmese that his allegiance was to the British whose interests he now appeared to represent. The missionaries' subsequent actions further confirmed this impression for they rapidly established themselves in the newly acquired British territories of Arakan and Tenasserim. The Judsons settled for a time in Amherst in a house provided by one of the British officers, and Campbell himself presented the Baptists with a site for a mission in Moulmein.

From time to time there were to be misunderstandings, disagreements and recriminations between the two groups of "white foreigners", but the basic pattern of alliance and cooperation was set for as long as British rule lasted in Burma, and no one was more aware of this alliance than the native races of Burma.

Among these were, of course, the Karens, who had assisted the British in the Delta area. "Once peace reigned," however, the Karens were forgotten, "just as Joseph was forgotten by the Pharaoh of olden days".<sup>10</sup> The Mons and Karens, who had proved so useful during the war, found themselves, by the provisions of the Treaty of Yandabo, once more in Burman territory, and subject not only to Burman rule but also to Burman revenge. Towards the end of 1826 the Mons and Karens of the Delta rose in desperate revolt. When Crawford returned from Ava down the Irrawaddy in the

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<sup>10</sup> Po, p. 90.

January of 1827, he had to pass through areas held by the two groups. The Mons told him that a Karen chief would be given the government of Bassein as a reward for their support. At that moment a Karen leader, at the head of an army of, reputedly, three thousand followers, was on his way to attack that city. Rangoon was also under seige, its attackers asking "several times for English help".<sup>11</sup> Burman reinforcements, however, defeated the uprising and took vengeance, destroying villages and killing their inhabitants.

Once again the area was almost deserted, famine ensued and the remaining inhabitants fled, some to the safety of the jungle. Others, beginning a new pattern, crossed the boundaries into Tenasserim and Arakan, where in earlier periods they might have escaped into Siam. The spirit of rebellion was not entirely eradicated, however. There was a Mon uprising in 1838, and in 1844 Calcutta found it necessary to warn British officials in Tenasserim not to get involved in plans for a Karen uprising, despite the fact that the Delta Karens were urgently requesting help from Moulmein.<sup>12</sup>

The First Anglo-Burmese war initiated two developments which were to have profound consequences. One was the arrival of a new power in the region which, for a time, actively encouraged the non-Burman races to revolt against their rulers; which, while abandoning the Delta, remained close enough to inspire hope of assistance in would-be rebels; which offered a haven across the border; and which itself acquired an area with a considerable Karen population.

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<sup>11</sup> Crawford, II 36.

<sup>12</sup> J.F. Cady, A History of Modern Burma (New York: Cornell, 1958), p. 76, citing India Secret Proceedings, Vol. 14 (1844), no. 165, of Oct. 18, 1844.

The other was the formation of an alliance, with all its ups and downs, between the British officials and the American Baptist missionaries. It was a marriage in which the closeness of the partners was most apparent to those who, like the Burmans, viewed it from the outside, and which sometimes seemed to mean more to one partner, the missionaries, than the other. It was, however, to be a relationship of lasting significance for one group in Burma, the Karens, who came to call the American mission their "mother" and the British Government their "father".<sup>13</sup>

The Karens in the Delta had given assistance to the British, but they were abandoned. Some of them fled across the border to Tenasserim, others across the mountains to Krakan where a Baptist mission was set up at Sandoway to evangelise the Delta from an area outside Burman control. A few Karens returned to the Delta as emissaries of the Baptist mission. Others, like the former governor of Syriam, a Talaing, returned to independent Burma disenchanted with British rule.

The Karens of the Toungoo area and the Kareni were as yet unaffected by the British-Burman conflict, and those accounts of the First Burmese War which mention the Karens refer only to those of the Delta. Contemporary sources give no indications that the conquest of Tenasserim involved the active participation of the Karens of the area. Probably they had followed the usual practice of disappearing into remote locations. These were the Karens, however, who found themselves under British

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<sup>13</sup> Ian Morrison, Grandfather Longlegs: The Life and Gallant Death of Major H.P. Seagrim (London: Faber, 1947), p. 30.

protection at the close of the First Burmese War. They may have been pleased by the change of government,<sup>14</sup> but a more likely reaction was indifference. Siamese, Burmese, British, whichever was the master the safest place was the most inaccessible part of the jungle.

However they were not to remain undisturbed for long. As soon as British government had been established, observers were sent out to examine the countryside, to find out about the inhabitants and their occupations, and the opportunities for trade, industry, and taxation.

One of the aspects of life in the Tenasserim district which disturbed the first Commissioner, Maingy, and his assistants most, was the nomadic life style of the Karens which seemed to them both unproductive and destructive. Despite his liberal principles, Maingy found it advisable to continue with many of the features of Burman administration, a course of action which did not appeal to Bengal when Tenasserim was placed under that jurisdiction in 1834. One aspect of the Burman system which continued under the British was the collection of poll tax from the Karens. In fact some tribes on the border seem to have found themselves in the unhappy position of paying tax to the Burmese and British governments simultaneously.<sup>15</sup> It was, naturally, difficult to induce the Karens to come into the towns to pay their taxes, and inconvenient to send out officials to collect taxes in kind. The British

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<sup>14</sup>F. Mason, The Karen Apostle, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup>J.S. Furnivall, "The Fashioning of Leviathan", Journal of the Burma Research Society, 24 (1939), 119-120.

government had no need for commodities such as elephant tusks, honey and sessamum oil in quantity. Thus the poll tax was demanded in the form of a money payment. Such a tax would not only be more convenient, it would also encourage the wild Karens to become involved in a cash economy in such a way as to induce them to abandon nomadic subsistence agriculture.

It seems unlikely that the Karens were particularly grateful for the British conquest. Not only was the tax more efficiently and regularly collected, and in an unfamiliar and inconvenient form, it was also very heavy, being at first fifteen rupees a year for each family. "One hundred years later, when money was much more plentiful, the corresponding tax was no more than Rs. 2."<sup>16</sup> Bengal suggested that the poll tax should be reduced and eventually abolished. Blundell, Maingy's successor, informed the Sudder Board in 1840 that he would reduce the tax by two-fifths but that he did not recommend total abolition, as it would encourage the Karens to remain nomads. He felt it would be better to "encourage their settlement in regular villages where they would come under the operation of other taxes".<sup>17</sup>

The Karens somewhat reduced the severity of the tax by redistributing the amounts among themselves so that the poorest of them paid somewhat less, while the richer paid proportionately more.<sup>18</sup> Thus

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<sup>16</sup>Furnivall, "Leviathan", pp. 119-120.

<sup>17</sup>Selected Correspondence, p. 193, 7th Sept. 1840. Letter no. 125.

<sup>18</sup>Furnivall, "Leviathan", p. 120.

the effects of the heavy tax were to encourage, albeit accidentally, the continuance of Karen communities.

Much more deliberate was the British policy of resettling the Karens in permanent villages. This, in addition to the need to fill the treasury, had been one of the reasons for the heavy poll tax.

The Court of Directors had inquired about the possibility of the export of cotton. Only Karens and Taungthus cultivated it in the area, but in a desultory fashion because of their migratory habits. Maingy tried to induce them to settle down and grow it "by which means they could form the most valuable class of subjects". Experimental plantations provided very high quality cotton but the yield was low, and Blundell vetoed the suggestion that Americans should be brought in to teach the Karens the necessary techniques, as he felt that the Karens would probably flee.<sup>19</sup> Helfer felt equally discouraged about the possibility of persuading the Karens to work in the mines and recommended the employment of convicts instead.<sup>20</sup>

The glowing picture painted by Malcom in the 1830's depicting the widespread use of coinage, better implements and improved manufactures, justice, security, sacredness of property, freedom of religion and taxes "equitably imposed", was probably not as appealing to the Karens who,

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<sup>19</sup>Furnivall, "Leviathan", p. 168.

<sup>20</sup>J.W. Helfer, Amherst Town in the Tenasserim Provinces (Calcutta: Huttman, 1838), pp. 14-15.

like the other inhabitants of British Burma, were probably "not yet reconciled to regular taxation",<sup>21</sup> although the ending of the destructive border wars with Siam must have been a considerable relief.

As for the British, their first impressions of the Karens of Tenasserim do not seem to have been particularly satisfactory. Helfer found them to be particularly apathetic and indifferent and unwilling or unable to give reliable directions to official explorers.<sup>22</sup> Some British administrators permitted Burman officials to practice various forms of extortion, forced sales, over-collection of taxes, and unjust imprisonment upon the Karens.<sup>23</sup> References to such practices in this period were scarce. They were to escalate after the second war, however, particularly in missionary literature.

It would seem that, had there been no missionary intervention, relations between the Karens and the British would have remained unenthusiastic at the most. The latter had betrayed the Karens in the Delta, and taxed them heavily in Tenasserim. Circumstances were not propitious for a long, warm friendship between the two peoples. The missionaries did, however, become involved, and this was to alter the situation significantly.

Before examining the first contacts of the Baptist missionaries with the Karens, it is necessary to put the work of conversion into

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<sup>21</sup>Malcom, p. 74.

<sup>22</sup>Helfer, Amherst, pp. 14-15.

<sup>23</sup>Francis Mason, Burmah: It's People and Natural Productions (Rangoon: Thos. Stowe, 1860), p. 612.

perspective. In the period between the two World Wars, when the Christian population was at its peak, only about one tenth of the Karen population of Burma was Christian.<sup>24</sup> Many accounts concerning the Karens give an exaggerated impression of the number of converts, partly because many were written by missionaries, who were naturally preoccupied with Church members, partly because Western visitors encountered the Christians most frequently, and above all because, as the most highly educated group among their fellows, the converts were most conspicuous in business and public affairs.

James Chater and Felix Carey had arrived in Burma in 1808, but they left the mission to the care of the Judsons in 1813, along with an immensely useful Burmese grammar compiled by Carey and some chapters of Matthew in Burmese. The Judsons' early career in Burma has already been mentioned. It was, however, about fourteen years before Judson first encountered the Karens. "They formed small parties of strange, wild-looking men, clad in unshapely garments, who from time to time struggled past his residence."<sup>25</sup> Enquiring about them, he was told by his Burman friend that they were as "untameable as the wild cattle of the hills" and that it would be a waste of time to bring them "within the sphere of his influence".<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Marshall, Melting Pot, pp. 20-33.

<sup>25</sup> E. Judson, Life, p. 379.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 138, quoting Fanny Forrester.

One Burman convert, however, bought as a debt slave an ex-bandit with over thirty murders to his credit, a man called Ko Tha Byu, who happened to be a Karen. The story of the slave's conversion, much beloved and much repeated by later missionaries, depicts a man, already over fifty, bad tempered and stupid, with a life of utter depravity behind him. His conversion took several months and much of Judson's patience; and his acceptance into the Church seems to have been delayed by hostility of the Burman converts to a despised Karen.<sup>27</sup> However, he was finally baptised by Boardman who had taken him to Tavoy. His single-minded dedication led him to devote the rest of his life to the conversion of his people to Christianity. Despite his extensive and successful efforts in this direction, however, he was in some ways a liability to the missionary efforts, since "he was not adapted to the pastoral office, his work was breaking up the fallow ground, and casting in the seed". If he was sent to a new post everything seemed to give way before him, but "allow him to remain, and the very individuals who, a little time before, had blessed God for his instrumentality in their conversion, were ready to exchange his services for those of another man".<sup>28</sup> It is a mark of the problems of the missionaries in health, language and lack of familiarity with the region, that they were obliged to rely on such a tool. His knowledge of Christianity can only have been rudimentary, he was virtually illiterate, and his bad temper remained with him to the end.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, he did serve a very important purpose, spreading

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<sup>27</sup> McMahon, Chersonese, p. 164.

<sup>28</sup> F. Mason, Karen Apostle, pp. 65-6.

<sup>29</sup> F. Mason, Karen Apostle, p. 39.

the news of Christianity until his death in 1840, while the missionaries were still struggling with the problems of language, the climate, and their inadequate members.

In 1826 Judson moved to Amherst, the newly chosen British headquarters, where his first wife Ann died. From there he moved to Moulmein, once again following the British government, who had decided that Amherst was not a suitable headquarters, and in 1828 another missionary, Boardman, opened a station at Tavoy. Soon afterwards, the latter encountered a group of Karens worshipping a book which turned out to be the Book of Common Prayer. He converted them and their "sorcerer" to "the worship of the God whom the book reveals".<sup>30</sup> According to missionary sources, increasing demands were heard from the Karens for a book of their own, and by 1832 Jonathan Wade produced a Sgaw Karen alphabet. Meanwhile, the Masons came to Tavoy shortly before Boardman's death in 1832, and they and the Wades also tried to keep a station going at Mergui as well, by spending time there whenever possible. It is hard to assess the reliability of early figures for conversions which may have been swelled by wishful thinking or converts who quickly lapsed, but the missionaries felt that they were making tremendous progress.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Mrs. Macleod Wylie, The Gospel in Burmah (London: Dalton, 1859), pp. 53-4.

<sup>31</sup> Some of the figures are as follows: 1831, 136 baptised to date at Moulmein, 76 at Tavoy, 5 at Rangoon (E. Judson, *Life*, p. 377). 1834, 500-600 Church members mainly Karen. (H. Träger, p. 49). 1847, 1,150 Christians at Bassein, ten years after foundation of the mission there (McMahon, p. 170).

The problems faced by the early missionaries were analysed by Judson himself and by Malcom, visiting from America in 1836.<sup>32</sup> Chief among these was the problem of health, exacerbated by climate, isolation, overwork, and the deaths of spouses, children and colleagues. Judson's first wife Ann died soon after the first Burmese war. His second, Sarah, herself the widow of George Boardman, died on her way home to the United States in an endeavour to improve her health; while Emily, his third, survived him by only four years, leaving Burma in ill-health soon after his death in 1850. Five of his twelve children died in Burma.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the natural hazards to health, Judson pointed out that many missionaries were sick, even before they left home, and he urged that, whatever their zeal, such men should not be sent.<sup>34</sup> Malcom estimated that nine years was the most that the average missionary survived, and that it was four years until the missionary could really be considered competent, leaving five years of useful work time.<sup>35</sup>

Ill health was often made worse by the demanding schedule that most missionaries followed. Unlike the British Baptists in India, they

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<sup>32</sup> Missionary problems are discussed at length in H. Trager, Burma Through Alien Eyes.

<sup>33</sup> H. Trager, p. 41.

<sup>34</sup> B.R. Pearn, Judson of Burma (London: Edinburgh House, 1962), p. 71.

<sup>35</sup> Malcom, p. 259.

believed in setting up as many stations and outstations as possible, all of which had to be visited regularly to ensure that the newly converted native pastors were not developing any extraordinary doctrines of their own. By 1840 Tavoy, for example, had seven outstations in surrounding villages, each with its own preacher or teacher.<sup>36</sup> New converts had also to be won, which entailed travelling further and further afield.

Judson was opposed to the grouping of several missionaries at one station, so isolation and loneliness were added to the other burdens. Several missionaries seem to have worked entirely alone, some of them single women. For example a Miss Macomber began her work in 1836, alone, at Dongwah.

By 1836 there were more than fifty missionaries and wives at work in Burma, almost all of them in the Karen field. However, support and interest from home was not always as enthusiastic as they desired. In 1844 Judson visited America, the only time he returned home, where interest in the mission was lagging. His presence was productive of great awe but the revival of interest was short lived, for by 1846 the Missionary Union was wondering which of its missions it should give up. In 1847 Mrs. Vinton, forced home by ill health, devoted much of her furlough to arousing new interest and was so successful that fourteen missionaries were sent out as a result, the largest group to that date. Nevertheless

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<sup>36</sup> H. Trager, p. 27, quoting Knowles, Memoir of Mrs. Ann H. Judson, Missionary to Burma, including a History of the American Baptist Mission in the Burman Empire (London: Wightman, 1831).

it was a constant problem to keep concern alive in America. The exhausted but indefatigable missionaries therefore sent back enthusiastic accounts in letters to relatives, friends, hometown groups and missionary magazines. Pathetic deaths were the occasions for memoirs and memorials, some of which included extracts from diaries and letters. Into this mixed bag of information dipped those supporters of the missions who felt called to write histories. Thus, as an indirect result of this need to arouse support at home, even the original letters must be considered by the historian with some care.

Burman-Karen relations may have been one area misrepresented by the missionaries. Judson's original purpose had been to convert the Buddhist Burmans. He devoted years to perfecting his mastery of Burmese, and it took him twenty-one years to complete his translation of the Scriptures into that language. It must have been galling to find the Buddhists so unreceptive. Mason quoted Judson as saying that more labour went into the conversion of two Burmans than one hundred Karens.<sup>37</sup> This difficulty apparently extended to those Karens who were already Buddhist. More Pwos than Sgaws had adopted Buddhism and they were converted to Christianity in much smaller numbers.<sup>38</sup> Resentment against the Burmans was inevitable. The emotions expressed by Bennett in his journal must have been fairly representative of those

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<sup>37</sup> H. Trager, p. 85.

<sup>38</sup> W. Bushell, "Notes on the Work among the Pwo Karen", Baptist Miss. Rev. 24 (Jan. 1918), 9-12, says that a much smaller number of missionaries worked with the Pwo.

of the majority of missionaries. "Poor people, how my heart has been affected for you today, when, learning the honest, simple truth, you confessed you were ignorant and wished for instruction. How unlike the proud pharisaic Burmese, who feel proud that they are not like other men, especially not like the poor Karen."<sup>39</sup> It is not surprising therefore, to find in the numerous missionary accounts an unflattering portrait of the Burmans, and a picture of Burman-Karen relations portraying little but pride and persecution on the part of the Burmese.

Despite the problems outlined above, the missionaries did make astonishing progress in this period. Converts were made, villages established, schools and a seminary set up, Sgaw and Pwo Karen committed to writing, translations begun, and missions set up to evangelise the Delta area. The effects of each of these developments on the Karens were to be profound and long lasting.

One of the earliest techniques used by the missionaries in their task of conversion was the setting up of schools.

The earliest of these, kept by Ann Judson for Burmese women who seemed interested in conversion, was probably confined to religious teaching, as many Burman women could already read and write. However, the policy seems to have changed after the first Burmese war, probably because of the lack of success up to that point. The missionaries now set up

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<sup>39</sup> F. Mason, Karen Apostle, p. 64.

schools for children instead of adults, doubtless because they seemed easier to convert; and as bait these schools began to offer secular subjects in addition to religious instruction. At first such instruction comprised reading and writing in Burmese, arithmetic and, for the girls, sewing and needlework.<sup>40</sup>

The primary purpose of conversion was certainly not forgotten, or even given second place. The reading texts were Burmese translations of the Scriptures, tracts and catechisms, and attendance at religious services was compulsory for the pupils.

At first the work of the missionaries was concerned with the Burmese, Talaings and Tavoyans,<sup>41</sup> mainly of the lower classes, and predominantly girls. The Buddhist system of the education of almost all boys at local monastic schools rendered the mission schools unattractive to them, and the need for Western-style education as a means to promotion under the new Government was not yet recognised. Many were the heartrending tales in the early missionary accounts of children, wiser than their parents, who begged to be admitted to the schools but were forbidden, with threats and punishments, by their cruel and heathen families. However, in the words of Mrs. Wade, "such opposition we have reason to expect, since we so freely tell the Burmans that it is our great object to teach their children the Christian religion".<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Kaung, "A Survey of the History of Education in Burma before the British Conquest and After," Journal of the Burma Research Society, 46 (Dec. 1963) 65.

<sup>41</sup>Kaung, p. 64. Tavoyans were descendants of Arakanese settlers around Tavoy.

<sup>42</sup>Knowles, p. 300, quoting Mrs. Wade's Journal for August 5, 1827.

Such schools were small. In 1837 Malcom mentioned four schools in Moulmein with a total of forty-four pupils, and staffed by teachers who were sometimes described as "a disciple" or "a Christian". A missionary's wife would usually oversee more than one school and would probably not be able to visit them on a very regular basis. The quality of either secular or religious education was therefore unlikely to be very high. Even as instruments of conversion the schools were not very satisfactory. The same four schools in Moulmein, one of which had been operating for three years, had produced only six converts.<sup>43</sup>

In view of this lack of success first with the Buddhist adults, and then with their children, the missionaries must have turned with relief to the much more receptive Karens.

The Karen demand for education, even allowing for zealous exaggeration, seems to have followed almost immediately on conversion, and centred above all, on a request to be taught to read. The extent of the need can be gauged by the way in which the missionaries quickly pressed into service such men as Ko Tha Byu, who Judson had instructed in reading. In the July of 1828, following his baptism in May, he was teaching school at Tshiekku, using Burmese tracts as texts, so that by the close of school "some of his pupils ... could repeat verbatim whole tracts", a procedure rendered necessary by the lack of textbooks.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Malcom, pp. 72-3.

<sup>44</sup> F. Mason, Karen Apostle, p. 43.

Problems of supervision must have applied even more strongly to schools for the Karens than to those for the Burmans, because of the greater numbers, and their more distant locations. In fact the quality of such supervision varied since there were three basic types of school.

The earliest of these had no particular physical location. The missionary would, as he travelled around, be accompanied by a group of disciples constantly talking, questioning and discussing. The process must have been haphazard, but had the merit of being highly personal and doubtless produced disciples of great enthusiasm. It was however totally inadequate to fulfil the Karen demand for religious and secular instruction.

Consequently, the second type of school was set up in the chief town in the district, and functioned for about four months of the year, during the rainy season when jungle travel was next to impossible. Enthusiastic Karens would travel to the "Town School" to learn as much as possible in the short school "year". At first the missionaries could work only from texts which they made themselves, in English and Burmese. Later, printing presses were set up in Tavoy and Moulmein and these supplied books in greater numbers as soon as a written form of the language was developed. The missionary and, as soon as possible his native assistant, would train the boys and men, while his wife or a lady missionary would supervise the education of women and girls. These schools developed into boarding establishments which took the form of almost self contained villages, growing their own food and supplying most of their own wants. Epidemics sometimes closed them down, but otherwise the precious time

was used for intensive teaching.<sup>45</sup>

During the rest of the year the scholars in their turn became teachers, and went out into the villages where they relayed, in the simplest possible terms, what they had been taught. These village schools, despite the many problems that beset them, from lack of supervision to hastily trained teachers who had only partially absorbed the doctrines and attitudes of their Western mentors, nevertheless became the backbone of the Baptist missionary effort. The teacher was often also the village pastor, and the church and schoolroom were usually the same structure. The role of the pastor-teacher will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 3, but it should be noted here that he naturally filled a role formerly held by the Karen elder, as a leader of the community.

The Christian Karens now acquired what Buddhists in Burma had always had, a village school imparting an education in which religious and secular matters were inextricably entwined. This was both a step upwards in social terms, and a very natural and easily accepted development in view of the Buddhist parallel. Heavy reliance by the missionaries on native teachers not only made the village schools seem less alien, but also developed skills of organisation and leadership in a Western format. The significance of this development for later events is clear.

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<sup>45</sup> James Lee Lewis, "Self Supporting Karen Churches in Burma: A Historical Study of the Development of Karen Stewardship" (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, 1946), p. 90, and Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 146.

In addition, the desperate need to provide teachers and pastors for the many villages who evinced interest made it necessary to send Karens to areas of which they were not natives. This must have contributed to the breakdown of the intense clannishness which early writers have described, and assisted in the growth of an awareness of a relationship between the different Karen tribes.

Early missionary accounts, with their stress on the "Book Legend" emphasise the Karen desire to be taught to read. At first, however, as has been described, the missionaries concentrated on teaching the basic principles of religious doctrine, and on having their charges commit to memory many passages of Scripture and religious texts.

By 1844, however, the curriculum in Dr. Mason's school at Tavoy was amazingly broad. How much of it filtered out to the village schools may be doubted, but the more practical aspects of this ambitious plan may have reached some of the rival communities. Elsewhere references are made to the teaching of the fundamentals of sanitation, diet, honesty and punctuality. The Karens, whose clothes could stand alone because they were rarely changed and never washed, were taught that cleanliness was next to godliness and that Saturday should be washday.<sup>46</sup>

There was a religious purpose behind the secular nature of some of the curriculum. Geography for example would, it was believed, upset "the whole cosmogeny of Buddhism", while chemistry would open up

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<sup>46</sup>For details of Mason's course of study, see Appendix.

"a world of mystery formerly explained by the supernatural".<sup>47</sup> It is interesting to note that Mason's classes studied English daily "not with a view to speaking the language, but to enable them to use English maps and globes", and with a view to ultimately using tables or logarithms and other mathematical tables. At this stage, therefore, it seems that no conscious attempt was being made by the missionaries to use the language as a link between the British conquerors and their Karen subjects, nor between the various tribes of Karens themselves.

Most of the missionaries were wholeheartedly committed to the schools as agencies of conversion. In 1836, however, they were visited by the Rev. Howard Malcom, who was touring south east Asia as the official appointee of the Missionary Union "to ascertain the condition" of the missions "and in general to collect such information ... as might enable the Board more wisely ... to promote the gospel among the heathen".<sup>48</sup>

On his return Malcom made a series of recommendations which indicated that his opinion differed radically from that of the missionaries on the spot. In particular he suggested that less time and money should be spent on the schools. He gave as his reasons that the schools left adults virtually unaffected, thus wasting a generation; that conversion became dependent on intellectual culture; that pupils rarely stayed in school long enough to benefit; that the teaching of reading would enable natives to get hold of "silly and pernicious books"; that schools were not visited

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<sup>47</sup> Lewis "Self Supporting", quoting Ola Hanson, A Century of Missionary Work in Burma.

<sup>48</sup> H. Trager, p. 86, quoting Gammell, History of the American Baptist Missions in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America (1849), p. 134.

frequently enough, and that they were often taught by unqualified pagans. He also felt that the proportion of conversions among the Burmans was too small to justify the use of schools for this purpose, although he conceded that the case was different among the Karens. Among them "many scholars have been converted; but the primary and daily object of the schools has ever seemed to be the conversion rather than the education of the scholar".<sup>49</sup>

Despite his criticism the missionaries continued to use the schools for the purpose of making converts. They no doubt felt that their experience enabled them more accurately to judge the suitability of the policy to local conditions, while even Malcom had seen the value of educational work among the Karens.

The decision to continue with this policy was a momentous one. Buddhist Burman boys had traditionally attended monastic village schools while girls had often attended lay schools run especially for them. Now Karen children could have an equivalent to the Buddhist Kyoung, and could learn to read and write. The appeal was strong, and many were attracted to Christianity through the schools. Villages appealed for teachers who, when they came, set up not only a school house but a church, who acted as pastors as well as educators, and whose lessons were never purely secular.

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<sup>49</sup> Malcom, p. 299.

A further development, which could hardly have been foreseen, stemmed from this decision. British rule inadvertently brought about the weakening of Buddhist authority, and in the ensuing confusion the monasteries came into conflict with each other and the British rulers. At the same time traditional styles of education became less relevant to the new demands of life under Western rule. These developments were barely discernible in the period between the first two Burmese wars, but the processes had been set in motion. At the same time many Karens were increasingly involved with an educational system which was directed towards a life style compatible with Western ideas, and which was not weakened by the internal dissensions experienced by the Buddhists.

The results, in terms of increased self respect and a relatively Westernised education, albeit tempered by the Karens who spread it, should not be exaggerated. The Karens did not instantly move into government posts, the professions, or business. In fact such a trend was slow to develop and when it finally became visible after the Third Burmese War it was not, in the eyes of the Karens or their missionaries, in proportion to the amount of education the Karens had received. The reasons for this discrepancy will be considered later. It was, however, in this period between the first two wars that the groundwork for the educational developments was laid.

Increasing involvement in the evangelisation of the Karens, and the decision to use schools as a tool in this campaign, made it necessary for the missionaries to provide written materials for this purpose.

As the early missionaries learned Burmese, and Carey, followed by Judson, had made considerable headway in translating religious works into that language, it would have been convenient to continue using that language in the conversion of the Karens. In addition the few Karens who were literate could read Burmese, as their own language, even if it had once been written, existed only in a spoken form in the nineteenth century. As a result the first attempts to convert the Karens were made through the medium of Burmese.<sup>50</sup> Had this policy been continued the Karens might have been assimilated rapidly into Burman society.

The decision to employ Karen seems to have been made on purely practical grounds. The Karens, naturally, wanted to hear about the new religion in their own language, and obviously the problems of communicating the essential religious doctrines would be lessened if Burmese were eliminated as an intermediary language. In the words of one Karen "Teacher Boardman preached to me the words of God, and I understood a little, but not fully. Ko Tha Byu taught me in Karen and I understood perfectly".<sup>51</sup> Sinister plans to prevent Karen assimilation into the larger racial group do not seem to have been part of early missionary policy, even if this was the final consequence. At the most there may have been some satisfaction in thus serving a group whom the Burmans had despised.

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<sup>50</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 79, quoting E.N. Harris, A Star in the East, p. 185.

<sup>51</sup> F. Mason, Karen Apostle, p. 30.

If the language of conversion was to be Karen then it made sense that the texts should also be written in the same tongue. It was possible for the early missionaries to represent this in terms of Burman-Karen hostility. Boardman himself in a letter from Tavoy in 1828, reported that "having suffered cruel oppression from their Burman masters they are averse to everything Burman and wish for a language which the Burmans cannot understand".<sup>52</sup> Wade was apparently so affected by the Karen's persistent requests for their legendary "Book" in the Karens' language that he finally agreed to commit it to writing "if someone would teach him Karen."<sup>53</sup> Judson wrote to the Missionary Board begging them to send more missionaries to help with the work of translation because the Karens were "literally crying out aloud for a written language",<sup>54</sup> and by 1833 some missionaries were already studying the language before they left the United States. The Vintons, for example, spent a year learning it from a Karen who had accompanied Wade to America.<sup>55</sup>

Whether the missionaries fulfilled or created a demand for a written form of Karen, it is impossible to determine. Bearing in mind

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<sup>52</sup> Knowles, p. 368, quoting Boardman, letter of Sept. 1828.

<sup>53</sup> Emma W. Marshall, "The Beginnings of the Karen Mission in Burma", Bap. Miss. Rev. 34 (June 1928) 250.

<sup>54</sup> E. Judson, Life, p. 333.

<sup>55</sup> Calista Vinton, Luther, The Vintons and the Karens: Memorials of Rev. Justus H. Vinton and Calista H. Vinton (Boston: Cothell, 1880), p. 14.

their desire to convert the heathen as quickly and effectively as possible, it seems unrealistic to expect them to have consciously considered the consequences in terms of Karen-Burman relations.

In any case, whatever his motive Wade began work on a Sgaw-Karen alphabet in 1832, producing a version which was totally phonetic even before he himself had learned to speak Karen.<sup>56</sup> Missionaries since that time have pointed out to their critics that he chose to use Burman rather than Roman letters, suggesting that the early missionaries were anxious to ensure integration of the two groups<sup>57</sup> or at least were not deliberately driving a wedge between them. It seems more likely that, once again, the decision had a practical basis. A few literate Karens already read Burmese, in addition the Roman alphabet was inadequate to reproduce the necessary sounds, although some additional symbols had to be added even to the Burmese to represent unusual Karen sounds, and also, in the words of Mrs. Mason, "for the simple reason that Burman type only was at hand at that time".<sup>58</sup> Pwo was reduced to writing shortly afterwards by Brayton, at first in Roman letters, but soon after was converted to a

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<sup>56</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 369, quoting Wade, "With the aid of two Karens who understood Burman, I analysed and classified the Karen sounds and adopted a system of representing them which embraced all the syllables occurring in their language."

<sup>57</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 81, quoting Harris, Star, p. 189.

<sup>58</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 368.

system similar to that used for Sgaw.<sup>59</sup>

Once a written alphabet had been constructed, there followed the task of translating useful works into the Karen dialects. When Malcom visited in 1836 he found three Karen books in print, a prose catechism, another in verse and, significantly, a small tract called "Sayings of the Fathers" with sayings and commands from Karen tradition that coincided with Biblical history. Other works, in handwritten form, included various tracts by missionary and native writers, Bible class questions, biographies of Old Testament characters, spelling books, vocabularies and grammars. Other books not intended for publication included fables, legends, poems and accounts of customs and demon-worship.<sup>60</sup> By 1843 the New Testament had been translated into Sgaw, and the translation of the Old Testament was complete by 1853.<sup>61</sup> As soon as possible treatises on geography, trigonometry, history and arithmetic were completed<sup>62</sup> and translations made of some of the plays of Shakespeare, Pilgrims Progress, and the Arabian Nights.<sup>63</sup> Wade compiled four large Octavo volumes entitled the Karen Thesaurus, a repository of legends and traditions in poetry and prose with

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<sup>59</sup>McMahon, p. 68. He gives no reason for the choice of Roman letters or the later change. In general much less attention is paid to the writing of Fwo than of Sgaw.

<sup>60</sup>Malcom, pp. 43-4.

<sup>61</sup>McMahon, p. 69.

<sup>62</sup>McMahon, p. 69.

<sup>63</sup>H.I. Marshall, Karen People, p. 310.

a lexicon or cyclopaedia of words and phrases" to which Mason was a significant contributor.<sup>64</sup> By 1836, two hundred and fifty Karens in the Tavoy district had apparently learned to read, and some of these had been set to copying the necessary texts.<sup>65</sup>

It was hoped, however, that this tedious process could soon be eliminated. The mission press, originally set up in Tavoy, had been moved to Moulmein. It consisted of four hand presses, and one power press with twelve small founts of English type, one of Burman, one of Karen and one of Talaing. There were also binding and storage facilities, and twenty five natives were fully employed there.<sup>66</sup>

By 1843 it was possible to publish a Karen newspaper, the Morning Star. Founded by Mason at Tavoy, it contained religious materials, exhortations, sermons, world news, and information on health and hygiene.<sup>67</sup> The newspaper was to survive until the Japanese invasion, and was the first of several such publications in Karen. The importance of such a medium of communication increased as time passed, but its origins were in this early period.

Once again Malcom did not wholeheartedly approve of local policy. He recommended that less time should be spent on translations and tracts

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<sup>64</sup>McMahon, p. 68.

<sup>65</sup>Malcom, p. 43.

<sup>66</sup>Malcom, p. 70. The press was finally moved to Rangoon.

<sup>67</sup>Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 84, quoting F. Mason, Story of a Workingman's Life, p. 276. Marshall, Karen People, p. 310, states it was founded in 1841. McMahon, p. 69, gives the date as 1842, much of his information came from Mason.

and more on actual preaching; that the Roman alphabet should be used in future when reducing unwritten languages to letters, and that disciples should be taught English as soon as possible.<sup>68</sup> As with the suggestions concerning schools, however, the missionaries seem to have continued with the existing policies. In the conditions of the 1830's they were inevitably strong willed men and women, or they would not have chosen to go to Burma, and would not have survived there. They believed in the efficacy of using Karen, and continued to do so. Had they followed Malcom's advice subsequent events might have been very different.

The British desire to settle the Karens in permanent villages has already been noted. The missionaries shared the same desire, not to facilitate the collection of taxes or to protect the teak forests, but to ensure that Christian Karens were located in sites of easiest access and healthier nature. The strain of jungle and mountain travel was bad enough without the added difficulty of reaching tiny Karen hamlets perched at almost inaccessible heights, or hidden miles from recognised tracks; while the problems engendered by climate were hard enough to combat without the danger of staying in areas where diseases were prevalent.

As a consequence the missionaries encouraged the Karens they converted to settle in permanent and healthy locations. Malcom commented that "the missionaries properly discourage their always collecting into exclusively Christian villages"; but conceded that "in some cases

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<sup>68</sup>Malcom, p. 298. This may be why Pwo was first written in Roman letters.

it seems expedient and necessary". It may also have been more convenient to separate the newly won converts, as yet not too secure in their faith, from their heathen fellows, until they were considered proof against the temptations of animist and Buddhist ceremonies, or the lure of strong drink, a Karen addiction particularly reprehensible to the Baptists.

Several of these early Christian villages are mentioned by name in the missionary literature of the period. These included Wadesville, named by Judson in 1831 after Wade, who first preached there, and Newville a few miles downriver, where he laid the foundation by establishing a church.<sup>69</sup> Not all of the villages had such distinctively American names, nor did they all become permanent settlements. Chummerah, founded in 1832, had been "abolished by the removal of the people" by 1836. Perhaps the site was considered unhealthy as "Miss Cummings went to Chummerah to acquire the language, but died before she was able to speak it".<sup>70</sup>

The missionary policy of persuading their converts to settle down and form "large, well ordered villages"<sup>71</sup> can best be illustrated by reference to Mata, or Mata-Myu, the City of Love, visited by Malcom while he was at Tavoy in 1836. Made up of about two hundred Christians "converted in different places" but brought together by the missionaries, the village delighted Malcom by the evidence of "spiritual change".

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<sup>69</sup> J. Clement, Memoir of Adoniram Judson: Being a Sketch of his Life and Missionary Labours (Buffalo: G.H. Derby, 1853), p. 212. Four weeks later he selected yet another site.

<sup>70</sup> Malcom, p. 57.

<sup>71</sup> E. Judson, Life, p. 380.

Punctual, decorous, devoted, musical; the people attended public worship not only on the Sabbath, but morning and evening throughout the week, and their children went to Sunday School. With only a manuscript copy of the Gospel of Matthew they were still "exceedingly ignorant of the claims of Christianity" but immensely eager to learn. Many of the young men, although needed for planting and harvesting, instead willingly went off as missionaries into the surrounding area, teaching and preaching. Most conspicuous of all, however, was the increase in cleanliness and absence of drunkenness, both in remarkable contrast to the conditions of the heathen villages of the area.<sup>72</sup> In association with the church the missionaries set up a number of institutions including two schools with a total of one hundred and thirty four pupils, a sewing circle holding annual displays, and a Maternal Association.<sup>73</sup>

A missionary policy, which was to increase in importance after the second Burmese war, was to give assistance towards developing the material culture of the Karens.<sup>74</sup> As with the settlement of permanent villages, this coincided with British policy. "By the aid of the missionaries" the Karens "obtained goats, bullocks, oil mills, seeds, etcetera, and with these; and still more by the increased industry they

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<sup>72</sup>Malcom, pp. 36-43.

<sup>73</sup>Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 57.

<sup>74</sup>In this they resembled the English Baptist William Carey who set up a mission with the aim of self maintenance through industry and agriculture. Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 159.

have been enabled to cease their wanderings and acquire many comforts to which their countrymen are strangers". In addition the men were "exhorted to raise plenty of cotton, and the women induced so to apply themselves to spinning and weaving, as to furnish every one of their families with a change of raiment".<sup>75</sup> From Helfer's report made soon after, it appears that the people of Tavoy were buying the cotton from the Karens, "each man carrying his load on his back through the mountain passes forty or fifty miles distance". Evidently this excursion into agriculture had proved successful although the variety was "inferior to the American or African".<sup>76</sup>

The policy of creating permanent agricultural settlements was only in its infancy in this period, but already some of the consequences could be foreseen. Re-siting villages in more accessible areas would bring Karens into contact with the other races of Burma, thus accelerating Burmanisation. At the same time, the nature of the villages with their Christian populations, would act to retard assimilation. Later developments would decide which of these contradictory forces would be stronger.

While, in general, the missionaries were in agreement with each other over their policies, even though these did not necessarily coincide with the ideas of visitors such as Malcom, there was one issue over which

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<sup>75</sup> Malcom, pp. 36-37.

<sup>76</sup> Helfer, Second Report, p. 48. Helfer calls the village Metamio. It is almost certainly Malcom's Matamyu.

they were seriously divided. This was the matter of self support, whether the mission should be financed from America, or pay for itself from Karen contributions.

Two completely opposing views developed among the missionaries to Burma. The first was held by the venerable Judson, while the second was developed by a younger generation of missionaries, particularly Vinton, Binney and Harris.<sup>77</sup> Their disagreement must have been all the harder to express since most of the younger men must have been inspired to come to Burma by stories of Judson's experiences. They had been impressed by his lengthy service in Burma, his sufferings and imprisonment, considerable scholarship, and great personal authority.

Judson, with his long years of work dedicated to converting Buddhist Burmans, believed that native Christians should not be encouraged to give money to the mission since such an act could be too easily confused with the Buddhist doctrine of gaining merit. Furthermore he was of a naturally paternalistic and authoritarian turn of mind, and believed that the missionaries should retain complete control, through the allocation of funds received from America. Consequently he developed the "Moulmein System" in the city which became his headquarters soon after the first Burmese war, paying preachers, members, and even school children, with American money. Had this programme become the rule, the Karens might

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<sup>77</sup>C.L. Klein, "The Past and Future of Self Support among the Karens", Bap. Miss. Rev. 35 (Jan. 1929), 26.

never have developed the skills required to assert themselves among the other races of Burma, but a combination of events brought about a new trend.

In part this was due to the Karens, whose traditions included generosity. In Mata they themselves built a house for the missionary and a zayat, and also sent fifty rupees to persecuted Christians in Rangoon.<sup>78</sup> Missionary sources include numerous references to Karens collecting money for the spread of the gospel and building churches at their own expense.<sup>79</sup>

The development of self-support was also due, however, to external pressures. The Baptist Churches in America were becoming increasingly interested in the Home Missions on the western frontier, and this put the Board in debt. The Land Bank system collapsed with the result that the Board owed \$21,950 by 1839, and the North-South split in the denomination in 1845 added to the problems and the debt. The Southern Convention turned its attention to other areas, supporting missions in China and Nigeria. Monetary support from home was consistently less than the missionaries hoped for. Abbott, in his first year at Sandoway in 1840, asked the Board for Rs.1500 but was only allowed Rs.1,000, and he found that none of the other missionaries could help him as they were equally badly off.<sup>80</sup> At that time he wrote "I hope

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<sup>78</sup> Malcom, p. 298

<sup>79</sup> Klein, p. 27.

<sup>80</sup> Klein, p. 28.

in time to succeed in introducing the system of each congregation supporting its own pastor, but that will require time and the fostering care of a beneficent Providence."<sup>81</sup>

Judson's absence in America in 1844 seems to have given the younger missionaries a chance to develop their own ideas, increasing the use of the Karen tongue in Moulmein; building a new station there, largely with Karen help; founding a new theological seminary; and opening the first Karen school there in 1846. In 1848 one of these men, Binney, wrote to the Board that it was conceivable that in ten years the Karens would be supporting their own churches and schools,<sup>82</sup> and Abbott in Sandoway stated "we are endeavouring to educate our churches to support their own pastors. Those which are not able to do so we aid".<sup>83</sup> Abbott is often described as the founder of the idea of self support, but Binney and the others in Moulmein seem to have been developing the idea at the same time, although with greater difficulty, since at that station they worked under the shadow of Judson. In fact subsidies persisted there, particularly in the Burman department, long after Judson's death in 1850.

As a result of the conflict between Judson and the younger missionaries, two systems of financing existed side by side. The Burman department continued to pay its preachers and teachers at rates considerably

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<sup>81</sup> C.H. Carpenter, Self Support Illustrated in the History of the Bassein Karen Mission from 1840 to 1880 (Boston: Rand Avery, 1883), p. 116.

<sup>82</sup> Klein, p. 29.

<sup>83</sup> Carpenter, p. 116.

higher than those received by the Karens who, on the whole, were supported by Karen rather than American donations. This may have contributed to the weakness of the Burman side of the mission, and it certainly led to some feelings of jealousy on the part of the Karens, who saw this as evidence of preference for the Burmans.<sup>84</sup> However the development of self support in the Karen mission was of the greatest importance in encouraging the self confidence and organising ability of the Christian Karens, as will be seen in the following chapters.

It is striking that the work of the missionaries encouraged the development of Karen self government even in this early period between the first two Burmese Wars.

The importance of self support has already been indicated. As a consequence the local village churches chose their own teacher and pastor and held meetings to decide how to raise money and how to spend the money already collected. The leaders of the Church were often the village elders, and the pastor gradually assumed the position held by chief among them. Since the conversions had taken place at every level of Karen society, from cultivator to chief, no split developed among them as a consequence of Christianisation.

Furthermore Judson's practice, contrary to the preference of Malcom for concentrating missionaries together at headquarters,<sup>85</sup> was to spread the missionaries thinly through the country and encourage them to make

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<sup>84</sup> Lewis, Self Supporting, pp. 107-8 and pp. 251-2.

<sup>85</sup> Malcom, p. 298.

preaching tours for most of the year. This made reliance on native personnel inevitable, and brought the missionaries into close contact with their converts, while depriving them of the companionship of their fellow Americans. In addition, the overseeing of the various projects from Maternal Associations to various village agricultural projects, had to be handed over to the Karens by the overburdened missionaries. The policy had its drawbacks. It was a tremendous strain on the missionaries, the mission was often overextended, and the supervision inadequate. Nevertheless, whatever the problems, the results, at first unintentional were, in terms of Karen development, dramatic.

When the British acquired Tenasserim and Arakan, the centres of missionary activity moved to these areas, and away from Rangoon and Ava. The hope of converting Buddhist Burma was not abandoned, however, and during the period between the first two wars, attempts to work within Burmese territory continued. However much the missionaries might hope that the British would eventually take control of that area, there was no guarantee that this would ever happen, and so work there could not be abandoned.

News of the mission work with the Karens spread into the Delta area and reached the Karen villages there. Some of the inhabitants travelled secretly by night, through Burma into British territory to attend Mrs. Vinson's school in Moulmein, returning at the end of the rainy season with copies of the Gospels and the Epistles concealed in their turbans, to spread their newly acquired knowledge and faith.<sup>86</sup>

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Luther, p. 83.

One of the areas in the Delta with a considerable Karen population was Bassein. Books written in Karen were smuggled into the region and the interest in Christianity grew rapidly. An American missionary visited the area briefly in 1835, in an attempt to follow up on the work of Ko Tha Byu, whose birthplace it was, and who had attempted to evangelise the area two years before. Such short visits proved unsatisfactory and the attitude of the government was uncertain, so that it was judged necessary to set up a permanent centre in British territory to conduct the work in the Delta from a safe distance. Sandoway in Arakan was chosen by Abbott for this purpose in 1840. The town was in a relatively healthy location, and sufficiently close to the mountain passes into Burma. Ko Tha Byu joined Abbott there, but died soon after his arrival.

Abbott began to send out "native assistants with letters of encouragement and love" to "travel among their countrymen, and preach the gospel without being suspected of political designs".<sup>87</sup> The assistants sent back some of the interested Karens to see Abbott and learn about the new religion. Within a few months he had a rainy-season school of fifty pupils, and was forced to refuse others because of lack of space. The subject matter ranged from arithmetic and geography to church organisation and of course the memorisation of large chunks of the scriptures. This work was largely carried on with the Sgaws of the Delta area. A mission

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<sup>87</sup> Carpenter, p. 37, quoting Abbott, letter of 17 Mar. 1840.

for the Pwos of the region was not founded until after the second war, in 1854.

Sporadic attempts were made during this period to set up a mission in Rangoon once more. Various missionaries visited the city from time to time and attempted to found churches and schools, but threats of persecution apparently limited the number of converts.<sup>88</sup>

Many were the bloodcurdling tales told of Burmese cruelty to Christian converts in the Delta area. Fines, slavery, imprisonment, torture, death, even crucifixion, were all described in vivid detail.<sup>89</sup> One account told of the massacre of all the inhabitants of a village of nearly a thousand, although the writer herself commented that it seemed incredible.<sup>90</sup> It is hard to assess just how serious the persecution was. Some of the stories may have originated in the post war retaliations described earlier, although few or none of the Karens involved would have been Christians at that time.

Campaigns against Christianity were not waged throughout the period, or in every area. It is reported that soon after Sandoway was established a Burman magistrate, afraid that taxes might be lost as a result of emigration, allowed Christians to worship their own God if they paid taxes and obeyed the laws. However in the cold season of 1842-3,

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<sup>88</sup> Malcom, p. 84.

<sup>89</sup> Luther, pp. 80-85; Carpenter, pp. 48, 53, 57; McMahon, p. 169.

<sup>90</sup> Luther, p. 29. The Christians laid down their arms and offered no resistance. Karen villages were usually small and the numbers, at least, seem exaggerated. The writer was told the story by her mother.

as a result of a royal order to exterminate the religion of the foreigners, Karen Christians were persecuted. Many fled to Arakan, entire villages following their pastors. Phayre, at that time assistant commissioner, supplied food and interest-free loans, but was powerless to avert the cholera epidemics that followed this upheaval.<sup>91</sup>

It is noteworthy that sometime in the 1840's the Roman Catholic Mission set up a Karen vernacular mission school in the Bassein district with the full permission of the governor to convert the Karens.<sup>92</sup> They were forced to use oral methods of instruction as they and the Baptists, who had translated and printed works in Karen, found it impossible to cooperate. Later struggles between the sects were to be very embittered.

In Rangoon in 1851, Kincaid, who had gone there to make yet another attempt to set up a permanent mission, was allowed to go on with his work "without the slightest molestation from the government". He was employed translating letters for the governor who was "highly gratified", and who courteously explained that what he disliked about Christianity was its exclusive character and its uncharitable desire to destroy other religions.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Wylie, p. 106.

<sup>92</sup> Kaung, p. 59.

<sup>93</sup> Eugenio Kincaid, letter dated Oct. 8, 1951 from Rangoon, Missionary Magazine, 32 (Boston, March 1852) 68. He here reports a rumour that the governor of a province between Bassein and Danabyu told the King that persecutions were resulting in lost taxes. This strategy resembles the story told by Wylie in 1850, with the addition that the King ordered that preachers should be free of taxes. The same event may have given rise to both stories.

However, in a later communication he describes the governor's threat to shoot every Karen who came to Kincaid's house "except the lame, the sick and the blind".<sup>94</sup> This change in attitude may correspond to the change in governors that occurred as a result of the contretemps with Commodore Lambert, as the new governor was a member of the anti-British party at court. In fact many of the changes in Burmese policy may have corresponded to changes of ruler, either at the court itself or locally. Crawford had remarked in 1827 that "any attempt to convert the natives creates insuperable difficulties, chiefly because it is viewed in the light of withdrawing them from their allegiance",<sup>95</sup> and this comment was as valid just before the second war as it was when it was made, soon after the first. As will be shown later, the Burmese rulers had good reason to suspect the loyalty of the Karen Christians within their domains.

Figures for conversions for the Delta area during this period cannot be relied upon,<sup>96</sup> but one thing is certain. Missionary work from Moulmein, in Rangoon itself, and above all from Sandoway, enabled the Karen missionaries to have ready-made congregations awaiting them in the Delta area when they arrived soon after the British landing.

Two major consequences followed. Conversion of the Karens of the Delta, particularly the Sgaws, was already advanced before the area came

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<sup>94</sup> Kincaid, letter dated Nov. 13, 1851 from Rangoon, Missionary Mag. 32 (April 1852) 101.

<sup>95</sup> Crawford, p. 392.

<sup>96</sup> 1840: 1270 (McMahon, p. 169); 1844: 1,550 (E.W. Marshall, "Beginnings of K. Mission", p. 252); 1852: 76 churches with 5,000 members (McMahon, p. 170).

under British control, and many of the Karens were therefore 'subjects' of the missionaries even before they became subjects of the British.

In addition the missionaries were enabled to extend their efforts immediately after the second war to the remote mountain areas to the north and west of the Delta region. All this was achieved, however, at the expense of good missionary-Burman relations with serious consequences for the future.

Christianity seems to have appealed to the Karens for a variety of reasons. The majority of them were animists and therefore more easily converted than a people with an organised religion. It is notable that the Pwos, more Burmanised than the Sgaws and other Karen tribes, were less easily converted.<sup>97</sup> Buddhism had filtered through to those who came into close contact with Burmans, but there had been no attempt at deliberate evangelisation. Judson compared the animist Karens to an empty jar, the Buddhists to one filled with earth oil. The latter had to be emptied and would always be tainted, the former was ready to be filled, with no strains of ancient superstitions.<sup>98</sup>

The missionary decision to accept and use Karen traditions, language and village government gave Christianity considerable appeal. At the same time, in the British provinces it offered identification with

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<sup>97</sup> Lewis, Burmanisation, p. 143. By 1924 only one in six Karen Christians were Pwos.

<sup>98</sup> E. Judson, Life, p. 554.

the new rulers and therefore some measure of protection and social status. In the Delta it represented a symbol of resistance to the Burmese government which dealt with them so harshly after the first war, and sporadically thereafter. One missionary, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, suggested that the Karens saw Christ as a temporal King who would lead them against the Burmans, although there seems to be no contemporary evidence for this.<sup>99</sup>

After his visit Malcom had written "so far as I know, no other mission of modern times holds out such encouragement".<sup>100</sup> Immediately before the second war, this conviction seemed to have been amply justified. Churches had been organised, day and boarding schools set up and a theological college founded. The language had been set down in writing, a vernacular newspaper was in circulation and books and tracts were being produced in great numbers from the printing press. Pastors and teachers had been trained and many of them were supported by their own people. Home missions, similarly financed, were well under way and advance forces had been sent into Burmese territory to begin the work of conversion there. In addition Christian villages had been set up and were receiving the benefits of American knowledge in the fields of sanitation, health and agriculture.

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<sup>99</sup> Alonzo Bunker, Soo Thah: A Tale of the Making of the Karen Nation (London: Ravell, 1902), p. 98.

<sup>100</sup> Malcom, p. 229.

It seems clear that the missionaries were primarily motivated, in their choice of methods to achieve the conversion of the Karens, by practical considerations. However some substantiation may be given to the theory that they had, at least subconsciously, some ulterior motives in their choice of policies. Resentment was definitely harboured by many of the missionaries against the Burmans, as evidenced by their writings and also by their identification with British interests. There is also, disturbingly, the remark found in a letter from Bennett to Judson, written as early as 1835. "I think the Karens here in Rangoon superior to those in the British provinces so far as I have seen; and could they be collected together, and civilised and Christianised they would be a lovely nation."<sup>101</sup>

Often, as with the policy of settling Karens into permanent villages, missionary and British policy coincided, but did not necessarily involve active cooperation. In other areas the mutual assistance was more than accidental.

Judson's involvement in the making of the treaty after the first war has already been noted. He also accompanied Crawford to explore and survey a suitable site for "an emporium of trade" and the British headquarters.<sup>102</sup> Crawford felt "his amiable friend" preached a sermon

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<sup>101</sup> F. Mason, Karen Apostle, p. 59, quoting a letter from Bennett to Judson, Oct. 28, 1833.

<sup>102</sup> Fanny Forrester (Emily Judson nee Chubbock), Memoir of Sarah B. Judson (London: Nelson, 1859), p. 49.

on that occasion which was "full of specimens of good taste and judgement".<sup>103</sup>

The site chosen was Amherst and it was intended to become the seat of a "prominent missionary establishment".<sup>104</sup> The British, however, soon removed to Moulmein and the missionaries went with them. The advantages of remaining close to the new rulers of Tenasserim were obviously considerable.

In addition to Judson's assistance at the close of hostilities there were other examples of the missionaries' decision to support the British, including assistance to Captain Burney in "suppressing and investigating the revolt in Tavoy" in 1830<sup>105</sup> and Judson's help to Major Benson in 1838 in the translation of letters.<sup>106</sup>

On that occasion Judson proved himself to be more anxious to extend British rule than the British themselves. Benson reported that the missionary "avows himself predisposed for war, as the best, if not the only means of eventually introducing an improved system of Government, manners and morals, and the humanising influence of the Christian religion". Benson felt that Judson overlooked "the direct and certain mischief of war", took for granted "the assumed good results" and ignored the possibility that

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<sup>103</sup> Crawford, 2, 81.

<sup>104</sup> Forrester, p. 49.

<sup>105</sup> Selected Correspondence, p. 22 and p. 259. Tavoy, Feb. 1830.

<sup>106</sup> Pearn, p. 82.

the situation might improve without recourse to hostilities.<sup>107</sup> Benson, in fact, was very anxious to prevent the missionaries from meddling in the explosive situation in the Delta, being only too aware from previous experiences that the Burmans were as liable as the missionaries to see the British and Baptist enterprises as one. Judson's belief in the efficacy of war may have been expressed in measured terms, but the newly converted Karens were in favour of instant action. Ko Tha Byu, for example, desired Vinton "to request the commissioner to send an armed force to take possession of Rangoon and vicinity; that he might return and preach the gospel to his friends and relatives".<sup>108</sup>

It is clear that the missionaries favoured the British acquisition of Arakan and Tenasserim and would have welcomed the extension of British power to the rest of Burma. It is also evident that this attitude was transferred to the Christianised Karens by every possible means including the utilisation of the legends concerning the "younger white brother from over the sea", to create a positive relationship between the British and the missionaries' protégés.

In return the British, although not always grateful for such enthusiastic support, particularly when it involved the further extension of their power, reciprocated by assisting the missionaries where possible.

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<sup>107</sup> W.S. Desai, History of the British Residency in Burma, 1826-1840 (Rangoon: University, 1939), p. 351, quoting India Secret Consultations, 22 Aug. 1838, letter of 18 July 1838, no. 51.

<sup>108</sup> F. Mason, Karen Apostle, p. 7, quoting Vinton, who describes Ko Tha Byu as "a very stupid man", "exhibiting an ignorance upon the most common subjects unworthy of the veriest child."

Often this was achieved in very personal ways. Sir Archibald Campbell, for example, frequently invited Judson to dine, until the latter decided that he should not waste further time on social intercourse.<sup>109</sup> The Boardmans also received much help from Campbell, who "kindly offered us as much land as we should wish"<sup>110</sup> and who when they insisted on living outside the cantonments during a period of dacoit raids, sent a guard of Sepoys for them.<sup>111</sup> There are many references in missionary letters to private donations from officers and officials, and sometimes to grants from official funds, as when in 1831 Maingy recommended a grant of Rs.500 towards the cost of a chapel.<sup>112</sup>

Phayre's assistance to the mission in Arakan has already been mentioned but "all the earlier missionaries to Burma experienced his kindness". Not only did he set up villages for Karen refugees from the Delta area, but he supplied them with rice, made interest-free loans, and tried to assist them in the cholera epidemics of 1843. He also lent his government schooner, and made personal donations.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Wayland, p. 373.

<sup>110</sup> Knowles, p. 338.

<sup>111</sup> J. Stuart, Burma Through the Centuries (London: Kegan Paul, 1910), p. 51.

<sup>112</sup> Selected Correspondence, p. 26.

<sup>113</sup> Carpenter, pp. 79-84. The epidemics were so disastrous that in one village, all but twenty of one hundred and forty families either died or fled.

The British sometimes found themselves, albeit rather unwillingly, supporting the missionaries in the face of Burman hostility. In 1830 the Burmese ministers asked Burney, at that time Resident, to tell the Baptists to stop distributing tracts in Prome. Burney pointed out that he had no official connection with Judson, but insisted that the missionary was a good and pious man, and unlikely to injure the Burmese King or people, a reply which must have been unconvincing in view of Judson's involvement with the negotiations for the Treaty of Yandabo. He also hinted that the reputation of Burma might suffer in England and America if Judson were persecuted.<sup>114</sup> The Burmese Court continued to believe that the British and missionaries were in alliance. In 1837 the new King, Tharrawaddy, insisted to the British representative that there must be no more distribution of tracts, for he would not be as tolerant as Bagyidaw, whom he had dethroned.<sup>115</sup> Helfer noted that even in Tenasserim the Burmese did not know how to distinguish between Englishmen and Americans, thinking "the latter to be a peculiar variety of itinerating white people whose real aim and purpose are to this day unknown, or indistinctly guessed at by the multitude, and to the knowing few a puzzling enigma".<sup>116</sup>

Nowhere is the British dilemma with regard to the missionaries more clearly illustrated than in the sphere of education. Maingy felt it

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<sup>114</sup> Desai, p. 166, citing Bengal Secret and Political Proceedings, vol. 358. Burney did, however, write to Judson.

<sup>115</sup> Pearn, p. 81, quoting India Secret Proceedings, vol. II (August 22, 1838).

<sup>116</sup> Helfer, Second Report, p. 19.

a most "agreeable" duty to offer to the Burmese a "means of acquiring knowledge of the English language and of more useful learning" than could be gained "under their own system of instruction". He noted with concern that whereas almost all of the older generation were literate, the monasteries were now becoming almost deserted. He attributed this to the mildness of British rule, believing that the inhabitants no longer needed to take refuge from public labours and the exactions of government officials. In any case he thought that Burmese education was "of little practical use and still less calculated to effect an improvement of the mind".<sup>117</sup> Although the British administration was still in its infancy, it would obviously be of advantage to have English speaking Burmese who could be employed at the lower levels.

In the circumstances the presence of the missionaries must have seemed, to the pragmatic Mr. Maingy, to offer a satisfactory solution. As early as 1828 a monthly grant was made to Boardman to set up a school to teach boys English, writing and arithmetic, and sewing for the girls. There were three conditions, that civil officials should be permitted to visit the school, that there should be a semi-annual report, and also that nothing should be done to suggest to parents that the British government entertained any intention of interfering with their religion.<sup>118</sup> Elsewhere

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<sup>117</sup> Selected Correspondence, p. 109.

<sup>118</sup> Selected Correspondence, p. 78. If scriptures were to be used it was to be as class books only.

Maingy stated that Burmese-Talain men of rank and influence were "proud to have their children instructed in the English language and in our branches of learning whenever they are certain that no attempt will be made to interfere with the religious faith of the children".<sup>119</sup>

Maingy's belief that the missionaries would not use the schools as instruments of evangelisation, if sincere, was naïve in the extreme. The matter came to a head in 1833 when Mrs. Boardman, whose five day-schools were "entirely supported ... by the Honourable Company's allowance"<sup>120</sup> was shown a copy of a letter, from the Commissioner to Bengal, in which he expressed the opinion that the schools were not agencies of conversion. She wrote to Maingy at once, requesting that monetary support be withdrawn, since she could not accept it on false pretences. More important, she felt, than English or science, was that the pupils should be given hope of a "glorious immortality in the world to come". Maingy's reply betrayed embarrassment, "the observations in my official letter are intended to support what I have before brought to the notice of the Government, that all are received who present themselves at your schools, without their becoming members of the Christian faith." He saw his plan for an extension of the schools on the "Tavoy" pattern to Moulmein and the rest of the province crumbling, in the face of Mrs. Boardman's uncompromising honesty. Maingy's plan was put into practice for a short

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<sup>119</sup> Selected Correspondence, p. 109.

<sup>120</sup> Forrester, p. 123. "Mr. Maingy is much interested" in the schools success.

time but soon collapsed as the propagation of Christianity was prohibited in government-supported schools, although Mrs. Boardman was always to teach "as her own conscience dictated".<sup>121</sup>

Maingy's dilemma was handed over to his successor Blundell, who fared no better. Unable to find teachers for his government schools, he finally asked the missionary Bennett to take over as teacher, warning him to avoid "all interference with the religious prejudices of the children",<sup>122</sup> but he was soon to close the school, recognising that he was "in error in having placed his school under a missionary". He confidently expected "a considerable influx of native scholars" as soon as a non-missionary teacher could be found.<sup>123</sup> Subsequently government schools were opened in the principal towns but the "considerable influx" did not occur. The need for English education was not yet sufficiently great, and for a time at least, despite Maingy's fears, the monastic schools continued to suffice for Burman and Talain students.

In general, therefore, the missionary-British relationship was seen rather differently by each of the partners. The British, while often admirers of the missionaries on a personal level, were unwilling to become involved on an official basis. When they attempted any such policy, as with education, the results were unsatisfactory and embarrassing. The advantages

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<sup>121</sup>Forrester, p. 127.

<sup>122</sup>Selected Correspondence, p. 137.

<sup>123</sup>Selected Correspondence, p. 49.

of such an alliance were perceived only when a crisis arose, the need to negotiate a treaty, put down an uprising, or translate a letter. The possibility that the missionaries, let alone their converts, might prove to be useful political allies was not, between the first two wars, considered. Indeed, the power which the rapid conversion of the Karens might give to the missionaries seems to have been observed by the British, not at all, and by the Baptists only dimly.

In contrast, however, the Baptists saw very clearly the advantages which British support would give to them. The new rulers might not wish to assist directly in the work of conversion but at least their presence made it easier than in the areas still ruled by the Burmese court. Indeed, if British power were extended to the Delta and Upper Burma, an enormous field of endeavour would be open to the Gospel. Consequently their enthusiasm for the alliance was considerably greater than that of the British. This attitude to the "younger white brother" was, quite deliberately, transmitted to the Karens, who thus became innocent pawns in the game whose goal, as far as the missionaries were concerned, was British conquest of the rest of Burma. In the process the Baptists created the pattern of relationships which continued until independence. The Karens were told that the British were their protectors, while their "protectors" were berated for lack of interest in the loyal people who loved them. As yet the pattern was no more than barely distinguishable. War would make it more vivid.

As already noted, any picture of Karens as a totally passive people, at the mercy of the whims of stronger races, is incomplete and

misleading. Indeed, the aggressive nature of the Karens north and east of Toungoo was legendary. Even in the troubled areas of the Delta and Tenasserim the spirit of resistance was not absent, and it is striking that this was often expressed through the medium of religion. Several of the early missionaries reported the existence of Karen prophets,<sup>124</sup> leaders of sects of varying size, with teachings which often combined animism with Buddhism and, later, with Christianity. While overtly religious, the true, political nature of these movements often broke through. Judson and Boardman both encountered such men, and Mason reported visiting such a prophet in the year 1837. This man had subsequently "successfully headed a revolt of the Karens against the Burmans, and compelled a detachment of soldiers that was sent against him to retire".<sup>125</sup> Smeaton records the story of "a leader who had announced himself to be the chosen of God and sent to deliver the nation", who, in 1840 led "thousands of Karens" on Rangoon. "The fanatics were met by Burman troops and slaughtered almost to a man".<sup>126</sup> As a result Christianity filled a role which the Karens had already created. It provided a new religious form for a discontent which sprang from social and economic causes. It is not surprising to find that as British rule became more firmly established, many of the movements, which would formerly have been directed against the Burmans, took on an anti-British character instead.

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<sup>124</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 273. Bhoo-Khoos were holy men, well respected and searching for truth; Wees were feared, dealt in trances, claims and prophecies of the future.

<sup>125</sup> F. Mason, Karen Apostle, p. 104.

<sup>126</sup> Smeaton, p. 183.

In summarising the major developments of this period it is obvious that two new and powerful forces affected the Karens in the Delta and Tenasserim areas, as a result of the first Anglo-Burmese War and its aftermath, although being far from the scene of the action the Karens of the Toungoo-Kareni area were virtually unaffected.

The Karens of the Delta area had made the initial contact with the British. Their belated but useful assistance during the war evidently made a good impression on those army officers who encountered them, but they were abandoned to the Burmese at the end of the war. The immediate consequence of the contact was therefore retribution, but the British presence in Arakan and Tenasserim, combined with missionary urging, seems to have encouraged some of them to cross the borders from Burmese territory and others to retain hope that the British might retake the Delta and remain permanently. In Tenasserim the effects of British rule were seen in the changes, slow but perceptible, in the economic structure of the province, due to the collection of taxes in cash rather than kind and the attempts to settle the Karens in permanent villages. These policies helped to bring the Karens into closer contact with the rest of the population and their new British rulers, but at the same time reinforced their clannishness by accidentally encouraging them to stay together in missionary villages.

These consequences were as nothing, however, compared to the results of another development encouraged by British rule, the explosion of missionary activity. While it is true that Judson and a few others

were already in Burma before the first war, it seems unlikely that they could have done any better than in the first thirteen years if the British had not taken over part of Burmese territory. The effects of missionary policy were far greater than can be measured in terms of numbers of converts gained, although these effects could only be seen in their earliest stages during the period covered by this chapter.

Education brought contact with Western ideas and values to the Karens, long before the Burmans, whose sons attended Buddhist monasteries, perceived its value as a means to promotion in British ruled areas. The creation of a Karen alphabet, and subsequent translations into the Sgaw and Pwo dialects, opened wider fields of knowledge and served, unintentionally, to keep Burmans and Karens divided, since the latter no longer needed to learn Burmese to become literate. Most education was carried on in the vernacular, but for the few Karens who learned English wider horizons began to appear. Assistance with crop growing, sanitation and other health measures began to improve the standard of living of the Christian Karens, while the foundation of permanent villages encouraged clannishness, as did the similar British policy. Several missionary actions contributed to developing Karen ability to govern themselves. The rapid rate of conversion and the ensuing demand for teachers and pastors meant that Karens themselves had to be pressed into service in these roles. Lack of monetary support from the United States and the personal convictions of the post-war generation of missionaries

led to the rapid growth of self supporting churches and schools, and even the establishment of Home Mission Societies supported by the Karens themselves. A second, but very important, result of the Home Missions was the unity they brought to a hitherto divided people. Of very great importance also was the missionary desire for the British conquest of independent Burma. The Baptists formed, along with the merchants, a pressure group in favour of aggressive action, and their influence on the Christian Karens of the Delta area made that group desperately anxious for a British takeover, despite the betrayal they had already experienced.

The pattern of relationships between the British, missionaries and Karens, which was to last until the end of British rule, began to be discernible. The missionaries clearly saw the value of alliance with the British and impressed their converts with the virtues of British rule. At the same time, conflicts between their own and the government's interests occasionally became apparent, as over the subject of education. British attitudes to the missionaries were, on the whole, compounded of personal admiration and respect. On the other hand, they seem to have felt less interest in the Karens, except in times of crisis, as for example during the war with the Burmese. However, missionary irritation over this lack of appreciation on the part of the government had not yet reached the peak it was to achieve at the time of the Third Anglo-Burmese War.

The reaction of the Karens themselves to the British is hard to estimate, as during this period it was invariably filtered through the enthusiasm of the missionaries. Certainly they assisted the British in the Delta, but their motives may have been at least partly commercial,

and their betrayal would hardly have endeared the British to them. In Tenasserim there was no evidence of great enthusiasm, except among those who became Baptist converts. On the other hand, Karen enthusiasm for Christianity was undeniable. This may have been partly due to the way in which the missionaries used Karen pastors and teachers and incorporated indigenous traditions and systems of village government into the structure they set up. It must also have been due to the social and material advances which the missionaries offered, and the apparent association between them and the other "white foreigners" who were the new rulers. A further contributing factor was the Karen predilection for following religious leaders who also promised political and economic improvements.

Thus patterns were developing in Karen life as a consequence of British and missionary intervention in Burma. With the Second Anglo-Burmese War they were to be thrown into much sharper focus.

### CHAPTER 3

#### "CHRIST AND GOOD GOVERNMENT", 1852-1885

Missionary enthusiasm for a second war between Britain and Burma was high and Dalhousie's decision to send Commodore Lambert to Rangoon, an action which culminated in the second Anglo-Burmese War, was consequently greeted with the greatest joy. Even before war broke out the Karens had asked Mrs. Vinton "Is it wrong to pray for war? ... May we not pray that the English may come and take our country so that we may worship God in freedom and without fear?" To which she had answered, "Yes, you may!", and "daily thereafter they included the petition in their prayers, looking for the coming of English guns and for the protection which the English flag and ever brought with it". Thus "the coming of the English fleet was the recognised answer to a nation's prayer".<sup>1</sup>

With such encouragement, it is not surprising to find that the Christian Karens rendered assistance to the British, although the rest of the Karens and the Talains proved disappointingly unhelpful. Missionary accounts relate that, once again, the Karens were forced by the Burmans to work on fortifications, bridges and roads. These sources say, however, that when required to fight the Karens either fled, fired in the air, or advanced towards the British without defending themselves and thus died "pierced by the bullets of the men for whose coming they had so earnestly

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<sup>1</sup>Luther, pp. 85-87.

prayed".<sup>2</sup> Missionary tradition also claims that they guided the British in the attack on the fortified Shwe Dagon Pagoda.<sup>3</sup>

Kincaid was already in Rangoon, and other missionaries, including Vinton and Abbott, rushed to the Delta area to do what they could. They found themselves taking a semi-military role, organising the Karens into levies and attempting to obtain powder and guns for their protégés from the British. The strangeness of the situation occurred to some of them. "It is rather anomalous for a missionary to have the request for gunpowder coupled with that for medicine," but in view of the good to be achieved by a British conquest they apparently did not doubt the wisdom or propriety of involving themselves in the hostilities. In a dress rehearsal for the Third Anglo-Burmese War they complained that the British did not appreciate the Karens or use them to the full. "Had the Karens been properly armed by the English and allowed to fight under leaders of their own, doubtless they would have proved an even better match for the Burmans than they were."<sup>4</sup>

Various British accounts speak highly of the Karen contribution to the war effort. Lieutenant Colonel Sturt received assistance with road and bridge building from a group of about one hundred Karens, who worked with good will and promptness. They also provided coolies, scouts and carts.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Luther, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup>Marshall, Karens of Burma, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup>Carpenter, pp. 210-212, quoting the missionary Van Meter's Journal.

<sup>5</sup>William F.B. Laurie, Pegu, being a Narrative of Events During the Second Burmese War (London: Smith and Elder, 1854), p. 493.

The Karens were particularly helpful in the Bassein district where Captain Fytche, at that time Deputy Commissioner, with the help of a Karen levy routed a Burman force led by the former Governor of the area.<sup>6</sup> Needless to say such assistance to the British provoked intense Burman hostility, and as the Burmans retreated they took vengeance on the Karens of the areas through which they passed.<sup>7</sup> Naturally this deepened the hostility between the missionary-led Karens and the Burmans, providing the missionaries with more atrocity stories for the consumption of the home audience and for later generations of Karens, while also providing the Burmans with a justification for their suspicions of the missionaries and all Karens, whether Christian or not.

Disease and famine, the inevitable consequences of war, affected the Karens as they did the other inhabitants of the Delta. Many Karens fled from their homes and encamped near Rangoon. Vinton and his fellow missionaries regarded these byproducts of the war that they had prayed for with concern. With no regard for his personal safety, or that of his wife, Vinton established a hospital near their own quarters, where they nursed countless Karens afflicted with smallpox.<sup>8</sup> Though the epidemic passed, it was followed by famine.<sup>9</sup> Vinton supplied Karens, at first only Christians,

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<sup>6</sup>Laurie, Pegu, p. 252. Burma Gazetteer, Henzada District, by W.S. Morrison (Rangoon: Supt. Govt. Printing, 1915), p. 17. Burma Gazetteer, Bassein, p. 17. D.G.E. Hall, ed. The Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence, 1852-1856 (Oxford: University Press, 1932), p. 37.

<sup>7</sup>Carpenter, pp. 204-209. Luther, p. 90. Beecher, "Letter", (dated Dec. 28, 1852 from Bassein), Missionary Magazine, 33 (June, 1853) 165-166.

<sup>8</sup>Luther, p. 95.

<sup>9</sup>Luther, p. 105.

but then any who came, with grain which he begged from local merchants, promising to repay the debts later. His daughter stated that he acted instinctively and "it is doubtful if, at that time, he recognised the importance of this work of love". However, whether conscious of the probable effects or not, his acts "opened the hearts of the heathen to receive the message as nothing else could have done". There followed a period not unlike that which followed the first war, only involving much greater numbers of converts. "Thousands were baptised, churches were organised, chapels and school houses built."<sup>10</sup> Vinton acquired land in an area which was at that time outside Rangoon, at Kemmeline, and there began to construct a school, church and living quarters. His removal to Rangoon from Moulmein and subsequent purchase of land was, however, to culminate in estrangement from the Board in America.

It is important not to overexaggerate the Karen response to the war. The non-Christian Karens had remained indifferent to the coming of the British and some of them were even to revolt against their new rulers soon after. Buddhist Karens showed little interest in Christianity. Many others remained steadfastly animist, and some who expressed an interest in the new religion put off the time when they would make a complete break with the past, and never were baptised.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Luther, p. 109.

<sup>11</sup> H. I. Marshall, "A Century of Karen Progress", Baptist Miss. Rev., 35 (Jan. 1929), 4.

However, the results were sufficiently encouraging to enable the missionaries to write home enthusiastically. "With a stroke of his pen" Dalhousie had given the people "security of property, cheap justice, impartial justice and commercial progress".<sup>12</sup> One wrote of the "emotions of joy and gratitude" awakened by the sight of the British ships, "the very guns spoke to us of peace and security".<sup>13</sup> Though they owed gratitude to the British<sup>14</sup> they had no doubt as to the real source of the miracle, "thus God works out the deliverance of his people".<sup>15</sup> Their enthusiasm even led them to exaggerate. "As soon as the people, Burmans or Karens, learned the news of the battle and the probability that the entire Province of Pegu would come under British rule, they all, without exception manifested delight."<sup>16</sup> It was, however, to be some years before the British eliminated the guerilla warfare, both Burman and Karen, that arose from the resentment aroused by the British conquest.

If the missionaries were enthusiastic, some of the British were also pleased with the actions of the Christian Karens and their missionaries during the war. Kincaid "without compromising his position as a missionary"

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<sup>12</sup> F. Mason, Burmah, p. 602.

<sup>13</sup> Kincaid, Miss. Mag., April 1852, p. 104.

<sup>14</sup> Wylie, p. 237.

<sup>15</sup> Carpenter, p. 187.

<sup>16</sup> Carpenter, p. 195, quoting Beecher, letter of 1852.

had rendered "valuable service to the authorities" and was on friendly terms with most of the British officers.<sup>17</sup> Laurie, who accompanied Sturt, could say nothing good of the Burman and Moslem leaders in Bassein but described the Karen chief as an "upright, trustworthy man" and his followers as "by far the best men, being more industrious and trustworthy; the expression of their faces proclaim them at once to be a much more sincere and honest race than the others".<sup>18</sup> Admiring their intrepidity in plundering the Peguese to procure powder, he described them as an "energetic race"<sup>19</sup> and prophesied an interesting future for them. He expected that "this curious race" would be "much mixed up with the future civilisation and enlightenment" of the new territory.<sup>20</sup> He looked ahead to when "in a few years more we may expect to find the Red Karens wheeling with right good will into the ranks of civilisation. Before then numerous roads will have been made, drains will have been cut, jungle will have been cleared away, and we shall see new cantonments peopled and garrisoned, all through the energy of the ubiquitous Anglo-Saxon race."<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps in the last sentence is a clue to another reason for British enthusiasm for the Karens other than gratitude; they were an excuse for the conquest. Writing of the mission at Toungoo, Laurie

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<sup>17</sup> J.N. Granger, Letter from Rangoon, Sept. 7, 1853, Miss. Mag., 34 (Jan. 1854), 25-6.

<sup>18</sup> Laurie, pp. 219, 221.

<sup>19</sup> Laurie, p. 181.

<sup>20</sup> Laurie, p. 500.

<sup>21</sup> Laurie, p. 409. In a later book, Our Burmese Wars and Relations with Burma: Abstract of Military and Political Operations 1824-1826 and 1852-3, with Various Local, Statistical and Commercial Information (London: Allen, 1880), Laurie's enthusiasm for the Karens seems to have lessened, as did British enthusiasm so often after a crisis was over.

challenged the "Peace Party" to say if Mr. Mason "could have thus laboured if it had not been for the inevitable necessity of war? ... How could the birth of civilisation have taken place in the land without the charge of the British bayonet" and the "persuasive thunder of artillery?"<sup>22</sup> An anonymous writer felt that "as no war had a more righteous beginning" so it would come to a "beneficial conclusion" by freeing the Karens who had twice assisted the British and "once been abandoned to vengeance, from bondage to a power despotic and barbarous - a government without wisdom - an executive without principle or mercy - punishments which are revolting and a spirit altogether ... corrupt and grasping".<sup>23</sup> Dalhousie, hearing from Kincaid that there were seven or eight thousand Christians in Rangoon "frankly confessed that they made the strongest reason why the British government should guarantee to this large body of Christians protection against such atrocities as had heretofore been shown them".<sup>24</sup>

Thus the crisis of the Second Anglo-Burmese War resulted in considerable missionary and Christian Karen enthusiasm for the British, hampered slightly by regrets that the British had not encouraged them to take a larger part in the hostilities, and reciprocated warmth on the part of the British who were both grateful for help and glad to have, in the Christian Karens, a justification for the conquest and annexation of Pegu.

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<sup>22</sup> Laurie, Pegu, p. 389.

<sup>23</sup> Anonymous [drawings signed by C.G.], Rough Pencillings of a Rough Trip to Rangoon in 1846 (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1853), p. vi.

<sup>24</sup> Granger, pp. 25-6.

The warm feelings between the British, the Karens and their missionaries were to cool somewhat as memories of the second war receded into the past. By contrast, however, the hostility between the Karens and the Burmans was to remain, nourished in the Karens by repeated tellings of atrocity stories, and in the Burmans by resentment over Karen disloyalty. It is not surprising that in this the Burmans made little distinction between the Christian and the other Karens. They had been betrayed for a second time by a subject people, and the treachery could neither be forgiven nor forgotten. Much of the subsequent Burman-Karen hostility can be understood in these terms..

Before the first Burmese War the only Karens with whom the British had come into contact were those of the Delta area, and those contacts, made by British representatives travelling up river to the Burmese capital, were brief and casual. The first war brought the British into more intimate contact with these Karens, but this situation ended when the area was abandoned in 1826. Thenceforward the Karens who were most closely involved with the British were those of the Tenasserim area, a shy group, subsistence agriculturalists unlike their Delta relatives, who without missionary encouragement might have remained as isolated from the effects of British government as the tax system would permit. Contact at second hand with the Delta Karens was also maintained by the missionaries, whose propaganda produced a Christian-Karen population loyal to the British even before the second war. After the war was over, however, the new rulers came into contact with a third group of Karens who were known to them largely by hearsay as a multitude of fiercely independent tribes in the hill and mountain areas around Toungoo and in the Kareni.

Those in the Toungoo area were the first the British encountered when they occupied the area early in 1853. They found that the Burmese Court had "never had any authority over any of the tribes living more than a day's journey from the city and river" and that beyond Toungoo, to the north and east, stretched an area of more than two thousand miles in a "very savage state".<sup>25</sup> However "fierce, wild and savage looking" the Karens appeared to be, the first of them to enter Toungoo after the conquest proved to be extremely timid. They would go half a mile to avoid any Englishmen or sepoys, and feared to be taken off as slaves by soldiers and missionaries alike.<sup>26</sup> These wary people seem gradually to have lost their fear of the missionaries but British accounts repeatedly speak of their fear of strangers, so that in the official mind, the Karens around Toungoo often came to be classified as stupid and sullen. However, the tribes towards the Karen were considered so fierce that for a while no attempt was made to put up boundary pillars east of the Sittang, and this caution lasted until the missionaries reported that the Karens there were not as savage as expected.<sup>27</sup> The Toungoo area suffered from frequent changes of administrative officers through death or transfer, and it was apparently considered unhealthy for Europeans. Consequently the British administration was set up more slowly there than elsewhere. Finally, in 1884, a Durbar was held for all the chieftains of the area. Land and government problems were discussed, and a settlement survey initiated at the request of the Karens

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<sup>25</sup> Po, pp. 60-61.

<sup>26</sup> E. Mason, p. 89.

<sup>27</sup> Dorothy Woodman, The Making of Burma (London: Cresset, 1962), p. 161.

who feared they might lose their land to the Burmans and Shans.

The Kareni itself was a tempting prize with teak forests and other useful vegetation, mineral wealth including tin, and a position on possible trade routes to the Shan states and possibly the back door to China. Dr. Richardson had led expeditions there as early as the 1830's and as soon as possible after the second war Captain O'Riley set out to explore the area thoroughly. He recommended annexation and the building of good roads, believing, contrary to general opinion, that the area was "salubrious and restorative to the European constitution". He took good care on his travels to lull any fears that the local chiefs might have of him, by good behaviour and presents of beads and handkerchiefs. Dalhousie was less enthusiastic, wanting to keep the area a no-man's-land.<sup>28</sup>

This proved difficult as the chiefs of the region began to play off the Burmese Court against the British. Finally in 1875 Forsythe negotiated a treaty with Mindon in which both sides agreed to respect the independence of the three Kareni states.<sup>29</sup> The agreement lasted until 1886 when the area was formally placed under British protection. The missionaries, however, were active in the area long before.

The area on the fringes of the Kareni remained somewhat lawless. Occasional tours by officials dispensing good will, advice and Exshaw's Best Brandy,<sup>30</sup> or dealing with specific problems such as local inter-village raids,<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Woodman, pp. 161-2.

<sup>29</sup> Htin Aung, The Stricken Peacock: Anglo-Burmese Relations 1752-1948 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1965), p. 65.

<sup>30</sup> McMahon, p. 355.

<sup>31</sup> McMahon, p. 329.

took place when weather and time permitted, but the missionaries were the real force for peace in the border area.

In one way British policy made considerable changes in the area, through the construction of roads. By the end of this period a settlement report of the Karen Hills area described the trade carried on by Shan middlemen, in which they brought up paddy, dry fish and other delicacies, cloth, silk and matches, and bartered these items for produce such as sessamum and betel nuts. The Shans were unpopular with the missionaries who blamed them for introducing bad habits such as gambling, but nevertheless the trade went on.<sup>32</sup> It was sometimes necessary to take action against tribes such as the Tsawkoos, who were found to be levying toll illegally on travellers from Toungoo to the Karen states,<sup>33</sup> but this hindrance was finally eliminated. Strange items found their way into the hills and were used for even stranger purposes. Dr. Mason found the Hashwie Karens using Perry Davis' Pain Killer as an ingredient in their manufacture of gunpowder.<sup>34</sup>

In the Toungoo area, as in parts of Tenasserim, there were extensive teak forests, but to the horror of the forestry officials the taungya system of agriculture practised by the Karens threatened these forests with a destruction that outdistanced regeneration. A report on the forests of

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<sup>32</sup> British Burma Settlement Department, Report on the Settlement of the Karen Hills Subdivision, by T.M. Jenkins (Rangoon: Supt. Govt. Printing, 1885), p. 6. Jenkins felt that the missionaries did not fully appreciate the civilising effects of the trade.

<sup>33</sup> McMahon, p. 276.

<sup>34</sup> McMahon, p. 354.

Pegu, made in 1875, noted that a community of "less than one hundred families cuts down yearly for its support a quantity of timber quite sufficient in tonnage to build a first class man of war, and if the whole Karen population in Burma be taken into account the timber consumed by them (of course taken quantitatively and not qualitatively) would represent in tonnage the whole English fleet". As further illustration the author reported that in the Martaban region the Christian Karens had been responsible for the disappearance of thirty-six square miles of teak forests between 1861 and 1868. The author believed that the presence of the British government further exacerbated the problem. Constant warfare in pre-British times had "necessarily thinned the population and thus counterpoised the evil" but peaceful times brought an increase in the number of inhabitants and therefore greater destruction.

The same report pointed out that such destruction was a waste, even in terms of the amount of fertility provided by the ashes, since most of it was washed away by heavy monsoon rains into the streams and rivers to the sea. Such a system entailed, moreover, extremely hard work each year, work which had to be repeated twelve months later on another site.<sup>35</sup>

In 1885 a settlement report explained that there was no new land to bring under cultivation as all available land had been utilised in the last three or four generations. The scarcity of land was due to

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<sup>35</sup> Sulpice Kurz, Preliminary Report on the Forests and other vegetation of Pegu (Calcutta: Lewis, 1875), pp. 74-5.

constant division and subdivision as the population increased. Where pressure was greatest the land was recultivated every seven years when maximum growth of grass had been obtained. The Karens in the area preferred to wait ten to twelve years, when bamboo and shrubs had grown and the land was in the best condition for working. Waiting longer, for fifteen to twenty years, resulted in the growth of trees, making cultivation more difficult.<sup>36</sup> The burning process used to destroy vegetation and produce ash was, of course, very dangerous and not always easy to control, so that larger areas than desired were sometimes inadvertently cleared. The new Government felt that taungya cultivation must be brought under strict control, and quickly.

The new British government faced other problems in dealing with the hill Karens of Pegu. Their nomadic habits made the work of the police and the tax departments more difficult, and periodically they suffered from plagues of hill rats and from famines. The former seemed to strike every forty or fifty years. Between 1870 and 1874 the government expended ten thousand pounds on the Karens as a result of rat plagues<sup>37</sup> and in 1875 and 1876 the authorities again had to send paddy to the hills for distribution because of widespread famine.<sup>38</sup>

To protect both the teak forests and the Karens, therefore, solutions had to be found.

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<sup>36</sup> Settlement Report, Karen Hills, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> C.J.F.S. Forbes, British Burma and Its People (London: Murray, 1878), p. 283.

<sup>38</sup> British Burma Settlement Report, Karen Hills, p. 6.

Terracing would help solve some of the water runoff problems, but the Karens had neither the tools nor the experience for the job, and the technique could only be practised on gentle slopes, whereas most of the hill rice was grown on steep ridges. Other suggestions to mitigate the evil included reforestation, although not with teak or evergreens as neither grew well on taungya land. Karens themselves might be employed in this work under the direction of the forest officer. It was also recommended that the missionaries should teach their flocks "rational agriculture" as this would be of far greater use in "the advancement of civilisation amongst the people than instruction in mathematics, geography and the like".<sup>39</sup>

One way of protecting forest areas was to limit the land which might be cultivated. At the same time it was obvious that smaller areas could not support the growing population even with improved techniques of cultivation. This left one other possibility, the movement of hill Karens to the plains. This was in fact desirable for other reasons than the protection of the forests. The British were beginning to encourage the clearing and draining of the rich and fertile Delta area for the growing of rice, and needed cultivators. One official remarked of the famine-enforced movements to the plains "if this is the remedy, the disease is not to be regretted".<sup>40</sup> By 1860 British Public Works Department engineers and

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<sup>39</sup> Kurz, pp. 74-5.

<sup>40</sup> British Burma Settlement Report, Karen Hills, p. 3, quoting Plant, Commissioner of Tenasserim District.

Indian labour had built great embankments to facilitate drainage and cultivation, and, with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the demand for rice increased rapidly.

The Hill Karens were not particularly enthusiastic about making the move. The flat Delta was to them a foreign land, its inhabitants including Burmans moving in from the dry zone to the north, Chinese, Indians, Shans, and even other Karens, were strange and alien. Until the hill people became acclimatised they almost invariably suffered from unfamiliar diseases. They had to leave the forms of agriculture they knew well, such as the dry cultivation of rice, and turn to the unfamiliar wet rice cultivation of the plains. They had to learn to use new implements and buy and work with buffalos.<sup>41</sup> They also feared the Delta area itself, which as a result of the wars with the Siamese and later the British, had a deservedly dangerous reputation.

However, the disturbances following the second war were over by the 1860's and, for a time at least, the area seemed secure and protected. In order to encourage settlement there, the British government offered land free to prospective cultivators, but still the Karens were unenthusiastic about moving. With missionary help a solution was evolved, however, by the creation of special Karen reserves set apart for their exclusive use with quasi-grants to representative Karens such as headmen or pastors.<sup>42</sup> As

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<sup>41</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 320.

<sup>42</sup> Burma Gazetteer, Pegu, p. 110.

early as 1857 Deputy Commissioner D'Oyley wrote to the Masons, "if your mountain friends will only clear the land and cultivate it, I will give them as much as their hearts desire". He also made loans to the Karens for the purchase of buffalos, with unlimited repayment time. This seems to have been a personal policy, although he had Phayre's backing; his successor, Captain Rock, was not so accommodating.<sup>43</sup> However, by the 1880's the policy was well established, and in 1883 "numerous advances of money were made for the purchase of cattle and implements" and, for many years after, the practice of reserving land for the Karens was continued,<sup>44</sup> not without some problems such as Burman resentment and the alienation of reserved land to non-Karens.<sup>45</sup>

The consequences of moving to the plains were many. The British government discouraged the splitting up of villages after internal conflicts, and the old system of spawning new villages decreased.<sup>46</sup> New and more permanent structures could therefore be built in the villages, and the flimsy-looking bamboo structures of the mountains were gradually discarded. New techniques of agriculture were learned and the keeping of animals such as buffalo and cattle increased, as did the use of fertilisers,

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<sup>43</sup>E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 320.

<sup>44</sup>Burma Gazetteer, Toungoo District (Rangoon: Govt. Printing, 1914), p. 19.

<sup>45</sup>Burma Gazetteer, Pegu, p. 110.

<sup>46</sup>H.I. Marshall, Karens of Burma, p. 30.

the rotation of crops, and interpaddy cropping. The Karens increasingly found themselves involved in a money economy. Lowland farming not only necessitated the purchase of oxen and buffalo, but of farm implements, a two-wheeled cart to haul paddy to town, and the payment of higher taxes.<sup>47</sup> The new arrivals also found Delta life demanded unfamiliar skills other than the purely agricultural, including a knowledge of the rice market, railway rates and the price of paddy as printed in the vernacular newspapers. These brought about the need for someone in the community, or even the farmer himself, to know how to read.

As the area under British rule increased, and to an even greater extent after the opening of the Suez Canal, the government felt a need for clerks and non-professional administrative personnel. Unfortunately, however, none of the school systems existing in Burma at that time were totally suitable for the government's needs. Government schools had not proved a great success in Tenasserim. By 1852 there were only 316 students in the three existing government schools, and only two-thirds of these were natives of Burma. By 1862 a fourth government school, which had been set up after the second war, had only 29 pupils and was closed soon after, while the oldest at Moulmein was recommended for abolition.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 37.

<sup>48</sup> J.S. Furnivall, Colonial Policy and Practice (1948, rpt. New York: University Press, 1956), p. 55.

Two other possibilities existed, the monastic schools and those of the missionaries. Monastic schools in Tenasserim had begun to lose much of their former prestige, and when Pegu was cut off from Upper Burma after the second war the same process developed there. As sources of Anglo-vernacular education they left much to be desired. They were not trusted to teach English with the correct accent and their school masters had neither the desire nor the qualifications to teach secular subjects.<sup>49</sup> The missionary schools, on the other hand, although the chief purveyors of Anglo-vernacular education, were not popular with Buddhist Burmans, because of their invariable practice of teaching religion as an integral part of the school curriculum. Their students were therefore predominantly Christian or animist Karens, and members of the latter group were usually soon converted.

In 1866 Phayre, recognising the deficiencies of Anglo-vernacular education, suggested a plan for "useful education" which he hoped would restore lustre and importance to the monastic schools. Grants would be available to them on condition that their standards of education were found acceptable by government inspectors. Such a plan required considerable confidence in the ability of the monastic schools to transform themselves. Unfortunately Phayre retired and his successor was not impressed by the idea,

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<sup>49</sup> Furnivall, Colonial Policy, p. 125.

so the plan languished. Thus the unsatisfactory combination of government missionary and monastic schools continued, with the subject matter and style of each varying. Missionary and monastic schools purveyed secular education with their own religious biases, while government schools offered an education principally aimed at producing competent clerks for government service. Most Karen students attended the Baptist schools. They therefore gained a head start in western education, but this tended to be aimed at agriculture, teaching or the ministry, rather than government service. Those Burmans who did attend western-style schools went to those run by the government. This, in part, helps to explain why the Karens made surprisingly little headway in government service or the professions, in proportion to the numbers of them receiving education.

Although one of the results of moving to the plains was a greater need for education, this did not lead to the integration of Karens and Burmans in the schools. In other ways, however, Burmanisation of the Karens was accelerated by this migration. There was greater contact between the two groups, and although the process was more dramatic after the third war, already some Karens began to alter their dress, customs and culture, to attend the pagodas and observe Buddhist feasts. Some of those who moved into towns began to lose all evidence of their racial identity, and some of these even married Burmans.<sup>50</sup>

Settlement reports and Gazetteers of the Delta area for this period indicate that many of the Karens who moved from the hills to the

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<sup>50</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karen People, p. 307.

plains, particularly the Christians, did remarkably well considering the hazards they faced. In the Bassein area in 1880 they were described as diligent cultivators who ploughed their fields carefully and kept them weed free. Their villages showed "great prosperity" with a chapel and sometimes a school, and they were prompt in paying their taxes, usually selling off sufficient paddy for the purpose.<sup>51</sup> Some successfully combined moneylending, cattlebreeding and agriculture, and their villages were noteworthy for the solid wooden houses which they built. Not surprisingly though, Karens in the same area who had only just arrived were reported to be heavily indebted.<sup>52</sup> In Henzada the Karens were the richest cultivators with holdings larger than those of the Burmans, but costing less to cultivate.<sup>53</sup> Apparently they hired less labour and were more thrifty than the Burmans, though "no less generous".<sup>54</sup> Most of the plaintain garden tracts were held by Pwo Karens, the Burmans finding the cultivation of these fruits too tedious.<sup>55</sup> In general they impressed the

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<sup>51</sup> British Burma Settlement Department, Report on the Settlement Operations in the Bassein District, by James E. Bridges (Rangoon: Govt. Printing, 1880), p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> British Burma Settlement Department, Report on the Settlement Operations in the Districts of Bassein and Thongwah (Rangoon: Govt. Printing, 1889), p. 9.

<sup>53</sup> British Burma Settlement Department, Report on the Settlement Operations in the Henzada District, by W.T. Hall (Rangoon: Govt. Printing, 1886), pp. 30-31.

<sup>54</sup> British Burma Settlement Department, Report on the Settlement Operations in the Syrian Township, Hanthawaddy Division, by B.A.N. Parrott (Rangoon: Govt. Printing), p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> British Burma Settlement Department, Report on the Settlement Operations in Bassein and Henzada (Rangoon, Govt. Printing, 1885), p. 26.

officials as being more hardworking than the Burmans. They also spent their profits somewhat differently. Burmans liked to gamble, buy fine clothes or build kyoungs with their profits,<sup>56</sup> while the Karens preferred to save more, and tended to buy westernised articles, "shoes and stockings, pocket handkerchiefs and English umbrellas" while Burmans might be happy with items such as saddles in traditional designs. "As soon as a Karen has a pony he sees the superiority of the European saddle and seeks to obtain one."<sup>57</sup>

Even those Karens who remained in the hills were trying new methods of cultivation including betel nuts and orange groves. Those who raised paddy were encouraged to grow pumpkins, gourds, cucumbers and sessamum intermingled with it.<sup>58</sup> In Mergui taungya and garden cultivation was still being practised, although by the 1880's cotton growing and weaving, the hope of the missionaries and officials of the earlier period, were "fast dying out" except among Karens living at a great distance from the towns.<sup>59</sup>

While hill cultivation improved, the movement to the plains was the more dramatic success. It should, however, be noted that those who did

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<sup>56</sup>Burma Gazetteer, Bassein, p. 51.

<sup>57</sup>F. Mason, Burmah, p. 622.

<sup>58</sup>British Burma Settlement Dept., Karen Hills, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup>Burma Gazetteer, Mergui, p. 84.

well were usually Christian Karens, and that not all Karens were as fortunate. Around Henzada the Pwos, who were less likely to be Christians than the local Sgaws, were described as living poorly, working hard until they made a little money, and then gambling it away. They also tended to become Burmanised more quickly.<sup>60</sup> They signed bonds "in the most reckless manner", seldom recorded their payments, and often left fully paid up bonds in the hands of the moneylenders. So bad was the situation that in 1883 the collector was enabled to execute decrees for the sale of land belonging to any Karens in certain townships, in order to protect them from unscrupulous moneylenders.<sup>61</sup> In some areas Karens paid higher rates to Burman moneylenders than did Burman farmers.<sup>62</sup> By the 1880's none of the cultivators was doing as well although their problems were minor compared to those experienced by their successors after the third war. Prices were going up, but the peasants usually sold the paddy straight from the threshing floor to repay debts, pay their taxes and save the trouble of storing the grain. They thus could not take advantage of the late season increases in prices.

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<sup>60</sup> British Burma Settlement Dept., Bassein and Henzada, p. 26. The report does not state that the Pwos described were not Christian, but it seems likely that they were not.

<sup>61</sup> Burma Gazetteer, Bassein, p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> Smeaton, p. 152. In 1882 interest paid by the Karens was 60%, by Burmans 45%, and by relatives of the moneylender 30%.

An additional problem, exacerbated by British rule, was that of opium. A missionary visitor to a large hill Karen village in the mid 1870's reported that drink and opium were ruining the inhabitants. "The English have allowed opium to be introduced and receive large revenues from it. The Karens get such a craving for it that in order to satisfy it they will plunder and rob one another."<sup>63</sup>

The British decision to protect the teak forests by encouraging as many Karens as possible to move to the plains, if considered by itself, tended to decrease the consciousness of being a Karen, by encouraging the intermingling of the various peoples who moved to the Delta area. Not only were Burman customs and religion constantly surrounding them, but they were aware of their inferior position in relation to the dominant culture and anxious to merge with it. This, however, was not the case with the Christian Karens, who not only retained their identity and were taught to be proud of it, but were more successful in material matters.

In Tenasserim the Karens, along with the other inhabitants, had already experienced the bewilderment of passing from one legal system to another, despite Mr. Maingy's short lived attempt to compromise between the old and new legal system. In the Delta and the Toungoo area the inhabitants now experienced the same confusing changes. Technically the Karens were, by the new laws, equal to all the inhabitants of British Burma, although it is doubtful if the concept of equal justice meant very much to a people accustomed to a system in which each group recognised only the authority of their headman in such matters.

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<sup>63</sup>Soltan, "Mr. Soltan's visit to the Karens", Baptist Miss. Mag. 56 (March 1876) 84.

At first Phayre, conscious of the debt the British owed the Christian Karens, was particularly anxious that the Karens should be protected and "put under people of their own race".<sup>64</sup> The missionaries were consulted as to those Karens best qualified, and consequently felt themselves responsible for the "temporal as well as the spiritual welfare of thousands";<sup>65</sup> This did not always please local Burman Chiefs who protested vigorously against the policy,<sup>66</sup> but the British persisted and the missionaries were excited at the prospects for their charges. "These are auspicious events to the Karens: the way for them to rise in intelligence, civilisation, and influence has been thrown wide open".<sup>67</sup> The rejoicing was premature, however, as the system did not work out as hoped. Some of the appointees were unwilling to accept the authority offered them, and in many cases the Karens refused to obey, preferring the old system of following leaders of their own race, only by consent. The chiefs had in earlier times possessed an informal authority, with no well-defined jurisdiction, over a unit usually no larger than a village. Unwritten regulations passed on by word of mouth, were interpreted by the elders and disputes were settled by discussion and compromise.<sup>68</sup> The

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<sup>64</sup> Carpenter, p. 216, quoting a letter from Phayre to Beecher.

<sup>65</sup> Carpenter, p. 220.

<sup>66</sup> Van Meter, "Letter", Missionary Mag. (Feb. 1853) p. 52.

<sup>67</sup> Beecher, "Letter", Miss. Mag. (Nov. 1853), p. 462.

<sup>68</sup> Tadaw, p. 96.

new formality was unnatural and unsuitable for those who were accustomed to the preconquest system, and the larger units of administration introduced by the British could not work well because of the intermingling of different Karen tribes in the same area.<sup>69</sup>

Soon, therefore, the British began to appoint Burmans as magistrates and officials over Burmans and Karens alike, although the occasional Karen rose to such a position.<sup>70</sup> Missionaries frequently complained that Burmans in official positions vented their racial pride on the Karens,<sup>71</sup> and some British officials agreed.<sup>72</sup>

In the Toungoo area it was longer before a regular system of law courts could be set up, and in the interim Nah-Khans, or Karen magistrates, were appointed to mediate between individuals and when necessary, between tribes.<sup>73</sup> Where these magistrates were Christian, they proved helpful to the missionaries by bringing tribesmen into contact with the Baptists,

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<sup>69</sup>H.I. Marshall, Karen People of Burma, p. 307.

<sup>70</sup>H.I. Marshall, The Karens of Burma, p. 31.

<sup>71</sup>For examples see E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 315 and H.I. Marshall, Karen People of Burma, p. 307.

<sup>72</sup>British India, Report on the Administration of Pegu, 1856-7, p. 8, warns against "too much reliance placed on exaggerated reports of Burman officials who are always inimical to Karens".

<sup>73</sup>Tadaw, p. 96.

although one of them was found to be somewhat of a disappointment when it was learned that, despite his Christianity, he possessed two wives.<sup>74</sup> By 1876 English laws, customs and courts were introduced and the Karens were induced to bring disputes before the officers "instead of having them settled in doubtful manner amongst themselves by their own chief and elders". By 1884 complaints, particularly over land claims, had multiplied, the courts were overworked, and the missionaries, chiefs and elders had to be called to a Durbar to discuss the problems.<sup>75</sup> If there had been no missionaries the net effect of the introduction of British law might well have been the destruction of the Karen system, without its replacement by a satisfactory substitute. Quite possibly, without missionary encouragement, the Karens would not have learned how to use the new legal system. Evidence for the later period indicates that non-Christian Karens were not very successful in this regard. The problem was not so much that English laws were too strict, indeed some Karens complained that these were too lenient in such matters as marriage and divorce and, as a consequence, encouraged profligacy;<sup>76</sup> it was rather that they were alien. Furthermore the law now appeared to consist

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<sup>74</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 171.

<sup>75</sup> British Burma Settlement Dept., Karen Hills, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> McMahon, p. 335, quoting Mason.

of the manipulation of a series of complex rules rather than personal arbitration by a respected authority. The heathen Karens therefore floundered, while the Christians turned to their missionaries to perform the necessary, if incomprehensible, wizardry.

Several attempts were made to organise Karen levies for the purpose of maintaining law and order. The Karen groups formed to hunt out dissident Burman leaders during the second war were the inspiration, and Phayre suggested in 1853 the formation of a mixed force of Talaings, Burmans and Karens. In 1856 a levy of about 200 men was recruited for service in a disturbed part of Tenasserim.<sup>77</sup> The idea was taken up in Toungoo in 1857, where a Karen police corps was planned, to consist of six companies of eighty privates, to patrol the frontier with the Karens. Problems were foreseen. "They are a wild and timid though faithful race, and likely to be as little amenable to discipline as the deer upon their own native hills." However, it was felt that this would give the Karens an opportunity to prove they were as useful as they were loyal. The report of the following year was disappointing. "The objections of these people to leave their homes in the hills and be disciplined and drilled were found to be insuperable," but optimism survived. It was thought that perhaps the tribes could form local militias under their own chiefs.<sup>78</sup> A "mountain police of reliable Christian men" was not much more successful.

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<sup>77</sup> British India, Report on the Administration of Tenasserim and Martaban, 1856-7, p. 8.

<sup>78</sup> British India, Report on the Administration of Tenasserim and Martaban, 1858-9, p. 571.

Christian Karens would not work on Sunday or cooperate with, much less obey, Burmans.<sup>79</sup> The problem of the rapid turnover of officials in the Toungoo area must have made the organisation of levies all the more difficult. Unable to speak Karen the officials were forced to rely on the overprotective missionaries or the hostile Burmans to communicate their orders.

The general lack of success resulted in loss of interest in the idea which was only to be revived again during the third war, and then by the missionaries rather than the British. Far from seizing upon the idea of "divide and rule" which such levies would have promoted, the officials were easily put off by the initial difficulties of the scheme, and their reluctance to try the experiment again in the 1880's can partly be explained by the lack of success thirty years before.

One of the charges levelled against the British officers and officials by the missionaries in this period, although not to such a great extent as after the third war, was that the new rulers preferred the Burman Buddhists and disliked the Karens. There was, however, a fund of goodwill resulting from the Christian Karen actions in the second war. Colonel Fytche gave a signed testimonial to one Karen leader describing him as "a most faithful servant of the government in any emergency" with "great influence among the people of his own race".<sup>80</sup> Phayre, whose rapport with the Burman Buddhists was very close, nevertheless retained an

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<sup>79</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 33.

<sup>80</sup> Carpenter, p. 231, quoting a testimonial given in Bassein on Dec. 4, 1860.

admiration for the Karens which they and their missionaries reciprocated.<sup>81</sup>

On a visit to the Toungoo area he endeared himself to them by shaking hands, picking up babies, appointing Karen magistrates in the place of Burmans and even visiting a Paku Church Association annual meeting.<sup>82</sup>

He retained his concern for the area, remembering to send cotton seeds for an experimental crop.<sup>83</sup> His retirement in ill health was much

regretted, and British officialdom, except in a few situations, seemed to lose interest in the Karens with his departure.

The problems faced by the Toungoo officials in obtaining a fair picture of their Karen subjects have already been noted. Some, however, were sympathetic. O'Riley, while assistant commissioner of Toungoo, proclaimed that no Burmans should be permitted in Karen hill settlements without permission of the headman,<sup>84</sup> and attempted to protect them from becoming indebted by licensing Burman tradesmen, and keeping them under strict controls. He also earned the approbation of the missionaries by resting on the Sabbath. Captain O'Doyley, a later commissioner, also protected the Karens in court over land issues, and by appointing Nah-Khans to reduce tribal warfare.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Wylie, p. 12. F. Mason, Burmah, p. 616.

<sup>82</sup>E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 279.

<sup>83</sup>E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 310.

<sup>84</sup>E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 88.

<sup>85</sup>F. Mason, Burmah, p. 616.

An interesting character of the period was Lieutenant Colonel McMahon who, while in charge of the district of Toungoo, was asked to supply information for the local Gazetteer. He assembled more material than he could use, and therefore decided to write a book based on his research and his personal experiences. The Karens of the Golden Chersonese was the result, and it was published in 1876. His account is infused with an interest in and sympathy for the Karens, partly because of the sources he used, including the papers of O'Riley and several missionary accounts, including much material from Dr. Mason. However, his book was written more in the tone of an amateur anthropologist than a propagandist. He was aware of missionary faults and Karen shortcomings, described some of their legends and customs and missionary theories concerning their origins. The book may have led to a more informed and sympathetic attitude on the part of other officials, but it did not compare, as a work of propaganda in their favour, to that of Smeaton after the third Burmese war.

McMahon himself offered some reasons why the Karens were not universally popular with British officials. He denied the missionary charge that the "aristocratic" British could have no sympathy with a race as lowly as the Karens, but cited missionary actions themselves as part of the problem. Some of the American Baptists, he thought, mistakenly encouraged the Karens to believe that they could obtain special justice through missionary pleading, and this was annoying to officials. In contrast to the attractive and lively Burmans, the Karens seemed "encased ... in a hopeless imperturbability and incorrigible apathy" and he felt

that the latter often blamed the Burmans unjustifiably when things went wrong.<sup>86</sup>

An army visitor to the Toungoo area at the time of the rat plague in 1874 was disgusted with what he saw. The Karens, he claimed, were offered work but preferred relief in the form of food, a fat Karen could be seen begging in the marketplace, and even the Christian Karens were no more industrious or moral than the rest. The missionaries, he claimed, used the opportunity for making converts, and he described their "active competition in the way of contributions of rice and doctrine to the supplicants, who accordingly make a good thing of it, and are rendered quite independent of work."<sup>87</sup>

It is almost impossible to assess the effects of British rule without considering the consequences of missionary operations at the same time. However if the situation of the heathen Karens is considered in isolation, some idea of what might have happened if the Baptists had not arrived can be gained. The opening up of trade and communications, the building of roads in the Toungoo area, and the moving of Karens to the plains, all tended to encourage the process of Burmanisation. In economic terms the effects were not wholly beneficial. The population of the hill areas increased as a result of the more peaceful conditions, and the introduction of new agricultural techniques only slightly alleviated the problems of overcrowding, while the heathen Karens who moved to the plains seem to have fared less well than all other racial groups. This

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<sup>86</sup> McMahon, pp. 38-40.

<sup>87</sup> Charles Alexander Gordon, Our Trip to Burmah, with Notes on That Country (London: Baillière, Tindall, and Cox, n.d. after 1874), p. 129. Figures for crime in Pegu in 1879 indicate that Christians were in fact slightly more often in jail than were Buddhists: .74% of the Hindu population, .28% of the Moslems, .20% of the Christians, .12% of the Buddhists, Furnivall, Colonial Policy, p. 58.

presumably would have accelerated integration, as there would have been little to be proud of in being a Karen, as the census reports show, if it had not been for the success of the Christians. The introduction of an alien legal system was confusing and upsetting for all groups, but the heathen Karens, particularly backward and traditionally hostile to centralised authority, were at a serious disadvantage. In this period it is impossible to cite examples of sympathy for the Karens on the part of British officers without encountering cases of distaste and dislike, so no general attitude can be discerned on the part of the conquerors. Overall, however, the net effects of British rule in this period, considered separately from those of the missionaries, tended towards an increase in both economic problems and Burmanisation. The consequences of missionary policies must, however, also be examined.

The period after the second war, despite its propitious beginnings with the triumphal movement of missionaries into Rangoon and Bassein, was not a time of unallayed success for the mission. Funds and interest at home were short, particularly during the period of the Civil War, while the panic of 1871 further reduced the resources of the American Baptist Missionary Union.<sup>88</sup> The report of a deputation from America caused a number of influential missionaries to break away from the Union, and the insanity of a missionary's wife brought confusion and division to an important new station. Missionaries from other churches began to

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<sup>88</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 220.

compete with the Baptists for converts, and many Karens who had been baptised began to backslide. Overall, however, this was still a period of growth.

As already noted, Vinton moved to Rangoon and Abbott to Bassein as soon as the British had taken these areas, and there found ready-made congregations awaiting them. In 1853 Harris moved to Shwegyin and Mason to Toungoo, although ill-health forced both these men and their successors to leave the work to native pastors for long periods of time. Missionaries moved to Henzada in 1854, and by 1872 Thayetmyo, Prome and Thongzai had been added to the list of A.B.M. missions. Other signs of expansion included the founding of Judson College in 1875 at Rangoon, at the head of a chain of twelve high schools and innumerable middle and primary village schools.<sup>89</sup>

Self support was emphasised in the Delta area missions. At Bassein the missionaries took over a Buddhist school building, not perhaps a tactful move, but the Karens supplied food and supported their own pastors,<sup>90</sup> both in the Sgaw mission and the Pwo department, which was set up in 1854. In 1860 the Bassein Normal Industrial Institute, later known as the Sgaw Karen High School, was founded, its buildings being paid for by Christian Karens. Its policy was to provide an education for any boy or girl "if not absolutely free, yet practically so, in so far as board and tuition were concerned", and its trustees were elected from among the

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<sup>89</sup> H.L. Marshall, Karen People of Burma, p. 300. Baldwin, p. 109.

<sup>90</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 141, quoting Van Meter.

Karens themselves.<sup>91</sup>

Although the mission at Shwegyin did not start with the advantage of a large ready-made congregation, as did Bassein, it also developed rapidly. By 1860 there were fourteen self supporting churches in the area,<sup>92</sup> and the Karens rapidly acquired an ability to run their own affairs, since throughout this period the presence of an American missionary was sporadic, and for long periods of time they were left "utterly to themselves". They developed "an independence of character and steadfastness of purpose which perhaps could have been acquired in no other way". In 1864 when their missionary was in America and seemed unlikely to return, they sent a contribution to the Missionary Union to help pay his passage, a significant, though small, reversal of the usual flow of money. In 1866 it was decided to set up a station school financed totally by the Karens, who rejected even the usual government grant-in-aid; while in 1870 their missionary wrote to the Executive Committee of the Society stating that they needed no financial assistance either to pay native preachers or for the schools of the mission. In fact, throughout its history the Shwegyin mission never accepted financial aid to pay its preachers or teachers.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Burma Gazetteer, Bassein, p. 116. The school did well. In 1869 it compared favourably with all other schools in the district, and by 1903 investments had brought it over a lakh of rupees, none of the money having been contributed by the Government or Missionary Society.

<sup>92</sup>F. Mason, Burma, p. 623.

<sup>93</sup>Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 182.

Harris, the missionary at this station, deliberately followed the policy of keeping himself in the background, never inaugurating any policies which could not be carried out in his absence, and encouraging Karen leadership and decision making.<sup>94</sup>

By 1860 there were also twenty-nine self supporting churches in Henzada, fifteen in Amherst province, and twenty-three in Tavoy and Mergut.<sup>95</sup> Others of course were in existence but still required some form of subsidy.

These were significant gains, but it is easy to lose a sense of perspective. By 1867 in Henzada there was a station school, and fifty-three churches had been organised. There were sixty preachers, four ordained pastors and a membership of two thousand. In the field covered by the mission there were however 549 villages, with a total estimated Karen population of 52,000, so that 50,000 Karens in the area were as yet untouched.<sup>96</sup>

Nor did every station flourish. In Moulmein progress was slow, partly because the station was bled of missionaries and native leaders when Pegu was opened up, and partly because of the persistence of Judson's "Moulmein System", or reliance upon money from America. One Moulmein missionary put the argument in favour of subsidy very forcibly, maintaining that the missionary "should be sure to have a little foreign money in the work in order to better control the situation, lest the Karens travel too

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<sup>94</sup> E.N. Harris, "Seventy five years of the Shwegyin Karen Mission", Bap. Miss. Rev. 35 (Jan. 1929), 9-10.

<sup>95</sup> F. Mason, Burmah, p. 623.

<sup>96</sup> J.C. Morgan Phelps, "Development of the Karen Work on the Henzada Field", Bap. Miss. Rev. 35 (Jan. 1929), 22.

fast for the missionary". Even a partisan of self support admitted that he felt "like a charioteer who had no need to urge on his steeds, his only difficulty being to hold them in and keep them on the road".<sup>97</sup> An example of both Karen determination and Karen power within the mission occurred in Bassein. The missionaries felt that an English education was unnecessary. They capitulated, however, when the Karens decided to open their own school and hire their own teachers.<sup>98</sup>

Despite the reservations of some missionaries, however, self support came to be the goal of the majority among them. The consequences in terms of the development of self confidence, organisational ability and experience in the Christian Karens were considerable.

Even as this period began, however, and the missionaries moved with rejoicing into the area they had coveted so long, problems arose which were to contribute to a serious schism in their ranks. To the missionaries on the spot in Burma it seemed imperative to move with all possible speed into the war ravaged territory, but if they wrote to request permission from America, replies to their mail would take six months to arrive.<sup>99</sup> Consequently Vinton hastened to Rangoon as soon as possible after the English landing, without awaiting permission from America, and

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<sup>97</sup> Klein, p. 31. E.W. Marshall, "Karen Progress Through Three Quarters of a Century", Bap. Miss. Rev. 34 (Sept. 1928), 406.

<sup>98</sup> E.W. Marshall, "Beginnings", p. 252.

<sup>99</sup> Luther, p. 91.

soon afterwards purchased land at Kemmendine, at that time outside the city, on his own initiative, establishing a mission and school there. That Vinton should take such important steps, unauthorised by the Missionary Union, apparently upset the Board and "was the objective point in the vote of censure passed by the brethren at home".<sup>100</sup>

Further problems arose, however, in the shape of a two-man delegation from America. Their purpose was to study the work of the mission in Burma and recommend the best means of expanding the work there, after the British conquest had opened a wider field. Some of their suggestions were acceptable, including those concerning the opening of new stations, the expansion of oral preaching, the closer oversight of native preachers and teachers, and the development of the theological seminary at Moulmein. The latter was to take the place of the numerous small station seminaries, and thus in a small way contributed to the intermingling of the different Karen tribes.

Two recommendations, however, produced such dissension that thirteen missionaries resigned from the Missionary Union.<sup>101</sup> The first was that, in future, missionary work to the Pwos should be carried on in Sgaw, because someone had told the delegation that Pwos understood Sgaw just as well as they did their own dialect.<sup>102</sup> The other was that,

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<sup>100</sup> Luther, p. 117.

<sup>101</sup> Strictly speaking, six missionaries, their wives (not counted as missionaries) and one woman missionary.

<sup>102</sup> Bushell, pp. 10-11.

henceforth, secular education and the study of the English language should be abandoned. This would have entailed the end of the Anglo-vernacular boarding schools of which the missionaries were immensely proud and which they felt were ideal instruments of conversion.<sup>103</sup> Behind these specific problems, however, lay the principle of missionary independence, and the right of those with experience on the spot to make policy decisions for the mission. The division was a very bitter one in the 1850's, although gradually all those missionaries still alive returned to the fold by the early 1870's.<sup>104</sup>

Apart from the creation of a great deal of ill will and personal anguish for the missionaries, the long term effects of the split were extremely important for the Karens. With the help of friends at home, in Burma and in England and, above all, with the contributions of the Karens themselves, the missionaries found that it was possible to survive, and even expand, without a great deal of financial support from the Society in the United States. This developed their sense of self reliance and further encouraged them towards the goal of self support, which has already been noted as a formative influence on Christian Karen development. Furthermore, the gradual acceptance by the Missionary Union of Anglo-vernacular schools

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<sup>103</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 166.

<sup>104</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting", pp. 167-8. Those who left were Vinton, his sister Miranda, Brayton and Rose, all in Rangoon; Beecher and Brown of Bassein; Harris of Shwegyin; and the wives of the male missionaries. Abbott had already left for America in ill-health and Binney resigned later. Van Meter, Mason, Wade and Cross did not feel strongly enough to resign.

as instruments of conversion, marked a victory for this means of evangelisation. A later missionary commented that it was not until 1922 that a scholar graduated from Tharrawaddy Sgaw Karen High School without having been converted.<sup>105</sup> In turn the consequences for the Karens were important, as the survival of the Anglo-Vernacular schools kept open the channels to jobs and promotions in British Burma, at least as far as the Christian element was concerned.

At the time of the second war there already existed a considerable number of Christians in Rangoon, Bassein, and other parts of the Delta area. In 1853, however, Mason, one of the missionaries who had not resigned from the Union, set off for an area almost untouched by Christianity, a British garrison town of Toungoo on the northern frontier, then a week's journey north of Shwegyin on the Sittang River.<sup>106</sup> The town had been occupied by the British earlier in the year and Mason, his wife and Karen assistant Saw Qua La, arrived in October.

The nature of the area around Toungoo, the adjacent Kareni, and of the tribes living there, has been described in Chapter One. Work in Tenasserim and the Delta was complicated by the need to employ two dialects. In the area which now faced the Masons, dialects had proliferated and villages could not often understand each other. The mountainous nature of the area

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<sup>105</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 178.

<sup>106</sup> J. Lee Lewis, "Seventy Years of Karen Mission Work in Toungoo", Bap. Miss. Rev. 35 (Jan. 1929), 16-21. An enquirer had visited Judson in 1832 from Toungoo and asked for a preacher to be sent there.

made travel arduous, and the fear of wild beasts, not to mention savage Karens and their ever-continuing feuds, was always present. Thus the missionaries faced problems for which even Dr. Mason's twenty years' experience in Tavoy had not prepared them. Ill-health forced the Masons to depart again early in the following year, leaving Saw Qua La to continue the work without missionary supervision. Another missionary couple visited in 1855 but left almost immediately, also because of sickness. Finally the Masons returned in 1857 by which time over two thousand Karens had been converted by native agency alone. Under Saw Qua La the work had been divided between four native preachers, each of whom had responsibility for a different tribe.<sup>107</sup>

The fact that a native pastor, with almost no help at all from the American missionaries, could succeed in establishing a new mission in such difficult circumstances, indicates a tremendous development of organising ability, in addition to other pastoral skills. Self confidence increased, and there were significant consequences in the breaking down of tribal barriers. Sgaw speaking Karens evangelised groups whose languages were very different. In fact Sgaw Karen became the literary language of all Karens except the Pwos, a development which further contributed to the unity of Christian Karens. They now, apart from the Pwos who as noted were converted in proportionately smaller numbers, had a common language available for use between them.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Lewis, "Seventy Years", pp. 16-21. Other figures which indicate the growth of Christianity in the area are as follows: end of 1853, 741 (ibid.); 1855, 2022 (ibid.); 1856, 2124 with 30 churches (McMahon, p. 181); 1859, 134 villages supporting their own teacher and buying their own medicine and books (F. Mason, Burmah, p. 624); 1870, 18,860 (McMahon, p. 183).

<sup>108</sup> Lewis, "Seventy Years", p. 17. After the Masons arrived the catechism was translated from Sgaw into Bwe, but this policy was later abandoned.

The usual pattern of schools was set up, and Mrs. Mason's particular interest, an educational institute for girls, was founded with help from the Karens themselves. It had a curriculum which rivalled that instituted by her husband twenty years before in Tavoy, which included, in addition to Christianity, geography, history, arithmetic, elementary astronomy, letter writing, health, housekeeping, sick nursing, teaching, order, punctuality and cleanliness.<sup>109</sup> Both husband and wife admitted the faults of their protégés more openly than most missionaries. Mrs. Mason deplored their inefficiency, and was forced to organise them herself in the building of the Toungoo Institute,<sup>110</sup> while Dr. Mason ruefully admitted that he "had never seen a Karen in the Church or out of it, that when he had committed a wrong would not tell a falsehood to cover it. What a Karen says he will not do today, under a change of circumstances he will do tomorrow, and seem to think it alright".<sup>111</sup>

In 1860 two more missionaries arrived, and in 1862 a separate mission was set up for the Pakus, the tribe that inhabited the area to the south of Toungoo. In 1871 the division of the mission into two parts, one association for the Pakus, and the other for the tribes of Bwes, Mogphas, Kerkers, Kebas, Red Karens, Padaungs and other tribes to the north, was formally made. The territories of each association stretched far to the east into the Karení, and a new station was eventually set up in Loikaw,

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<sup>109</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 185.

<sup>110</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 229.

<sup>111</sup> F. Mason, Burmah, p. 622.

in the Kareni, under the missionary Bunker, who worked in the area for forty years, to bring Christianity, education and a modification of the chronic feuding which was traditional in the area.

The course of events in Toungoo was not, however, as smooth as the foregoing account implies, for from 1862 to 1870 the mission was rent by a serious schism, with consequences so shattering that they were discernible years afterwards.

In 1862, Mrs. Mason returned from a furlough in America where she had "with characteristic zeal and resourcefulness"<sup>112</sup> organised the Women's Union Missionary Society. She brought with her, however, besides a representative of this society, a new knowledge of a "God language" which could be read in patterns in clothing, in nature, and in dreams. Although Dr. Mason did not agree with her, he apparently made no attempt to prevent her from teaching her new beliefs to the Karens, and confusion spread among the local Christians. The other missionary in the station moved the Paku Mission to another site, and did what he could to counteract her teaching. The Bunkers arrived in 1866 and joined him in travelling from village to village trying to counteract Mrs. Mason's teachings.<sup>113</sup> In 1863 both the Masons were dismissed by the Union, but because they continued to live in Toungoo, and many of the Karens persisted in adhering to "Mama Mason", confusion was worse confounded and the dismissal solved nothing. In 1870 the situation worsened when Mrs. Mason, against her

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<sup>112</sup>Lewis, "Seventy Years", p. 16. Mrs. Mason was at this time 46. She had begun her missionary work at Moulmein with her first husband John Bullard, where she learned Pwo. He died after three years and she became the third wife of Dr. Mason and went with him to Toungoo. She survived him by twenty years, becoming "progressively more insane" and having to be kept under constant watch. Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 210.

<sup>113</sup>Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 201.

husband's will, offered the mission property, along with her followers, to the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which at that time was not operating in the area. Dr. Mason was received back into the Union in 1871, but died before he could take up new work in Rangoon, while Mrs. Mason returned to America and progressive insanity.

The consequences for the Toungoo Baptist Mission were catastrophic. The converts were newly made and uncertain of the nature of their faith. Many of them had become Christian through the agency of the Masons and had no way of distinguishing between the "God Language" and orthodox Baptist teachings. When Mrs. Mason offered the Mission to the S.P.G. its officers were uncertain as to the correct mode of conduct. An investigator was sent, and after touring the area, he recommended leaving the churches "quite alone", since he felt that the Baptists would, in time, be able to restore peace.<sup>114</sup> The Anglican bishop of Rangoon, however, decided that there was a serious risk that the Karens involved might lapse into heathenism or become Roman Catholic, and Mrs. Mason's offer was accepted over the protests of the A.B.M.U. In one move, therefore, the S.P.G. acquired approximately half the Baptist pastors and about half the Baptist property in the area. The consequences for the Karens could be seen twenty years later when Jenkins, working on his settlement report on the Karen Hills, found clusters of two and three villages of the same name, where the Baptists, Anglicans and heathens had separated into their own villages.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 203.

<sup>115</sup> British Burma Settlement Dept., Karen Hills, p. 6.

Whether the Anglican decision was morally justified or not, it gave the Society a beginning in an area where it had hitherto no missions. The S.P.G. set up a small mission press in Toungoo, publishing song books, catechisms, and prayer books, and began work in Sgaw, Bwe, Paku and other dialects.<sup>116</sup> A Roman Catholic mission to the Karens had already been set up in the Delta even before the second war, and in the mid-sixties they also began work in the Toungoo area. The Catholic missionaries were concerned with the economic aspects of life in the Toungoo district, and "evinced an intelligent interest in the culture of the mulberry and the breeding of silk worms" and tried to improve the methods of the Bwes who were producing silk by "a wasteful and slovenly system".<sup>117</sup> The Baptists, however, strongly disapproved of the work of both the Anglicans and Roman Catholics, since both permitted their congregations to continue to drink alcohol and to take opium;<sup>118</sup> whereas abstention from alcohol and drugs was obligatory for members of Baptist congregations. Conflict developed between villages of different denominations and "instead of killing fowls they break one another's heads with all the fervour of the convert".<sup>119</sup> In general

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<sup>116</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 141.

<sup>117</sup> Mc Mahon, p. 335.

<sup>118</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 187.

<sup>119</sup> Scott, Burma, a Handbook, p. 125. Scott was one of the British officials who found the Karens unattractive. His comments are usually unfavourable.

terms the consequences for the Karens of these interdenominational squabbles was to retard movements towards unity among the different groups.

Despite the split in the missionary ranks in the 1850's, that decade and the next were a time of exciting expansion. It seemed as if "the entire race would be Christianised at once"<sup>120</sup> but for about twenty years from the late sixties to the mid-eighties, there was a slack period, noticed by missionaries and outside observers alike.<sup>121</sup> When McMahon toured the Toungoo area in the early seventies, he came upon the village of Bawgalay. In 1855 the local chief had induced the villagers from surrounding hamlets to come together and build one large village around a sizeable chapel on the summit of a hill. It was, when he saw it, "fast disintegrating" and the villagers were back in their own hamlets.<sup>122</sup>

The loss of interest may have been due to a number of causes. The very rapidity of the early conversions probably concealed the temporary nature of the enthusiasm of some of the converts. The demands made by the Baptists, including abstinence from alcohol and drugs, must have been hard to live up to, particularly when relatives or other villagers continued in the old ways. Where villages were converted wholesale, usually because of the conversion of the local chief, Baptism may not always have involved personal conviction. Undoubtedly Mrs. Mason's teachings brought confusion to the Toungoo area, and there as elsewhere the conflict between Baptists, Catholics and Anglicans must have confused possible adherents.

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<sup>120</sup> E.N. Harris, "The Conservation of a Race as a Missionary By-Product", Biblioteca Sacra, 88 (1920), p. 156.

<sup>121</sup> McMahon, pp. 185-6.

<sup>122</sup> McMahon, p. 230.

The consequences of continued rapid conversion provide an interesting subject for speculation, but the slack period in the seventies caused the mission to lose momentum, and the chance for converting a majority of the Karens, if it had ever existed, was lost.

As in the first period of their work, missionary policy continued to coincide with that of the British with regard to village settlement. The British policy of moving Karens to permanent sites on the plains, was equally attractive to the Baptists, although for somewhat different reasons. Constant migration meant that schools could not be kept up with any regularity. It meant that families living by subsistence agriculture could not afford to support the teachers and pastors in the way that the missionaries hoped they would, and it meant that when disasters, such as poor weather or rat plagues, struck, the villagers had no resources to fall back upon. A stable non-migratory community was much to be desired.<sup>123</sup>

Consequently the missionaries did all they could to encourage their converts to move to permanent locations on the plains, even when as sometimes happened the local British official was not enthusiastic.<sup>124</sup> As already mentioned, settlement reports of this period frequently describe Christian Karen settlements as more prosperous than the average, while those of the non-Christian Karens seem to have been poorer than those of the Burmans in the same regions. Beecher wrote of an area east

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<sup>123</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 309.

<sup>124</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 334.

of Bassein which had, until shortly before, been thick jungle with tiny villages of frail houses, that "it affords no small gratification to the Christian missionary; and no light testimony in favour of the gospel" to find a substantial and well built village, with thriving fruit trees in the same area. Cross in Tavoy noted that the Karens were no longer so frightened by Burman threats and commented "I take this as an encouragement, an evidence of advancement of civilisation; and of Christian knowledge among the Karens."<sup>125</sup> For the missionary, civilisation, economic advancement and religion went hand in hand.

To improve the lives of the Karens the missionaries introduced western ideas and instruction. Mrs. Mason wanted them to be trained in cotton growing, lowland rice agriculture, iron and lead working, the making of agricultural implements, woodwork, wickerwork, and practical botany to enable them to gather plants from the forest for export. She also suggested that a knowledge of leatherwork and shoemaking would encourage them to exploit rock salt and limestone in mountainous districts, and tannic acid from various tree barks.<sup>126</sup> The missionary emphasis was intensely practical, and McMahon deplored the missionary tendency to emphasise the utilitarian over the aesthetic, and the lack of beauty in Christian villages.<sup>127</sup> Not all missionary ideas were suitable for the geographical situation of Burma, and some were not accepted by the Karens.

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<sup>125</sup> Cross, "Journal", Bap. Miss. Mag., 59 (Nov. 1859), p. 389.

<sup>126</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 310.

<sup>127</sup> McMahon, p. 52.

The missionaries came gradually to realise that this was due less to innate conservatism than to an instinctive realisation that not all of the ideas were suitable. Attempts to introduce the American plough instead of the Karen forked stick proved unsuccessful. The cattle were too slight to pull it, and it cut too deeply, so that rice sprouts could not stand upright. It was also discovered that when reaping machines were introduced they were impractical, as they knocked down irrigation ridges and proved to be more trouble than they were worth.<sup>128</sup>

With the extensive system of Karen Anglo-vernacular boarding schools resting upon a widespread primary system and leading to Judson College which was founded during this period, it might have been expected that Karens would rise rapidly in government service, the professions and business. At the same time, as already noted, the monastery schools were in decline and few Burmans had evinced much interest in Government Schools, so the Karens were ahead in western-style education. The opening of the Suez Canal, with the increase in trade which quickly followed, brought a greater need for efficiency, and larger numbers of clerks, so job opportunities were available.

Some Karens did so well in the missionary education system that they were able to go abroad for further study. In 1865 two Karen boys sailed for America. One of them returned as a Minister of the Gospel, the other, a "crack baseball player" for his university, returned with

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<sup>128</sup> Harris, "Conservation", pp. 156-8.

Normal Training. At about the same time another went to the U.S. and returned with an M.A. "to serve his people into old age". One village alone, with seventy houses, sent three of its young men to America and four to India.<sup>129</sup> As early as 1881 a Christian Karen with degrees of LL.B. and M.A. obtained in the United States, and who had practised in Federal and State Courts, was admitted as a second grade advocate for the Bassein District.<sup>130</sup> Everything, therefore, looked very hopeful for Karen progress in employment, in government and the professions.

In proportion to the amount of education received, however, Karen progress in this sphere was somewhat disappointing. Several reasons can be put forward. The missionaries claimed that it was due to British prejudice, that the officials preferred to hire Burmans who in their turn helped to exclude Karens from government jobs. The Karen characteristics of shyness and reticence, so often commented upon, may also have hindered their success. Above all, however, and paradoxically, the cause may have been in the attitudes of the missionaries themselves.

This is illustrated by a story told of Mrs. Vinton who, after her husband's death, struggled to keep the Rangoon mission alive despite the rift with the Missionary Union. Her students were highly regarded by government officials and frequently obtained vacation jobs in the Revenue Survey, donating up to half of their earnings to support the mission.

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<sup>129</sup> Po, pp. 40-41.

<sup>130</sup> Burma Gazetteer, Bassein, p. 86.

However "numbers of young men who had been educated in Mrs. Vinton's school refused lucrative appointments under the English government, and offered their services as evangelists and teachers".<sup>131</sup> Thus, while complaining that Karen potential was not recognised, the missionaries themselves were responsible for siphoning off many of the most able young men into positions of teacher and pastor within the Baptist community. The missionary educational system was thus an example of the contradictions inherent in their policies. Education could lead to material advancement, but was channeled instead in religious directions.

The clearest example of this duality lay in the role of the Karen pastor himself. He was not always doctrinally sound, or even sufficiently well educated, particularly in the early years of the mission when reliance had to be placed on men newly converted from paganism. In 1870, for example, several Christian pastors were found guilty of "heathen enchantments", and there was a case of a totally uneducated son succeeding his father as village pastor.<sup>132</sup> One problem was that in the early stages, communities tended to choose village elders with prestige in the village rather than better educated but younger men. Much of the missionaries' time and anxiety were devoted to the task of "oversight". Ideally first and second generation converts needed the very best of pastors to guide them away from the old practices, but instead

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<sup>131</sup> Luther, pp. 170-71.

<sup>132</sup> Carpenter, Self Support, p. 345.

the missionaries found themselves with "only the ranks of the converts themselves from which to draw".<sup>133</sup> This need for supervision took missionaries away from the oral preaching which they desired to undertake and which the Deputation had recommended so highly, although the problem decreased somewhat as time passed.

Most of the missionaries also felt strongly that their task was to advise, rather than to exercise disciplinary authority, and to train natives as quickly as possible to direct their own church affairs.<sup>134</sup> This led to very rapid advances in organisational ability and self confidence on the part of the Karens.

One sign of these developments was the way in which some of the pastors "took up large tracts of land, rallied their people about them and had them bring the land under cultivation, thus establishing flourishing settlements. Some of them dug extensive systems of irrigating ditches for the cultivation of the betel nut; and thus laid the basis for later prosperity; enriching not only themselves but also their people." The missionary who observed this development was told that in his father's time "few owned so much as a buffalo, and when they needed a cart the householders in a whole village would have to club together". However organisation and cooperation enabled them to gain herds of buffalo, possess a cart for every household, and have incomes that "would enable a white man to live in comfort" largely as a result of "native sagacity and

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<sup>133</sup> Luther, p. 168.

<sup>134</sup> Luther, p. 169.

leadership".<sup>135</sup> One Christian pastor induced both converted and heathen Karens to leave the hills for the Plains where they brought the land under cultivation and "built up a strong community and a prosperous church".<sup>136</sup> Pastors often kept records of rental contracts and sales, of debts to moneylenders both current and cancelled, sold the community's paddy, hired coolies and oxen where necessary, supervised the division of property on the death of a villager, and acted as an arbitrator in disputes between members of the community.<sup>137</sup>

Some pastors were also disseminators of western culture and ideals. A visit in the mid-seventies to the house of a pastor who had been to America revealed that he was "more civilised than the rest of his people". He had a table and two chairs, and on the walls a religious text, an "illuminated advertisement of Jaynes Family Medicines", and a picture from an illustrated paper of the Queen and Duchess of Edinburgh driving into London.<sup>138</sup> Religion, science and loyalty therefore mingled on his walls for his flock to see, and chairs and a table signified civilisation and status, if not comfort.

It can be seen, therefore, that the desperate need for pastors of quality led to a situation where the most able and best educated Karens

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<sup>135</sup> Harris, "Conservation", p. 162.

<sup>136</sup> Harris, "Seventy Five Years", pp. 10-11.

<sup>137</sup> Cady, p. 138.

<sup>138</sup> Soltau, p. 84.

went into the ministry rather than government service or the professions.

If a pastor with an American education could be found in a small agricultural community, then this must have been a position accorded high priority. As a consequence Christian Karen settlements of considerable prosperity grew up, some of them even strong enough to survive the later economic troubles of the Delta. At the same time, however, the Karens did not break out of the traditional agricultural pattern as their education might have been expected to impel them to do.

As noted in Chapter One, local village government, through meetings of elders and villagers, was common among the Karens before the British arrival. The Baptist missionaries, partly through inclination and partly through force of circumstance, adapted this to the organisational needs of the church. Baptist and Karen preferences for a decentralised and democratic form of government coincided ideally in this regard, and this may be one reason why the Baptists appealed so strongly to the Karens.

Consequently meetings were held within each Baptist village to discuss all issues connected with the church and school, and often secular matters as well. Churches also sent representatives to annual Baptist Association gatherings, and their members therefore came into contact with other Karens, thus helping to break down traditional clan-nishness while also learning to extend decision-making techniques acquired at village level, to a wider sphere. McMahon attended such a gathering in the late 1860's, where the representatives of forty villages met. The proceedings were businesslike, reports were received from the

various churches, and committees were appointed to carry news to such outstations as were not represented.. The Karen Christian habit of handshaking, also noted by other writers, was practised to excess, for the occasion was social as well as businesslike, and in some ways even resembled a fair with numerous petty traders in attendance.<sup>139</sup>

Mrs. Mason described a Bwe Christian Annual Convocation held about ten years earlier, and only a short time after the introduction of Christianity. It serves as an excellent illustration of the attitudes, concerns and procedures which the combination of Karen and Baptist traditions produced. The meeting was held in a huge wooden "tabernacle", and was attended by four Karen preachers and about one hundred preachers-cum-schoolteachers. Committees were formed and resolutions passed on such subjects as female education, Bible distribution, and self support. Individual villages made requests for teachers and previously feuding communities agreed to end their conflicts. Three rules for Christians were discussed and passed. Christians were not to marry heathens, local villages were to aid and support their own teachers and they would all do what they could to enlighten the heathen.<sup>140</sup>

After 1865 Karen delegates attended the Burma Baptist Convention and "shared the honours of president and officers with Burmans and others".<sup>141</sup> Local association meetings gave Karens a chance to meet

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<sup>139</sup> McMahon, pp. 256, 262.

<sup>140</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 294.

<sup>141</sup> H.I. Marshall, The Karens of Burma, pp. 38-9.

others of different villages and helped to break down the suspicion and hostility between them, and to make them aware of their common bonds, immensely important to a people who were previously so fragmented and divided, even on a local scale. Conventions widened their horizons still further and gave them experience in more formal organisational and democratic procedures. The Anglo-Karen Handbook and Reader, a teaching aid and phrase book published in 1875 contained a section in which there appeared model sentences for use in debates. Phrases connected with Parliamentary procedure were given therein, and words such as motion, amendment, question, postponement, order and, of course, honourable gentleman, were included.<sup>142</sup>

Association meetings and church conventions were not the only places where Karens gained experience of this sort. As early as 1857<sup>40</sup> chiefs from the Toungoo area, with a further 120 represented by letter, met to found the Karen Education Society. A Board of Managers was elected, with one member from each tribal group, and Captain D'Oyley, Deputy Commissioner at Toungoo at that time, agreed to act as president. One of the first resolutions was to support a plan much beloved by Mrs. Mason, the founding of a Female Institute. The notion was not at first popular but once adopted was enthusiastically supported. The government supplied the land and the teak required for building, but the

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<sup>142</sup> C.H. Carpenter, The Anglo-Karen Handbook and Reader (Rangoon: American Mission Press, 1875), p. 179.

Karens supplied everything else themselves, constructing a large two storey building, roads, gardens and a library, and also paid for the passage of a teacher from America. The school took fifty girls over the age of twelve, and during the vacations supplied teachers for twelve branch schools.<sup>143</sup> In 1885 a National Education Society was founded, involving 82 chiefs.<sup>144</sup> In addition to extending education, the role of such societies in giving the Karens valuable organisational experience is evident.

Another field in which the Karens gained experience was that of the Home Missions. In 1834 the Tavoy Home Mission Society had been organised, while another had been set up in Moulmein at about the same time. The word passed into the Karen language by transliteration soon afterwards.<sup>145</sup> In 1854 Rangoon formed a society "for aggressive work among the heathen", at first operating in their own area, and later among Karens outside Burma itself.<sup>146</sup> In 1856 the Moulmein Society sent several students from the Theological Seminary to work in the Toungoo area.<sup>147</sup> Even Shwegyin, despite the repeated absences of its missionary, organised a society of its own.<sup>148</sup> Henzada set up its own society in 1871 to help

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<sup>143</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 174. F. Mason, Burmah, p. 623. The latter says that at first 60 chiefs were involved and later 260.

<sup>144</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 149.

<sup>145</sup> Lewis, "Seventy Years", p. 17.

<sup>146</sup> E.W. Marshall, "Karen Progress", p. 408.

weak churches in the district and also farther afield. The management was put entirely into the hands of the Karens themselves who, as well as paying all the costs, selected the fields and allotted the budgets. A pice-a-week fund was established to ensure that every Karen, however poor, could feel he had made a contribution and shared in the responsibility.<sup>149</sup> The Home Missions promoted interaction between the different Karen groups which led to a better understanding between them and a greater sense of community. This intermingling was, however, among Christian Karens, or those in the process of conversion, and failed to involve those Karens who rejected Christianity or were indifferent to it.

Mason had forecast in 1860 that "any attempt to bring Christians and heathens together will prove a failure", but twenty years later Karen actions contradicted his belief.<sup>150</sup> In 1881 a step was taken towards bringing Christian, Buddhist and animist Karens, of all language groups and tribes, together. This step was the founding, by the Karens themselves, of the Daw Ka Lu or Karen National Association. Its Manifesto stressed that when the Karens lived in the highlands they had survived by cooperation, but that this attitude had been lost when they moved to the plains. It explained that Christianity had recreated the realisation of the need to work together, but that the Christian Karens now feared that they might leave the others behind. Unity, it was stated, could be on the basis of race and education rather than religion, and that therefore

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<sup>149</sup> Phelps, p. 22.

<sup>150</sup> F. Mason, Burmah, p. XVII.

unity was to be given a very high priority. The need was therefore felt for an association which would utilise Karen clannishness to unite Christians and non-Christians, which could help to obtain scholarships abroad and which could set up an agricultural school to improve the skills of the predominantly agricultural Karens. Most significant, from the point of view of political awareness, was the desire which was expressed to develop an organisation which would make it possible for the Karens to deal with their own secular problems, and therefore free the missionaries from this chore. This would enable the government to understand Karen needs, and the Karens to understand the policy of the government, through direct communication. It would also eliminate government criticism of missionary "interference" in secular affairs.<sup>151</sup> Naturally, in the circumstances, the leadership was largely Sgaw and Christian, since these were the most advanced sections of the population, but the determination to involve all Karens was very real, as indicated by the name they chose which, in Karen, means the "whole nation".<sup>152</sup> It was later to deal with such disparate subjects as the celebration of Victoria's Jubilee and the best measures to be taken during the Third Anglo-Burmese War,<sup>153</sup> and the choice of delegates to go to London to speak for the Karens.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Smeaton, pp. 210-221.

<sup>152</sup> Tadaw, p. 98.

<sup>153</sup> Bunker, Soo Thah, p. 242.

<sup>154</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 124.

The formation of the Daw Ka Lu seems to have been an act which sprang from a genuine awareness of a Karen identity on the part of the Karens themselves, albeit at first among the Christian group. By contrast the expression of a Karen desire for a national banner resembling the flags of America or England seems to have been stage-managed by the redoubtable Mrs. Mason. This "demand" was answered in 1860 by the presentation to that lady, by the A.B.M.U., of a flag showing a Bible with a sword across it. A letter from Saw Qua La concerning the advantages of unity was read to the assembly, and in Mrs. Mason's address of thanks she expressed the opinion that "in a hundred years hence the Karens will be the ruling power in India and the missionary nation to Asia, and the right hand of the English nation".<sup>155</sup> This statement was made in the heady and exhilarating days of the first decade after the British conquest of Pegu when conversion figures were high, and by a woman of strong personality and extreme enthusiasms. Nevertheless it is an extraordinary statement, predating by a quarter of a century almost identical missionary attitudes at the time of the Third Burmese War. The Manifesto of 1881, however, seems to indicate that Karen ideas were less ambitious, if more realistic. The inflammatory days of the Third War were yet to come.

Overall, three main developments emerge from the work of the Baptist mission in the period between the second and third wars. The first was the increasing involvement of the Karens in the work of the mission, the consequent increase in self confidence and organisational

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<sup>155</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 265.

ability, and the application of this to secular affairs. The second was the increasing awareness of a Karen identity through the work of the Home Mission Societies, the continued publication of periodicals and the increased use of Sgaw in Karen literature, culminating in the foundation of the Daw Ka Lu to promote the unity of all tribes, languages and religious groups among the Karens. The third appeared to be working in a contrary direction, whereby Christian Karens increasingly turned to three occupations, to their traditional work of agriculture, and to the imported vocations of pastor and teacher.

At the end of the second Anglo-Burmese war British official enthusiasm for the Christian Karens was at a high point. The commissioner of Pegu wrote to one of the missionaries towards the end of 1852 concerning Karen assistance during the war, "we must not forget such good will as has been shown us".<sup>156</sup> Dalhousie, visiting Rangoon in 1853, requested, despite his illness, "If I am to see anyone it must be the American missionaries." In the subsequent interview with the Vintons and Kincaid he showed "deep interest" in the work among the Karens, and when thanked for the kindness shown by his subordinate officers to the mission he replied that he was glad if they had done their duty.<sup>157</sup>

The missionaries acquired the status of semi-official representatives of the Karens. Yule explained that if one wanted to know anything

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<sup>156</sup> Phayre, quoted in the Miss. Mag. 33 (June 1853), 165.

<sup>157</sup> Luther, p. 165.

about that race it was best to inquire of the missionaries because "they alone know the Karens, because they alone know the language of the two tribes".<sup>158</sup> In fact few, if any, officials learned Karen. Areas which were predominantly Karen, such as Toungoo, were considered unhealthy and officials sent there died, or were moved after relatively short periods of time, so that learning the language did not seem worthwhile or was cut short. The number of dialects also added to the problem, while in areas such as the Delta the Karens were so scattered throughout the area that learning their language must have seemed an unnecessary chore. As a consequence direct communication, except with highly educated English-speaking Karens, was rare. The officials communicated either through Burman interpreters, who tended to be hostile to the Karens, or through the missionaries who tended to be overprotective. To some extent, therefore, an individual's reaction to the Karens depended on the amount of admiration or irritation he felt when faced with a missionary. When Captain Rock took over from an officer who had been sympathetic to the Karens as Deputy Commissioner of Toungoo, he proved to be exactly the opposite of his predecessor. Mrs. Mason's account of the period is full of her feuds with him. In conflicts between Burmans and Karens, Rock took the side of the former, explaining he had "not much opinion of this mission work. Missionaries no doubt mean well; but it's all useless - there's no changing savages. You'll never succeed".<sup>159</sup> Stories

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<sup>158</sup> Yule, p. 286.

<sup>159</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 334.

of British indifference predominate in later literature, although it is difficult to separate actual examples from repetitions and embroideries. The accusations were accepted, however, by Karens and missionaries of a later period.

If the British were dependent on the missionaries to some extent as a means of communication with the Karens, the missionaries in their turn were dependent on the British to make their work easier for them. As had been the case after the first war, missionary stations were usually located in towns selected as British headquarters. In the Bassein area the missionaries deliberately delayed building a mission until they knew whether the British would select Negrais or Bassein. Had the former been selected the missionaries would have moved there with the British "as a matter of course".<sup>160</sup>

The missionaries benefitted further by official and semi-official grants of land and buildings. The officer in charge in Bassein granted them any building that might serve the missionaries' purpose and "kindly proffered further aid".<sup>161</sup> In Toungoo the Deputy Commissioner assisted Mrs. Mason to acquire a very large tract of land, allowed her to use bricks from the old town walls, permitted her to select teak logs for building and agreed that the school could set up a private ferry, instead of using the public one.

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<sup>160</sup> Carpenter, Self Support, p. 233.

<sup>161</sup> Carpenter, Self Support, p. 200, quoting Van Meter's Journal.

British officers also gave much help from their own pockets and their own time. This was particularly true in Rangoon, where the Vintons were struggling to survive without Missionary Union help after the 1853 split.<sup>162</sup> The Vintons made many personal friends among the British community and Mrs. Vinton visited several of them in England on a return trip to America.<sup>163</sup> Similar aid was received by many other missionaries who paid tribute to the "large hearted liberality, the hearty cooperation, the tender sympathy and unexpected help in sickness or trial which many of the English government officers have given".<sup>164</sup>

In the minds of some officials there was a strong connection between Christianity, civilisation, and loyalty to the British government, no doubt in part as a result of the unflagging missionary propaganda. Phayre was particularly enthusiastic about the work of the Baptists, and they in turn regarded him as a man with "a remarkable faculty of leading wild, ignorant tribes by the heart".<sup>165</sup> He regarded Christianity as a "powerful lever for raising the condition of the people",<sup>166</sup> and finding the Karens in the Toungoo area a "wild and savage people, he thought it advisable to have little to do with them for a time, handing them over

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<sup>162</sup>For example, the Annual Rangoon Mission Report for 1857 noted that Rs.16,039 had been donated by "English friends" as opposed to Rs.9202 from Karens, and Rs.4664 from friends in America. The same source records individual donations from British officials up to Rs.669. Luther, pp. 142-3 and p. 137.

<sup>163</sup>Luther, pp. 230-1.

<sup>164</sup>Luther, p. 59. See also E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 112.

<sup>165</sup>Smeaton, p. 217. During the third war one missionary remarked "would to God we could have half an hour of such a man as Sir Arthur Phayre". Smeaton, p. 20.

<sup>166</sup>Po, p. 61.

to the care of the A.B.M.<sup>167</sup>

O'Riley travelled through the hill tracts with the Mason's assistant Saw Qua La, and thus the Karens of the area encountered a British official and a Karen missionary together, a connection that they would not forget. So grateful was the Government that Saw Qua La was subsequently offered high honours and a good salary to accept a nominal office. He refused, however, preferring to live "for Christ alone".<sup>168</sup> O'Riley felt that the "combined agency" of the government and missionaries "cemented a bond of unity and brotherhood" among the numerous tribes, and thought that the Karens "will eventually be found willing recipients of our laws to render them useful subjects of our Government".<sup>169</sup> When Phayre visited the area in 1859 he reported his amazement and pleasure at the sight of a people who, so recently savage, now appreciated the benefits of religion and education, and were living as "quiet, industrious mountaineers anxious for improvement".<sup>170</sup> In a minute written in 1863 he asserted "from long experience among similar tribes", that "such results could not be obtained by civil administration, unaided by missionary teaching".<sup>171</sup> This attitude persisted after Phayre's departure. A government

<sup>167</sup> British Burma Settlement Dept., Karen Hills, p. 6.

<sup>168</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 149. See also McMahon, p. 182.

<sup>169</sup> British India, Report on the Administration of Pegu, 1856-7, p. 38.

<sup>170</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 286.

<sup>171</sup> Dated May 1, 1863, quoted in Smeaton, p. 193. McMahon felt much the same, pp. 54 and 185.

report in 1880 asserted that "the Christian-Karen communities are distinctly more industrious, better educated and more law abiding than the Burman or non-Christian Karen villages around them".<sup>172</sup> Phayre had set the tone, however, and after his retirement the enthusiasm seems to have been more muted. That this was the period when the rate of conversions slackened, and some reversion to heathenism occurred, may also have contributed to the lessening of British interest in the conversion of the Karens; as may the passage of time, which dimmed memories of the second war and removed from Burma those officers who had served in it.

That British and missionary interests coincided with regard to the settlement of Karens in permanent villages on the plains has already been noted. In some cases this led to active cooperation, and the progress of one such settlement can be followed through the Administrative Reports of British Burma from 1862 to 1866. The first year's report indicated that endeavours were being made to form a plains settlement, "with the cooperation of the Rev.<sup>d</sup> Dr. and Mrs. Mason". The report recognised that while the British government could supply assistance to the Karens for the purchase of cattle and ploughs, that the missionaries could help with "advice and encouragement to sustain them therein". Success up to that point was "chiefly due to the hearty support" of the missionaries. Thirty-two families had been settled in the plains, with twenty-four buffaloes

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<sup>172</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 149. See also McMahon, p. 182.

and about one hundred and forty acres of rice cultivation.<sup>173</sup> The following year there were 309 people of all ages engaged in agriculture and they had 197 acres under cultivation.<sup>174</sup> By the third year they had further extended the area, although much damage had been done by floods in the rainy season of 1864.<sup>175</sup> In the next year there were 67 families, a total of 223 people, 69 head of cattle, 53 ploughs and 18 carts, with 210 acres under rice and 68 acres under cotton. The writer of the report felt that "this settlement of Karens in the plains advances them in the social scale and relieves the hill tribes from increasing difficulty arising from a superabundant population."<sup>176</sup>

Mrs. Mason described her own part in this process as much more than the giving of moral support. She built a store for the grain so that the Karens need not be dependent on traders when the price of paddy began to rise. She resold the stored paddy to the villagers at cost price when necessary. She also apportioned the land to each cultivator, as she knew that otherwise they would never make a start, and assisted them to obtain the necessary ploughs and yokes.<sup>177</sup> It seems clear that without the work of the missionaries and later of the Karen pastors themselves,

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<sup>173</sup> British India, Administrative Reports of British Burma, 1862-3, p. 45.

<sup>174</sup> British India, Administrative Reports, Burma, 1863-4, p. 60.

<sup>175</sup> British India, Administrative Reports, Burma, 1864-5, p. 60.

<sup>176</sup> British India, Administrative Reports, Burma, 1865-6, p. 60. The reason for the drop in population is not given. Some may have moved to found new settlements, or returned to the hills, or have been affected by Mrs. Mason's schism and left.

<sup>177</sup> E. Mason, Mountain Men, p. 328.

the Karen settlements on the plains would not have developed as quickly and prosperously as they did, and the government policy of opening up the plains for rice cultivation would have progressed more slowly.

The Government also used the missionaries to help maintain the boundaries delineated by the settlement reports. "Having the cooperation of the missionaries labouring amongst these people so laudably and so usefully renders the task more easy and the results more promising."<sup>178</sup>

As the missionaries assisted the Government with the settlement policy, so the Government assisted missionary education programmes. The increasing need for educated young men to fill the lower ranks of government service has already been noted, and government reports indicated, time after time, that the missionary schools were doing a better job than the few run by the government.<sup>179</sup> Such schools received grants-in-aid equal to the amount spent by the school itself. The only restriction on such schools was that they should be open to the government director of education for inspection.<sup>180</sup> The best pupils took the University of Calcutta matriculation. Inspection reports were usually favourable and British officials were impressed by the work of the missionary schools.<sup>181</sup>

Interdependence, therefore, remained the situation between the British and missionaries in this period. British feelings were at their

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<sup>178</sup> British Burma Settlement Department, Karen Hills, p. 2, quoting the recommendations of the Deputy Commissioner of Toungoo.

<sup>179</sup> For example, see British India, Administrative Reports, Burma, 1862-3, p. 22.

<sup>180</sup> Luther, p. 58.

<sup>181</sup> Carpenter, Self Support, p. 415.

warmest towards the Karens and their missionaries during the war itself and during Phayre's period as Commissioner. The officials recognised the assistance which the missionaries could give them in civilising, settling and educating the Karens. They were less impressed by the possibilities of using the Karens as a quasi-military force, particularly as the memories of 1852 waned. The missionaries in their turn appreciated both the personal and official help given them, in the form of monetary and land grants. Increasingly, however, they found themselves in the position of protectors and pleaders for the Karens, and in this capacity, towards the end of the period, began to think the Karens somewhat unappreciated by government.

Missionary responsibility for the welfare of the Karens was somewhat lightened by the foundation of the Daw Ka Lu towards the end of this period. This action, which came from within the Christian fold, although it reached out towards the animist and Buddhist Karens as well, was not the only Karen response to the situation following the second war.

Not all Karens were ecstatic over the arrival of the British. In fact there were reports that the Karens found of their new rulers that "their little finger" was "thicker than the loins of their old masters".<sup>182</sup> After the British conquest the tradition of the Karen King, a theocratic ruler with unusual powers,<sup>183</sup> surfaced in the rebellion of Min Laung.

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<sup>182</sup> Although the missionaries "indignantly denied that the people looked on the change of rulers as other than a liberation and a blessing", Yule, p. 286.

<sup>183</sup> For examples of Karen prayers and poetry illustrating these ideas see McMahon, p. 82.

The famine resulting from the inevitable neglect of the rice fields in the Delta during the war may have fanned the fires of desperation. A Karen animist, taking the name which translated means "Incarnation of a Prince"<sup>184</sup> appeared in the hill country of the Yonzalin river in 1857, promising to drive out the foreigners,<sup>185</sup> according to the legendary lore of the Karens. After subjugating the Yonzalin he descended to the plains with twelve to fifteen thousand followers claiming to be "an incarnation of the deity", and many "simple Karens placed implicit faith in his divine mission".<sup>186</sup> He plundered the area around Shwegyin and Kyaukkyi and promised to take Pegu, where he would establish a new dynasty of the Karen race.<sup>187</sup> The rebellion affected Karens from Siam to Bassein.<sup>188</sup> In the latter area another Karen leader arose in support, but the Deputy Commissioner was able to put down this rising with relative ease,<sup>189</sup> although the original outbreak proved more difficult to control, successful guerilla tactics prolonging it for five years. The rebellion was suppressed in the end but not until it had given considerable trouble.

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<sup>184</sup> Spellings and translations vary slightly. Marshall, Karen People, p. 312, and British Burma Gazetteer (Rangoon: Govt. Press, 1879), p. 39.

<sup>185</sup> British India, Administrative Reports, Tenasserim and Martaban, 1856-7, pp. 20, 56.

<sup>186</sup> Albert Fytche, Burma Past and Present (London: Kegan Paul, 1878), p. 171. He was the Deputy Commissioner responsible for dealing with the outbreak.

<sup>187</sup> British India, Administrative Reports, Tenasserim and Martaban, 1856-7, p. 20.

<sup>188</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karen People, p. 312.

<sup>189</sup> Burma Gazetteer, Bassein, p. 18.

to the authorities. Min Laung finally escaped to the Kareni.<sup>190</sup>

The incident illustrates two points. One is the existence of a tradition of a theocratic ruler, a tradition so strong that it could serve to unite a large number of Karens, from two disparate areas, in bitter guerilla warfare for a considerable period of time. That this was a genuine tradition, and not one worked upon by the missionaries is obvious from the circumstances, although the Baptists also appealed, accidentally at first, to the traditional association of religion and power. The other conclusion that may be drawn from the rebellion is that, despite missionary propaganda to the contrary, the coming of the British was not considered by all Karens to be a matter for rejoicing, and that for some, the British were as much the enemy as the Burmese had ever been.<sup>191</sup>

Although the Min Laung rebellion and the foundation of the Daw Ka Lu can both be seen as positive affirmations of Karen identity in different forms, not all Karens reacted with such signs of self confidence. Many observers wrote of their intense fear of strangers, particularly of officials, and their habit of evacuating entire villages at the approach of unknown visitors.<sup>192</sup> The hill Karens, formerly considered wild and truculent, and desperately feared by their neighbours, were described as sombre and despondent, stealing cattle rather than men,

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<sup>190</sup> Fytche, p. 171. He used a mixed force of soldiers, police and friendly Karens.

<sup>191</sup> A minor insurrection by another Karen prophet aiming at religious and political freedom occurred in 1866; Tadaw, p. 114. There were to be similar occurrences after the Third War.

<sup>192</sup> Forbes, p. 287.

and drinking very heavily.<sup>193</sup>

Many seemed to wish to repudiate their Karen background. Until 1872 the peoples of Burma were recorded by race, but from 1881 by language. This produced an increase in the number reported as Karen. It may be that they wished "to sink their despised Karen origin" and therefore returned themselves as Burman "only to be betrayed by the language they spoke".<sup>194</sup> The movement to the plains, encouraged by the British, brought increased contacts with the Burman Buddhist majority. Those whose culture and identity was unprotected by missionary enthusiasm must have felt considerable pressure to become more like their neighbours, particularly as the Burmans generally considered the Karens to be inferior. The process of Burmanisation will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

The most obvious development during the period following the second war was that almost all Karens were brought under British rule. Even those in the KarenI came under British influence, though not direct control. Accompanying this extension of British power was the spread of the missions, primarily those of the Baptists, but also of the Roman Catholics and of the S.P.G.

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<sup>193</sup> Scott, Burma, a Handbook, p. 121.

<sup>194</sup> Tadaw, p. 36, quoting the Census Report of 1891, vol. I, p. 70. In 1891 674799 said they spoke a Karen language. 540927 said they were of the Karen race.

Trends which were to become obvious during the period following the third war, could already be detected. Increased reliance on, and identification with, the British was partially balanced by a contrary trend towards hostility between some of the Karens and their new rulers. A growth of a sense of Karen identity and self confidence was accompanied paradoxically, by a decrease in both of these attitudes, while an ominous increase of Burman-Karen dislike also became apparent to observers.

Identification with the British, and a growing reliance upon them, at least among the Christian Karens, was partly due to missionary propaganda. Even before the second war American missionaries and Karen preachers were building up the image of the British as rescuers from cruel Burman oppression. The gratitude of some British officers for Karen assistance, a feeling which lasted to some extent throughout Phayre's period as Commissioner, and the British desire to use the Karens as a justification for the conquest, produced a mutually satisfactory relationship between the two groups, at least for the first decade or so. British-missionary interdependence also put the Karens into a position where they benefitted in concrete ways such as in the acquisition of education and land, and also in a less tangible but no less valuable warmth of regard. Missionary attitudes to western culture and technology which they passed on to the pastors and teachers also contributed to a growing desire among Karens to emulate their conquerors. Gratitude also played its part in creating a favourable attitude, particularly in those converted to

Christianity, gratitude for British assistance during plague and famine, for special concessions over land grants, and for the personal interest of some officials, including Phayre himself.

The relationship between the British and the Karens was not, however, idyllic. Even the Christian Karens, in part tutored by their disappointed missionaries, felt that the British did not fully appreciate their help and loyalty, or their potential as supporters of the regime. This was particularly true after the departure of the sympathetic Phayre. The Karen uprisings, such as that of Min Laung, show that a significant number of Karens, both from the Delta and the surrounding hills, were no more favourable to British rule than to Burman. On the British side, some officials did find the Karens less attractive than the Burmans with whom they were in contact, and language problems kept them at one remove from the Karens they governed.

If there were contradictions in British-Karen relations, there were even deeper paradoxes in Karen attitudes to themselves. A sense of Karen identity, as opposed to awareness of village or kinship loyalties, was developing, at least among the Christian Karens. This was, to a great extent, due to the policy of sending out Karen preachers from one area to another, a policy enforced on the missionaries by the rapid rate of conversions, and the inadequacy of their numbers and of funds from home. The Home Missions came to play a vital role in this development as the members chose, financed and supplied preachers for new fields of endeavour. Such intermingling was further encouraged by meetings of various kinds

and at different levels, including the All Burma Baptist Convention. The gradual movement towards the use of Sgaw as the literary language also facilitated communication between formerly indifferent or hostile linguistic groups. Even if the request for a flag had been stage-managed by Mrs. Mason, the foundation of the Daw Ka Lu in 1881 was a more genuine expression of a Karen identity overriding village, tribal, linguistic and even religious affiliations.

If the period was one which witnessed a growth of awareness of a common cultural identity, it was also a time which saw a great increase in Karen self confidence. Some Delta Karens had assisted and even fought for the British troops during the invasion and had been considered valuable allies by the officers, and even by Dalhousie himself. After the war, with British help towards the acquisition of land, and missionary aid in planning, organisation and the learning of new techniques, the Christian segment of the population had begun to do well as wet rice cultivators on the plains. Towards the end of the period, pastors of their own race had shouldered the burden of organising these agricultural communities and in many cases were successful enough to arouse the admiration of settlement officers who visited the villages. Missionary schools were the most successful institutions purveying western ideas, and the majority of their pupils were Karens. A few visited India or even America for further education, and theological colleges, Normal Schools, Female Institutes and Judson College enabled them to move ahead in the sphere of education, although they tended after graduation to enter the ministry, teaching or agriculture. In terms of governmental experience,

plans to appoint Karen magistrates and Nah-Khans, although not always successful, had at least been put into practice, and the theory and practice of democracy had been acquired through missionary teaching, and the multitude of Karen meetings at every level. The almost universal missionary practice of encouraging self-support and responsible decision-making proved to the Karen Christians that they could organise and finance their own institutions, if necessary with little or no outside help. All these discoveries were heady ones for a people so recently regarded as inferior. The Daw Ka Lu, an organisation aiming to make it possible for Karens to improve themselves and deal with the government without missionary involvement was the culmination of this growth in self confidence.

Some developments of the period affected the Karen self image detrimentally, however, particularly in the case of the non-Christian Karens, who lacked missionary reassurance, protection or tuition. Many of the non-Christian Karens fared worse as a consequence of their move to the plains than either the Christian Karens or the Buddhist Burmans. Proximity to the Burmans, who traditionally regarded them as inferior, made some Karens unwilling to acknowledge their race, and anxious to adopt Burman ways. In the new British law courts, those without missionary help fared badly. Opium and alcohol also took their toll. Had Phayre's plan for mixed levies succeeded, the tendency to merge with their neighbours would presumably have increased. Hill Karens, less affected by these trends than those living on the plains, were nevertheless exposed to

wider influences by the opening up of roads and the consequent expansion of trade.

A disturbing emphasis on Burman-Karen hostility continued in this period, the missionaries playing upon wartime atrocities and also upon the oppression of the Karens by petty Burman officials under the British. In their turn Burmans resented Karen assistance to the British during the war, the attempts to found Karen levies afterwards, the special treatment including the creation of land reserves, and the creation of special Karen magistrates. Missionary cries that the British showed no favouritism and indeed failed to give their charges their just deserts seemed patently untrue. Resentment sometimes flared in petty acts on both sides, but was of a relatively limited nature.

This was not to remain the situation, however, for in 1885 the Third Anglo-Burmese War commenced, and with it hostility rose to new heights.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Loyal Karens 1886-1918

During the second war the missionaries approached the task of military recruitment with a certain awareness of the incongruity of their religious and martial roles. Such was not the case with their successors during the period of the third war.

As Upper Burma drifted towards local anarchy the problems of violence and dacoity spread to Lower Burma, which was seriously affected by early 1886. An unprecedented and unexpected element was the active involvement of Buddhist monks who personally led armed bands into action. That the anarchy was not as widespread or long lasting as in Upper Burma was due less to the growing attachment between the British and the Burmans (indeed there had been an epidemic of lawlessness from about 1880)<sup>1</sup> than to the survival of the upper levels of the administration, and the assistance given to the government by the Christian Karens.

The latter formed their own units to defend Karen villages, which were often singled out for attack<sup>2</sup>, and even went hunting the Buddhist

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<sup>1</sup>Cady, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>E.B. Cross, "Missionary Correspondence, The Karen Mission", Baptist Missionary Magazine, 66 (June 1886), 150-151.

guerilla groups,<sup>3</sup> bringing back several poongyi heads and claiming the rewards.<sup>4</sup> Some of the Karens were led in the field by the missionaries themselves, particularly around Toungoo, Shwegyin and Rangoon.<sup>5</sup> In other cases they assisted their missionaries to protect the mission headquarters which, even when there was no fighting in the area, were subject to harassment and arson.<sup>6</sup>

The missionaries expressed few doubts that their conduct was justified. Most of them shared with the Christian Karens the conviction that this was a holy war. Bunker rejoiced, "we have been praying for this for years, the Burman power broken means Buddhism broken, now is the day of our power."<sup>7</sup> Another missionary exulted at the fall of "bloody, pride inflated Theebau", for "if there be no longer a king in Burma their religion will fall to pieces".<sup>8</sup> The Christian Karens prayed for the

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<sup>3</sup> Alonzo Bunker, Sketches from the Karen Hills (London: Revell, 1910), p. 206. They did not fight on Sundays, however.

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton, pp. 14-16, quoting Vinton.

<sup>5</sup> In particular Vinton of Rangoon (son of the Vinton involved in the second war), Cross, Crumb, Case and Bunker of Toungoo, and the newly arrived David Smith of Shwegyin. J.B. Vinton, "The Burman Insurrection", Baptist Miss. Mag. 66 (August 1886), 330-31. Also Nicholls of Bassein, Burma Gazetteer, Bassein, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Bunker, Sketches, p. 204.

<sup>7</sup> Bunker, "Cleanings from Letters: Letter dated Nov. 19, 1885", Baptist Miss. Mag. 66 (Feb. 1886) 48.

<sup>8</sup> A.T. Rose, "The Advance into Upper Burma", Baptist Miss. Mag., 66 (Feb. 1886), 36.

opportunity "to measure with these idolators, not our weapons or our bravery, but their wooden gods against our glorious Jehovah".<sup>9</sup> Few of them agreed with the belief of one lone missionary who argued that it was not a war of Buddhism against Christianity "although all on one side may be Buddhist and all on the other Christian", but a "strife between law and order and good government on one side, and rebellion and anarchy on the other".<sup>10</sup> That the Burmans shared the prevailing Christian conviction that this was a holy war was demonstrated by threats to kill all Karens who were not Buddhists; and the attacks on villages which were directed specifically at chapels and the destruction of such symbols as Christianity as Bibles.<sup>11</sup>

Burman rebel groups, some of them led by monks, also attacked heathen Karen villages; evidently classing all Karens alike, and therein lay another justification in the missionaries' eyes for direct involvement in the hostilities. Heathen villagers were usually less successful in resisting the dacoit attacks, and many of them sent for help to the missionaries or to

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<sup>9</sup>J.B. Vinton, "Burman Insurrection", p. 331. "O Lord, I need no lawyer nor intercessor to plead my case with you when I ask you to bless this levy tomorrow. You know this insurrection was raised by the poongies against You. They could not reach up to overthrow Your throne in the heavens, so they try to hurl You from Your Church in Burma. It is for Your self interest to help us, for they hate us because they first hated You, our glorious Head."

<sup>10</sup>F.D. Phinney, "Gleanings from Letters: Letter dated June 8, 1886", Baptist Miss. Mag. 66 (Sept. 1886), 377. His justification may have been different, but he shared the current enthusiasm for the war.

<sup>11</sup>E.B. Cross, "The Karen Mission", p. 150.

Christian Karen villages.<sup>12</sup> To the Baptists, therefore, the anarchy seemed to offer the ideal situation to unify the scattered tribes. Presumably this would lead to the eventual conversion of the entire race,<sup>13</sup> but for the moment the missionaries were elated by the possibility of the creation of a Karen nation. J.B. Vinton noted that all the tribes around Toungoo had men in arms, including the Bracs who were numerically the smallest, and lived three days march away from Toungoo, beyond the limits of British territory.<sup>14</sup> "This is just welding the Karens into a nation, not an aggregation of clans. The heathen Karens to a man are brigading themselves under the Christians: This whole thing is doing good for the Karen. This will put virility into our Christianity."<sup>15</sup> He noted with pride that Karens were increasingly willing to admit to their nationality and even to wear distinctively Karen dress.<sup>16</sup> Mrs. Mason excepted, attempts to separate the Karens from the other races of Burma had been more a by-product of the conversion process than a deliberate policy, but now the creation of a distinct Karen nation became an end in itself. Only in the period after

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<sup>12</sup> E.B. Cross, "The Karen Mission", p. 151. E.B. Cross, "Letter from Toungoo, dated July 1886", Baptist Miss. Mag. 66 (Oct. 1886), 394.

<sup>13</sup> E.B. Cross, "Letter from Toungoo, dated Feb. 2, 1887," Baptist Miss. Mag. 67 (May 1887), 136.

<sup>14</sup> Smeaton, p. 16, quoting Vinton.

<sup>15</sup> Smeaton, p. 12, quoting Vinton.

<sup>16</sup> Smeaton, p. 46.

the First World War did the missionaries begin to express doubts about the wisdom of such a course.<sup>17</sup>

Burman-Karen hostility was sharply exacerbated by the events of the war, and although there was a considerably religious element, non-Christian Karens were often included in Burman resentment. On their part even the missionaries to the Burmans felt revulsion, and the Burmans were seen as "villainous".<sup>18</sup> Missionaries, Christian and even heathen Karens, therefore agreed in their fear and hatred of the majority race, and in their sense of superiority over the "traitors". On their part the Burmans felt the same emotions, and the hostility was mutual.

It might have been expected that the British would at last have seen the advantages of a consistent policy of exploiting these racial conflicts, a policy which was strongly advocated by such missionaries as J.B. Vinton. The most obvious immediate course of action would be to employ Karen levies to assist in the work of "pacification", as Burmans in the circumstances were not to be trusted and the military forces had to be drawn almost exclusively from India.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately for this plan,

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<sup>17</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karen Peoples of Burma, p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> M.B. Ingalls, "Letter dated May 6, 1886", Baptist Miss. Mag., 66 (August 1886), 336.

<sup>19</sup> F. Tennyson Jesse, The Story of Burma (London: MacMillan, 1946), p. 83.

however, few of the Karens were adequately armed, and they could not acquire guns and gunpowder without the necessary licenses.<sup>20</sup>

As early as January, 1886, the District Superintendent of Police in Shwegyin reported that a large number of Karens under their Christian teacher had offered to fight, but urgently required guns and ammunition. He thought them reliable and strongly recommended arming them, offering to lead them personally if it should be necessary.<sup>21</sup> The government, however, was hampered by its own regulations, and lack of available arms,<sup>22</sup> and the formation of the levies was slow. Missionaries were again permitted to certify Christian Karens to be fit applicants for gun licenses, an earlier practice which had subsequently been dropped,<sup>23</sup> and missionaries could, with special permission, import guns and ammunition themselves to alleviate the shortage.<sup>24</sup> Heathen Karens could be enrolled, under District Magistrates or European officers of police, in disturbed districts.<sup>25</sup> The Chief Commissioner worried by delays, and attaching

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<sup>20</sup> E.B. Cross, "The Karen Mission", p. 150.

<sup>21</sup> British Burma, Proceedings of the Administration of Burma in the Home Department for the months of January to June 1886. Mr. W.J. Porter, District Superintendent of Police, Shwegyin, January 6, 1886, p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> E.B. Cross, "The Karen Mission", p. 150-1.

<sup>23</sup> British Burma, Home Proceedings, January to June 1886, p. 35.

<sup>24</sup> British Burma, Home Proceedings, July to December 1886. Chief Commissioner to Government of India, August 23, 1886, p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> British Burma, Home Proceedings, July to December 1886, note by T.D. Jamieson, Officiating Inspector General of Police, Rangoon, p. 40.

"great importance to the successful raising and training of these levies", urged that the Karens should be licensed as special police, which would enable them to be armed with the minimum of delay.<sup>26</sup>

Not all the British officials were in favour of arming the Karens in this way, considering them unreliable;<sup>27</sup> and even those who favoured the policy encountered the traditional problems of persuading them to fight outside their own areas, obey officers other than their natural leaders, or abandon their crops in order to receive proper training.<sup>28</sup> On the whole, however, most officials shared the view of the Commissioner of Tenasserim who wrote to the Toungoo missionaries that the Karens had "made the suppression of the rebellion a much easier matter than it otherwise could have been", and who felt that "by their bravery and hearty cooperation against the rebels" they stood out in "strong and favourable contrast to Burmese villagers, who might with advantage profit by the example of the Karens' loyalty and pluck".<sup>29</sup>

Consistent with the pattern established immediately after the previous two Anglo-Burmese wars, the British were enthusiastic and grateful for the assistance they had received. As had the Dalhousies before them, Lord and Lady Dufferin "showed both wisdom and kindness in improving their

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<sup>26</sup> British Burma, Home Proceedings, July to December 1886, Chief Commissioner to Inspector General of Police, Lower Burma, August 5, 1886, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> British Burma, Home Proceedings, January to June 1886, p. 35, and A.V.B. Crumb, "Letter from Toungoo, dated March 19, 1886", Baptist Miss. Mag., 66 (June 1886), 15.

<sup>28</sup> British Burma, Home Proceedings, July to December 1886, p. 28. Burma Gazetteer, Bassein, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Plant, "Letters to Rev. Crumb, dated Toungoo, March 19, 1886", Baptist Miss. Mag., 66 (June 1886), 152-3.

opportunity in Burma to see for themselves the wonderful Karen Christians".<sup>30</sup> Sir Charles Crosthwaite expressed the opinion that the Government of India owed a debt to the American Baptist Mission that "should not be forgotten" for producing a "loyal and generally staunch" people from a tribe that had been "despised and downtrodden for some generations".<sup>31</sup> A British officer who had hitherto believed that missionaries, however good, must inevitably be a "drag on political officers all over the empire" completely changed his ideas when he encountered the Karens, and wrote enthusiastically, if patronisingly, about them in his eyewitness account of the war and subsequent pacification.<sup>32</sup>

The most influential admirer of the Karens, however, was an officer of the Bengal Civil Service, Donald Mackenzie Smeaton, whose book, The Loyal Karens of Burma, was published in 1887. Had it not been for the Karens, he believed, the Burmans and Shans would probably have overrun Lower Burma. "The Queen's Government, for a time at least, would have ceased to exist." He believed that communications with Mandalay would have been cut, and the British army hemmed in by hostile forces. "What catastrophe might have occurred it is impossible to say. But it is not unreasonable to

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<sup>30</sup>"The Indian Witness", Baptist Miss. Mag., 66 (September 1886), 380.

<sup>31</sup>Charles Crosthwaite, The Pacification of Burma (London: Arnold, 1912), p. 51.

<sup>32</sup>Edmond Charles Browne, The Coming of the Great Queen: A Narrative of the Acquisition of Burma (London: Harrison, 1888), p. 312.

predict that the disaster would have had its contre-coup on the faraway North West Frontier, and that the reconquest of Burma might have been rendered impossible by the withdrawal of all available troops to repel aggression elsewhere."<sup>33</sup>

It remained to be seen whether such gratitude would last or, as after the first and second wars, dissipate with the end of the crisis and the passage of time.

Smeaton's view that the British Government owed the Karens a considerable debt of gratitude led him to criticise the past and existing policies concerning them, and to propose actions which should be taken in the future. His suggestions provide a convenient measure by which to assess the effects of British rule on the Karens in this period.

He had been in Burma since 1879<sup>34</sup> and became Financial Commissioner.<sup>35</sup> Although some of this knowledge was acquired first hand, much of his information came from the missionaries, particularly J.B. Vinton, the son of the missionary of that name who had been involved in the second war and the secession from the Missionary Union. Vinton's opinions are quoted at great length throughout Smeaton's book. Smeaton, in agreement with his mentor, believed that it was "high time that the British people lent their ear to the plaint of the Karens and redressed

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<sup>33</sup>Smeaton, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>Smeaton, p. 63.

<sup>35</sup>Po, p. 36.

the wrong done them by the listlessness and neglect of our own government".<sup>36</sup>

Most provocative were his suggestions that the Karens should be given, "if only as a political experiment", a chance of "growing as a nation in their own way". They should be allowed and encouraged to "keep their nationality intact" thus giving the British valuable experience, which might be used elsewhere, in cultivating such a growth.<sup>37</sup> Each group in Burma should be given a chance to develop in this manner. The Karens, who had already learned a great deal about such things from their missionaries, should be permitted to develop a government of their own, hold their own courts of elders, and defend their own villages.<sup>38</sup> This was, he thought, partly a counsel of necessity since "this vigorous young giant" could not for long "be kept in leading strings". An officer of great experience had once told him that eventually "the Karen and the native of India will divide Burma between them".<sup>39</sup> He believed that it would be "an incalculable advantage for us to have loyal Karen people occupying points of vantage all over the country" and that it would be "the highest and best policy to bind them closely to ourselves, to show them that we wish them to be a strong and prosperous community". He

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<sup>36</sup>Smeaton, p. 61.

<sup>37</sup>Smeaton, p. 221. Po, p. 78. Smeaton believed that "it is not often given to witness such a remarkable development of national character as has taken place among the Karens under the influence of Christ and good government". Marshall, Karen People of Burma, p. 309.

<sup>38</sup>Smeaton, p. 229.

<sup>39</sup>Smeaton, p. 202.

believed that they should be given "every facility for developing a national civilisation and a national religion". This, he thought, would achieve a twofold aim. Not only would it mark the development of a new means of administration but it would also have the effect of raising "a living wall of defence against aggression from without and turbulence from within".<sup>40</sup>

A few outside missionary circles may have privately agreed, but Smeaton was the only official to put forward such a strong case for the deliberate fostering of national consciousness among the Karens. The reasons for such silence were varied. Some officials heartily disliked the Karens and their missionaries; others genuinely abhorred the idea of fostering a racial split; many knew little or nothing of the Karens; and many more were unwilling to commit themselves publicly to such outright criticism of government policy. By far the majority probably preferred to deal with individual issues or cases as they arose rather than to follow any consistent policy, and so Smeaton's suggestions to encourage racial consciousness among the Karens were not implemented in any substantial way.

In part, however, many of Smeaton's suggestions were followed, for the Government was aware, at least during the decade following the war, of the debt it owed to the "Loyal Karens".

Smeaton believed that a people must have a language of their own if they are to survive, and he regretted that British policy seemed destined to eliminate Karen in all its dialects.<sup>41</sup> He criticised the

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<sup>40</sup> Smeaton, p. 236.

<sup>41</sup> Smeaton, p. 228.

lack of Karen-speaking officials, with some success. Soon after the war rewards were introduced as a means of encouraging the learning of Karen. The first official passed the Sgaw Karen Test in 1891, and subsequently others learned Sgaw and Pwo, while a few mastered Bwe and Taungthu.<sup>42</sup>

Smeaton suggested that the use of Karen should be permitted in local courts, and that government documents, such as tax receipts and court summonses, should be issued in that language,<sup>43</sup> but this suggestion was not adopted and the subject remained a permanent grievance for the Karens, who felt at a disadvantage when forced to deal in Burmese, either directly or through an interpreter.<sup>44</sup> This also encouraged the Christian Karens to rely on their missionaries to help them out in legal problems,<sup>45</sup> a dependency which the government had not intended to foster.

His recommendation that grants-in-aid should be available to Anglo-vernacular schools teaching Karen rather than Burmese as a second language, was at first accepted.<sup>46</sup> The decision was later reversed, only to be restored again in the 1920's. For a considerable period of time, however, every Karen school receiving a grant-in-aid was forced to teach the Burmese language. A missionary in the twenties maintained that this accelerated Burmanisation considerably since culture, habits of thinking

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<sup>42</sup>Po, p. 34, quoting V.W. Wallace, former Commissioner of the Irawaddy Division, in an unpublished preface written for a planned second edition of the Loyal Karens of Burma.

<sup>43</sup>Smeaton, p. 228. Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 111.

<sup>44</sup>Po, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup>Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 111.

<sup>46</sup>British Burma, Home Proceedings, January to June 1887, p. 12.

and fundamental attitudes are transmitted through language and he gave as an example the lack of honorifics in Karen compared to the considerable number in Burmese.<sup>47</sup>

As a result of the various decisions taken on the different language issues, British policy followed its usual contradictory course, both protecting and weakening the Karen language, and thus both hastening and delaying Burmanisation.

If Smeaton's ideas on language were not wholly acceptable, his conviction that the Karens should be encouraged to leave their exhausting life of subsistence agriculture in the hills, and move to the rich rice-growing lands of the plains was, as already indicated, entirely in accord with existing government policies.<sup>48</sup> One issue which concerned Smeaton was the problem faced by Karen villages who found Burmans, Chinese or Shans moving into their villages.<sup>49</sup> This difficulty had first come to Government attention shortly before the third war, in areas such as the Karen hills where ownership rights, as a result of the taungya system, were not established.<sup>50</sup> Smeaton and many of the missionaries wished to

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<sup>47</sup>Lewis, "Burmanisation", pp. 109-10.

<sup>48</sup>Smeaton, p. 236.

<sup>49</sup>Smeaton, p. 154.

<sup>50</sup>Burma, Settlement Department, Karen Hills, p. 1.

protect all Karens by restricting settlement in their villages to Karens alone. Before the Indigenous Tribes Protection Bill became law, it was submitted to interested parties for their comments.<sup>51</sup> The time, October 1886, was propitious for the Karens, as their services to the Government were uppermost in everyone's mind, and on the whole the comments were favourable.<sup>52</sup>

Some officials, however, expressed considerable doubt. One felt that the "filthy habits of Karens" were sufficient protection, and deplored recent developments, such as the arming of Karens, "for the express purpose of shooting Burmans". He was anxious that amicable relations should be restored between the two groups as quickly as possible.<sup>53</sup>

Another thought that "any attempt to artificially protect a weaker race against stronger ones in the struggle for existence" would probably be a costly failure, which could hardly be justified even if it were a success. He believed that if the Karens were not the weaker race, they would only need "fair play, not special protection". He saw in the bill the work of the missionaries who were really afraid of the "decay of their own influence and a reduction in the number of converts as a result

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<sup>51</sup> British Burma, Proceedings of the Administration of Burma in the Home (Legislative) Department, December 1886, pp. 5-14.

<sup>52</sup> British Burma, Home (Legislative) Dept. Proceedings, 1886; E.B. Cross to Junior Secretary of Chief Commissioner, Nov. 16, 1886, pp. 5-6. W.T. Hall, Assistant Commissioner Paungde to Deputy Commissioner of Prome, Nov. 20, 1887, p. 7. H. Buckle Deputy Commissioner, Amherst, to Junior Secretary of Chief Commissioner, Nov. 2, 1886, p. 10. J.B. Vinton to Secretary of Chief Commissioner of Burma, Nov. 12, 1886, p. 12.

<sup>53</sup> British Burma, Home (Legislative) Dept. Proceedings, 1886. Col. C.W. Street, Commissioner of Pegu Division to Secretary of the Chief Commissioner of Burma, Nov. 6, 1886, pp. 10-11.

of the free intercourse of the Karens with other races".<sup>54</sup> The Bishop of Rangoon also feared the legislation would have a "pernicious and demoralising effect", would "keep up race distinctions ... keep alive race animosities and ... tend to make the Karens more exclusive than they even are now".<sup>55</sup>

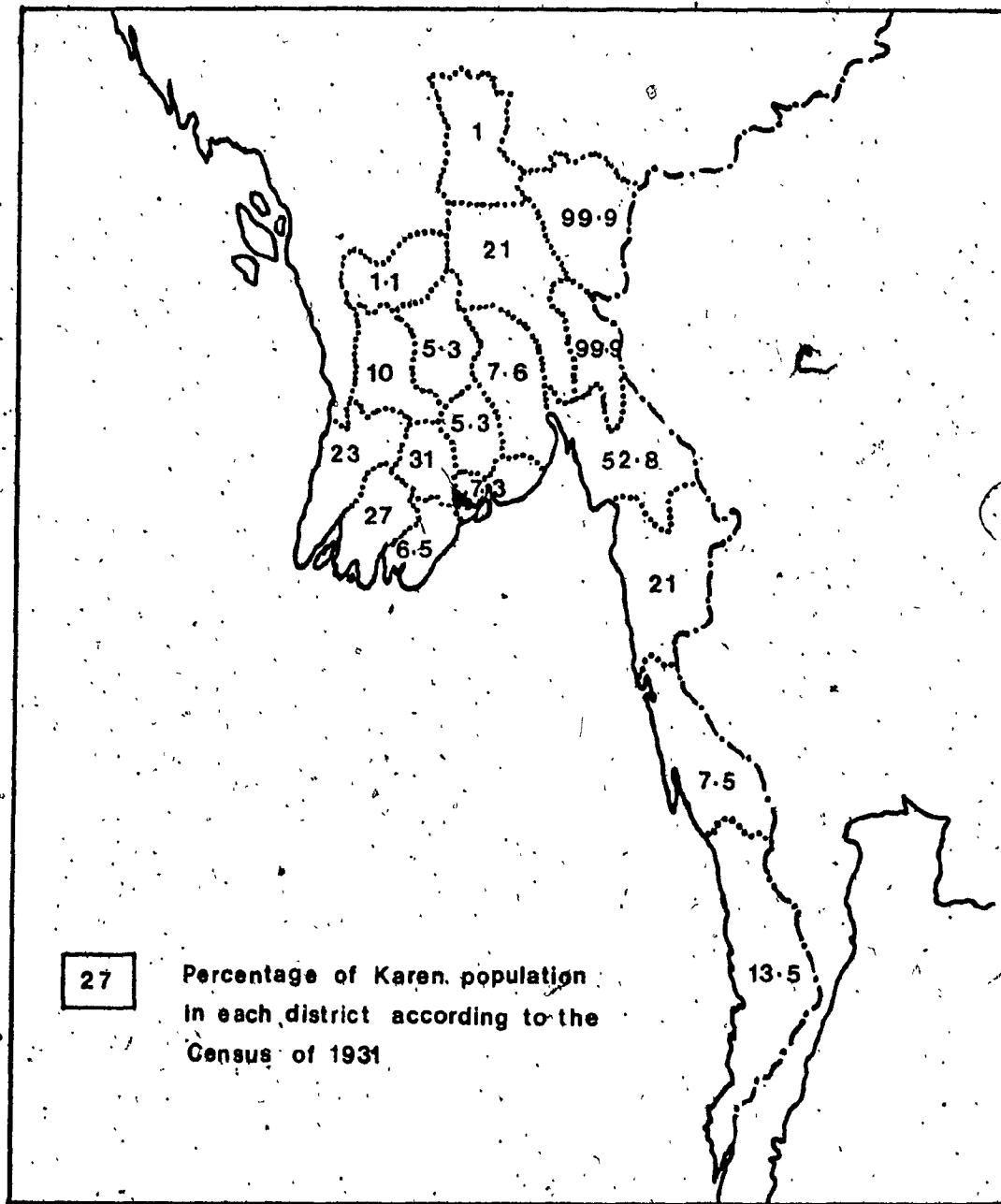
It is significant that at the high point of Karen popularity with the British, opposition to giving them special treatment, and concern about the divisive nature of the policy survived. Even at such a point Smeaton and the missionaries failed to win over all British officials to their opinion. The most important new element in the situation after the third war was, however, the awareness of the possibility that certain policies might lead to racial conflict in Burma. Officials might disagree over the advisability of dividing the races, but for the first time they were acting with the possibility consciously in mind.

Attempts by the British to encourage the Karens to move to the plains and construct permanent villages there dated back to the period after the first war and had been intensified after the second. Smeaton's suggestions to step up the campaign coincided with the Forestry Department's continuing desire to protect their teak from taungya agriculture. Reserved areas, where slash and burn techniques could still be used, were set aside in the hill districts, but as several levels of government were involved in the granting of such rights, the Karens, particularly those without missionary assistance, found it difficult to obtain the necessary permission,

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<sup>54</sup> British Burma, Home (Legislative) Dept. Proceedings, 1886. Capt. W.F.H. Gray, Dep. Commissioner Prome, to Junior Secretary, Chief Commissioner of Burma, Nov. 16, 1886, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> British Burma, Home (Legislative) Dept. Proceedings, 1886, Right Rev. J.M. Strachan, Lord Bishop of Rangoon to Junior Secretary to Chief Commissioner of Burma, Nov. 12, 1886, p. 12.



Map 4. Areas of Karen settlement

even though the right of appeal existed. Thus the move to the plains continued to accelerate under Forest Service pressure.<sup>56</sup> Some of the Karens who remained, however, did very well working for the Service, particularly in the planting of teak and the capture, training and working of elephants.<sup>57</sup>

One of the most momentous consequences of the move to the plains was the dispersal of Karens over a very wide area of the Delta. While this made eventual unification of the Karen people less likely, it also ensured that if any serious nationalist movement developed it would present an almost insoluble problem in terms of presenting realistic territorial demands.

There is evidence that the Christian Karens continued to do rather better than other groups in a period when the overall economic situation was deteriorating rapidly. Around 1900 they were still being described as "much more diligent cultivators", with well laid-out villages, spacious and substantial houses, and "thrifty and careful" habits, although the Pwos, less likely to be Christians, were noted for their "propensity for drinking and gambling" which caused many of them to lose their land.<sup>58</sup> In 1916 the Bassein Gazetteer recorded that twelve out of fourteen of the local Cooperative Credit Societies in the area were composed of Christian Karens,<sup>59</sup> whose settled communities made possible the mutual trust and

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<sup>56</sup> Nisbet, p. 61.

<sup>57</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karens of Burma, pp. 10 and 52.

<sup>58</sup> Nisbet, p. 319.

<sup>59</sup> Burma Gazetteer, Bassein, p. 54.

common interest necessary for the success of such societies. Ten years later a settlement report recorded the presence of a relatively peaceful and prosperous Karen Christian village of 700 inhabitants amidst the chaos, squalor and violence of the Delta area,<sup>60</sup> but at about the same time a missionary to the Karens expressed the opinion that the outlook, even for the Christian Karens, was not good. They were, he said, too timid and easily overawed, lacked initiative, and were usually as badly indebted as other Delta inhabitants.<sup>61</sup> Overall it seemed that of all the communities, those of the Christian Karens had the best chance of survival, while their heathen relatives fared even worse than the average agriculturalist.<sup>62</sup> For the prosperous, Karen identity was reinforced by consciousness of success and by such new institutions as the credit societies. For the failures assimilation into Burman society became a desirable goal.

Smeaton criticised British officials for forgetting the debts they owed to the Karens for their service during the second war.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Burma, Settlement Dept., Report on the Original Settlement Operations in the Labutta Township of the Myaungmya District, 1924-5 (Rangoon: Govt. Printing, 1926), p. 75.

<sup>61</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karen People of Burma, p. 92.

<sup>62</sup> For additional information see Burma, Settlement Dept., Report of the Operations of the Third Settlement in the Thabaung, Kyaunggon Kyonpyaw and Nhathainggyaung Townships, 1912-14, by P.E. Jamieson (Rangoon: Govt. Printing, 1915), p. 3; Report on the Settlement Operations in the Bawni Circle of the Pegu District, 1900-1901, by W.V. Wallace (Rangoon: Govt. Printing, 1902), p. 3; Report on the Second Settlement of the Toungoo District, November 1910-October 1913, by S.A. Smyth (Rangoon: Govt. Printing, 1914), pp. 2 and 11; Initial Report on the Revision Settlement of the Pyapôn District, 1921-1922, by O.M. Rees (Rangoon: Govt. Printing, 1923), p. 32.

<sup>63</sup> Smeaton, p. 61.

"In the face of neglect and discouragement they have served us nobly and well."<sup>64</sup> He charged that officials rarely bothered to visit Karen villages or get to know the timid people,<sup>65</sup> and quoted Vinton who foresaw that when the third war was over the Karens would be "as soundly hated as ever by the officials".<sup>66</sup> As a result of British treatment, he concluded, the Karens had turned not to their natural protectors the British, but to the missionaries, "and fortunate for us it is that the missionaries have always been the noble, high minded loyal men they are".<sup>67</sup> Many Burmans who felt that the Karens were unduly favoured,<sup>68</sup> would have taken issue with this picture of discrimination against the Karens, but forty years later the Karen leader San C. Po was to reiterate, with great emphasis, the conviction that the majority of British officials ignored, or even disliked Karens.<sup>69</sup>

An additional problem was the employment of Burmans in the lower ranks of the civil service, where according to Karen charges, they discriminated against the minority races and made it difficult for them to get just

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<sup>64</sup> Smeaton, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> Smeaton, p. 35.

<sup>66</sup> Smeaton, p. 20.

<sup>67</sup> Smeaton, p. 148.

<sup>68</sup> For example Ba Maw, Breakthrough in Burma (Yale University Press, 1968), p. 186.

<sup>69</sup> H. I. Marshall, Karen People of Burma, pp. 23, 87, 306. See also Jesse, p. 88, who states that under Sir Harcourt Butler the Karens felt better treated. It was during his period as Governor that a Karen was appointed to the Legislative Council, in 1915.

treatment.<sup>70</sup> More important than the actual reality of the situation was the fact that both Burmans and Karens perceived the situation in terms of discrimination against themselves. Both felt the British favoured the other, and resentment simmered until, in the Second World War, and again during the Insurrections, it reached boiling point.

Writing during the months following the conquest of Upper Burma, Smeaton forecast that pacification would prove to be a slow and difficult process. He therefore recommended the recruitment of a regular Karen militia, to be distributed in colonies all over Burma, in stockaded villages with special land privileges.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, however, many officials were coming to the conclusion that the arming of levies, useful as it might have been during the crisis, was not a policy to be prolonged. The usual problems had been encountered, but even more serious was the risk of setting one race against the other. Many loyal Burman officials had complained about the use of Karens in the levies and the exclusion of Burmans,<sup>72</sup> and Sir Charles Crosthwaite concluded that it was "inadmissible that the Government of Burma should prefer one race more than another". He therefore proposed to disarm the Karens as soon as possible, despite

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<sup>70</sup>For examples see Po, pp. 64, 74-75, 92-93.

<sup>71</sup>Smeaton, p. 5.

<sup>72</sup>British Burma, Home Dept. Proceedings 1887, Col. C.W. Street, Commissioner of Pegu, p. 47.

the expected protests of the missionaries. If the Karens wished to join the special police they would be encouraged to do so. He did feel, however, that Burmans were less likely to go through the necessary formalities and that Karens were therefore likely to predominate.<sup>73</sup>

Despite Crosthwaite's determination not to be seen to be exercising a preference for one race over the other, British policy during this period did, in fact, favour Karens over Burmans in connection with levies, military police, and enrolment in the army. In the period following the third war Burmans were distrusted and, in any case, many Burmans were not enthusiastic about doing military and police duties on behalf of their conquerors. In 1887 Karens were enlisted in the military police, and in 1891 a Karen battalion was formed. Discipline and alcohol proved to be problems, however, and the battalion was disbanded in 1899.<sup>74</sup> During World War One, Burmans were temporarily enrolled in the army, but the Karens, along with the Chins and Kachins, far outnumbered them.<sup>75</sup> This produced great Burman resentment, although as usual, the Karens felt that they were not given their due appreciation or promotions.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Crosthwaite, p. 80, quoting from his letter to Lord Dufferin, Sept. 30 1887.

<sup>74</sup> Crosthwaite, p. 131. H.I. Marshall, Karen People of Burma, p. 313.

<sup>75</sup> Furnivall, Colonial Policy, pp. 182-184, summarises the history of enrolment in the levies, police and army. By 1931, although the Burmans made up roughly seventy-five percent of the population, and the Karens ten percent, there were 1448 Karens but only 472 Burmans in the army.

<sup>76</sup> Po, p. 89.



The Third Anglo-Burmese War affected British-Karen relations profoundly, although not in the ways that Vinton and Smeaton envisaged. Until that episode it is hard to detect any conscious realisation on the part of British officials that a combination of British and missionary policies was creating a serious racial split between Karens and Burmans. The war illustrated with frightening clarity the extent of the hostility which existed, and as the more pressing problems of pacification were solved, the officials had time to assess the situation and plan policies accordingly.

As already noted, before the third war British policies had accidentally produced two contradictory trends, one tending towards the Burmanisation of the Karens and the other towards increased separation. Awareness of the problem did little to resolve these contradictions. Officials such as Smeaton felt that the experiment of protecting the Karen identity and culture was worth the attempt, while others wish to avoid any appearance of favouritism or divisiveness. The general results of British policy continued to be haphazard, and as a result both Karens and Burmans could find the grounds to complain of discrimination. Such were the policies on education, the police and army, and language. The policy of encouraging Karen movement to the plains increased assimilation of heathen Karens into Burmese culture, but where missionaries were present a greater sense of separateness was the result. The Karens continued to perceive their relations with officials as poor, while Burmans felt the treatment was preferential. Complicating matters further was the customary shift in interest on the part of the British. Once again, as memories of the war became dim, there was a "marked decline in the

cult of the Karen", noticeable during the first decade of the twentieth century,<sup>77</sup> and only slightly revived by Karen service during the First World War.

Smeaton believed that, in pursuing a policy of official neutrality towards religion, the Government was doing the Karens a disservice. The interests of the Karens and the Government, he insisted, were essentially one, since even the animists shared with the Christian converts the westerners' belief in a Messiah. Consequently, by openly encouraging the teaching of religion, the "British Government would in no sense be interfering with the religious freedom of the people" but rather "be fulfilling at once the historical destiny and universal wish of the people".<sup>78</sup> Since the majority of officials had at last realised the potential dangers of the missionaries promotion of the Karen cause, they were unlikely to endorse the nation-building dreams of the vociferous Vinton. As a consequence a pattern of relationships, similar to those after the first two wars, developed once again. For the missionaries, enthusiasm mixed with frustration was succeeded for a while by unadulterated frustration. As the period drew to a close the missionaries, however, began to reassess their attitudes towards Karen nationalism, and the 1920's were to open with

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<sup>77</sup> Alleyne Ireland, The Province of Burma (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), p. 64. See also Stuart, p. 188.

<sup>78</sup> Smeaton, p. 233.

a good deal of self questioning, as the American missionaries looked back on their role in this regard with growing uneasiness.

One reason for self doubt in the early decades of the twentieth century was that the Karen mission had reached a new plateau. The usual pattern of war, dramatic increase in conversions, and lull, was followed for the third time. Now, however, there was no prospect of another crisis to stimulate a wave of conversions. Heathen Karens were still becoming Christian,<sup>79</sup> but not at a sufficiently rapid rate to keep enthusiasm high. The policy of self-support was continued, but some of its disadvantages were becoming apparent. Every group of twenty-five to one hundred people expected to have its own pastor, and yet qualified men were not available. Of the 788 pastors in 1924, not one had a college education. Communities could offer little in the way of economic support and the pastor usually survived by farming, or marrying a rich wife.<sup>80</sup> One missionary described the situation as not so much one of self supporting churches as of "self supporting-pastors".<sup>81</sup> The churches had produced no great thinkers, were mired deep in old-fashioned rules and regulations, and were offering little to Karen youth, who were losing interest in religion.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Po, p. 63.

<sup>80</sup>Lewis, "Burmanisation", pp. 154-156.

<sup>81</sup>Harris, "Conservation", p. 162.

<sup>82</sup>Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 155.

While in many villages signs of the rural reconstruction programme, which had brought straight streets and substantially built houses about 1900, were still in evidence at the end of this period, it was obvious that education in health and sanitation had not gone far enough. Even in Christian villages filth, dysentery and a variety of diseases still went hand in hand.<sup>83</sup> Baptist schools continued but Karen Christians "fell below the average for all Buddhists in general literacy, although they took a high place for literacy in English".<sup>84</sup> Even the effects of the westernising influence, which the mission had exerted during the nineteenth century, were brought into question. A missionary in 1920 concluded that "the missionary, too, helped to make the economic condition acute. We have raised the standard of living. The impact of modern civilisation is breaking up the fabric of ancient institutions", and this he believed was "nowhere more acute than in the Christian community".<sup>85</sup>

There were, of course, some consolations for the missionaries. The material condition of the non-Christian Karens was significantly worse. Those of them who had moved to the plains encountered the most serious problems of agricultural indebtedness and with no pastor or missionary to organise them, could not take advantage of such ameliorating measures

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<sup>83</sup> A.C. Darrow, "Industrial Education in Burma", Baptist Miss. Review, 26 (March, 1920), 83-84.

<sup>84</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 35, quoting 1921 Census, Part I, p. 76.

<sup>85</sup> Darrow, p. 82.

as the credit societies. Their villages were noticeably more dirty and poverty stricken and had higher crime rates.<sup>86</sup> These, however, were the Karens that the men of 1886 had dreamed of converting, and there was poor consolation in reflecting that all Karens of note came from the Christian segment of the population.<sup>87</sup>

Unfortunately, one cause of missionary rejoicing during the third war lingered on into the twentieth century to become an embarrassment to the Baptists of the later period. Many Karen Christians continued to fear and hate the Burmans. Replies to a questionnaire on the desirability of devolution of power from the American missionaries to Karen leaders stressed that the missionaries still appeared in the light of protectors from Burman hostility. "If the missionaries should leave us the Burmans would oppress the Karens .... We fear that the predominant Buddhist population would certainly do what they could to suppress Christians".<sup>88</sup>

There were very few developments to counteract the tendency of the Christian Karens to keep themselves apart from the Burmans. Some Karen pastors, as a result of missionary urging to evangelise the Burmans, were persuaded to conduct some services in Burmese. Since this entailed learning about Buddhist beliefs, it was hoped that it might bring about a better appreciation of Burman-Buddhist culture and values,<sup>89</sup> a desire

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<sup>86</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karens of Burma, p. 39.

<sup>87</sup> Htin Aung, A History of Burma (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 314. Harris, "Conservation", p. 163.

<sup>88</sup> H.I. Marshall, "The Devolution of the Karen Churches", Baptist Miss. Rev. 28 (May 1922), 163.

<sup>89</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 114.

that would have shocked the missionaries of 1886. Meanwhile, some Roman Catholic Karen missions used Burmese in the mission schools.<sup>90</sup> However, most of those Karens who spoke Burmese were Pwos, a largely non-Christian group, who were increasingly describing themselves as Burman and thereby apparently shrinking in numbers; while those describing themselves as Sgaws, proportionately the more Christian, were becoming more numerous at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>91</sup>

In the 1920s the self-doubts of the missionaries finally surfaced in print. Undoubtedly the political events of the period stimulated public debate, but many of the missionaries must have been prey to private doubts in the course of the previous decade, particularly since Burmese nationalism came to the fore during the First World War.

On one side were the missionaries who were disturbed by the Christian Karen desire that their race should remain a separate and protected entity within Burma. This point was put by the Marshalls, husband and wife. Writing in 1922 the missionary put forward the view that Karens should not attempt to develop "as a separate people living apart and seeking advantages for themselves". Instead they should forget racial feeling and join with their neighbours in working for the good of Burma.<sup>92</sup> His wife forecast that "as years go on the wall of separation between the two

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<sup>90</sup> In 1921 Baptists made up seventy-five percent of the Karen Christians, twenty percent were Roman Catholics, and three percent Anglicans. Lewis, "Burmanisation", pp. 139-140.

<sup>91</sup> Harris, "Conservation", p. 149.

<sup>92</sup> H. I. Marshall, Karen People of Burma, p. 34.

leading races of the country will gradually grow less". However, her belief that unity would be achieved through the spread of Christianity to all the inhabitants of Burma indicates piety rather than realism.<sup>93</sup>

On the other side were those missionaries who, like E.N. Harris, believed that the Karens had a right to survive as a separate entity and that missionary policies in that direction had protected a valuable and virtuous race. This belief can be traced back to the missionaries of the period of the Third War, and to Smeaton, who had written that it was not a dying race that Christianity had got hold of, but "a young and vigorous race springing up with marvellous elasticity from the oppression of centuries". He continued

"I believe that devotion to the Christian faith has supplied the one link that was wanting to complete what may be called the federative capacity of the Karens and make their national unity strong enough to resist all disintegrating forces. Nothing that the Government has yet done has succeeded in rousing the people to a sense of their dignity as men or a nation. The Government has given them nothing around which their national aspirations could rally. Christianity at the hands of the American missionaries has done this. Once a village has embraced Christianity it feels itself head and shoulders above its neighbours .... The coming of Christianity has honoured their national traditions. They feel themselves and their ancestors justified before all men. A new life opens out to them - a new career for which their forefathers had sighed in the ages of hardships and oppression and slavery. They are proud to devote their lives to working out the high destiny which they believe God had, in the long past, prepared for them."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> H.W. Marshall, "Karen Progress", p. 410.

<sup>94</sup> Smeaton, p. 198. Vinton's comments in this regard have already been noted. In 1902, one of the veterans of 1886, Alonzo Bunker, published his novel Soo Thah, appropriately subtitled A Tale of the Making of the Karen Nation. Smeaton's statements were extensively quoted by Po.

Harris did not express himself so unreservedly, but he expressed pleasure that the last census report had shown that the Karens were not "a decadent race ... losing their language and their distinguishing racial characteristics". He had feared that the Karens were rapidly becoming Burmanised, and that their language and literature would disappear within a few decades, but found that, on the contrary, the Karens particularly the Sgaws were increasing in numbers.<sup>95</sup> He ascribed this increase to Government protection and the effects of Christianity. To those who asked whether this "persistent differentiation of the Karen race is desirable" he replied that any race "which has the virility to assert itself and maintain its integrity in the face of disintegrating influences such as surround the Karens, may be supposed in the very nature of the case to be a worthwhile race". Furthermore, he asserted that the Karens were "far and away the most virtuous people in the East", that Christianity had been the fulfilment of their traditions, and the only means by which they would have accepted social and economic improvements. He also maintained that the missionaries had done nothing to deliberately separate the Karens from the Burmans, and cited the example of the adaptation of the Burman alphabet to Karen as an illustration of this.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Harris, "Conservation", pp. 147-8.

<sup>96</sup> Harris, "Conservation", pp. 151-2.

It was certainly true that many of the missionary actions which had proved divisive had been guided by expediency rather than deliberate nation building, and that some consequences of policies could hardly have been foreseen. Moreover, the missionaries had naturally been thinking in the context of continuing British power. The men of 1886 could hardly have been expected the plan for British withdrawal at the time when that country's powers seemed to be at their zenith. The very nature of their fervour, the conviction that their purpose was to bring men to Christ seemed to justify expediency and blinded them to the long term consequences of their actions. Nevertheless from the Burman point of view missionary shortsightedness and opportunism were unforgiveable, and the long term consequences were disastrous.

In one sense developments during this period rendered the debate among the missionaries both irrelevant and futile. While it would be untrue to represent the Karens during the earlier period as totally passive, the pawns of the Burmans, British or missionaries; nevertheless much of their history up until the 1880s can be written in terms of external forces, acting upon them and moulding them in particular ways. There had been earlier moments of self assertion, often taking the form of traditional uprisings of a religious and political nature already described; but with the creation of the Daw Ka Lu, the new Karens, those created by the combination of missionary and Government actions, began to take control of their own affairs. The period after the third war can be seen in this light, and as a preparation for the overtly political struggles of the

twenties, thirties and forties, over which the missionaries had little control.

While some Karens were taking control of their own affairs, there were still others who were very little affected by the changes which had taken place since 1826. This was particularly true of those who had remained in the remote hill areas, especially the Kareni, although two agencies of change, the missionaries and the traders, penetrated even where the British did not go. Shyness, and an addiction to dirt, drink and drugs, except in Baptist circles, remained distinguishing characteristics according to several observers, although one official commented, with traces of regret, that they did not drink "with the persistency ascribed to them by earlier visitors".<sup>97</sup>

One feature of Karen life changed little. There seemed no diminution in the willingness of many Karens to follow leaders who combined religious with political promises. In this period many such cults blended Christianity with the earlier mixture of Buddhism and animism.

Immediately after the third war the missionaries were hopeful that the Burman depredations on Karen villages would persuade many animists to seek protection from the Baptist Church. West of Toungoo, however, they found that "a great many had already become disciples of a false prophet who, taking advantage of the disturbed state of their minds,

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<sup>97</sup> J.G. Scott, Burma: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day (London: Fisher Unwin, 1924), p. 355. Marshall, Karens of Burma, p. 9. Lewis, "Self Supporting", p. 187.

has started a sort of religion teaching that a great personage is coming who is to conquer everything".<sup>98</sup>

The Shwegyin area, a fertile ground for "Karen King" cults also produced its prophet. Ko San Ye, sometimes known as Ko Pi San, born near Papun in 1845, became famous as a Buddhist-animist hermit, known both for his virtue and his money making abilities, selling charms, spells, talismans and magical safety pins. The British government became suspicious that he might lead a rebellion in traditional style, and moved him, with his followers, to a more accessible area on the plains. In 1890 he and his adherents were converted by the Baptists, but he was never wholly under missionary control. He contributed generously to the building of the Vinton Memorial Chapel, but also spent great sums of money on the construction of about a dozen giant teak buildings, each large enough to shelter about two thousand people. Their purpose was variously reported as providing rest houses for travellers, meeting halls for the Daw Ka Lu, or temples for the Karen King who, some said, was Ko San Ye himself. He owned two cars, being one of the first men in Burma to have such a vehicle, and had a steam boat of his own. Increasing friction with the missionaries developed over his unwillingness to restrain his excesses, his increasing debts and rumoured orgies. In 1901 he and his disciples separated from the Baptists, founding the Free Church Mission. He came under the influence

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<sup>98</sup> B.P. Cross, "Eastern Yoma Karens", Baptist Miss. Mag., 67 (October 1887), 400.

of an English Baptist minister and sank even deeper into debt. His body was finally found at the bottom of a deep well, presumably as a result of suicide, in 1912, but many expected him to rise from the dead, and his movement continued until the Second World War, splintering several times.<sup>99</sup>

Another Karen prophet, "Bishop" Thomas Pelleko, once an ordained Anglican priest, developed the doctrine that the name of Christ should be associated with a bow, the two words sounding somewhat similar in Karen, and that sins could be removed by shooting arrows over Church buildings for a considerable fee. In 1898, and again, permanently in 1906, he was ejected from the Anglican Church and subsequently took the title of Bishop. As had the doctrine of every other Karen prophet, his programme took a political turn, when in 1910 he was arrested for fomenting a rebellion and encouraging his followers not to pay their taxes. After ten months in gaol he was released on the grounds that he was less of a rebel than a religious crank. By 1921 his followers numbered about four thousand, and the movement was publishing a monthly paper in the Sgaw language.<sup>100</sup>

The repeatedly resurgent cults of these Karen Messiahs drew energy and ideas from Christianity, but their roots were deep in the pre-western Karen tradition, in which the "King" combined both a religious and a political role. These movements illustrate the resilience of Karen culture,

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<sup>99</sup> In 1927 there were six thousand to seven thousand followers. Lewis, "Self Supporting", pp. 282-305. Po, pp. 43-45.

<sup>100</sup> Po, p. 45. Lewis, "Burmanisation", pp. 151-152.

absorbing into itself elements of western religion, and transforming resentment of Burman rule into opposition, albeit unsophisticated, to that of the British. They indicate that the Karens were not simply puppets of the British Government or of western missionaries, but that they retained an awareness of their identity that owed only superficial debts to outside influences.

While Karen "Messiah" movements often took on an anti-British cast, the attitude of orthodox Baptists, even after they had emerged from the close tutelage of the missionaries, remained generally loyal. Queen Victoria's Jubilee was productive of much enthusiastic response. A "Humble Memorial" signed by a number of Karens "on behalf of their nation", thanked God that the British conquest had brought "prosperity and progress" to the Karens "to a greater degree even than the other races in Burma" and recorded a feeling of gratitude for the many benefits of Her Majesty's reign, "a debt which a nation's life blood would not fully repay".<sup>101</sup> During the First World War the Karens responded enthusiastically to the need for soldiers "with a number exceeding that of any race in Burma".<sup>102</sup>

In contrast, however, throughout this period, must be noted the continued complaints against the British, who were accused of despising or ignoring the Karens, and allowing continued harassment by

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<sup>101</sup>Browne, pp. 321-324 gives full text of speech.

<sup>102</sup>Po, p. 41.

Burman officials. These complaints, reported by Smeaton in 1887, were repeated by numerous Karens during the early decades of the twentieth century. A Delta Karen Barrister, trained in England, became a champion of the Karen cause, and a non-cooperator with the Government. He believed ~~that~~ "the people are not happy because they are not prosperous, not contented and not satisfied, and because they are not given justice, one of the three gems of the state, viz. Justice, Freedom, and Equality".<sup>103</sup> As the overtly political battles of the twenties increased in intensity, even the most pro-British Karens, such as Dr. San G. Po, attempted uneasily to combine remonstrance with loyalty.

If British rule did not please all Karens, western influences were still very strong. Even the remote areas were touched, though not transformed, by the trader and the missionary. The former brought Manchester

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<sup>103</sup> Po, p. 53, quoting Saw Pa Dwai, the barrister. Lengthy specimens of his unusual oratorical style are given.

<sup>104</sup> Sir San Crombie Po, M.D., was born in Bassein, qualified as a doctor in the United States and then returned to his birthplace, spending fifty years in the service of the Karen cause. In 1916 he became the first and only Karen on the Legislative Council, actively recruited Karens during World War One, and served on the Whyte Committee. His book, Burma and the Karens, was written for the arrival of the Simon Committee. He argued that a separate Karen State affiliated to Burma but run by Karens with British help; should be created from the Tenasserim Division, otherwise extremists might turn to violent measures. Left in charge of Bassein by the British during World War Two he did much to avert violent clashes with both the B.I.A. and the Japanese, even continuing to operate in his hospital with the help of his daughter, also a doctor. He died in 1946, convinced that the Karens should throw in their lot with Burma, and his family supported the Burmese Government throughout the Insurrections, his daughter becoming a member of U Nu's second cabinet.

cloth to replace local products, nails as a substitute for bamboo thongs in house construction, and even western machinery.<sup>105</sup> The latter brought education, which among many less trivial things resulted in some intriguing choices of Christian names. One visitor encountered a Caroline, a Rosalind whose mother had been reading Shakespeare, a Porphyrio Po Ba, and both a Napoleon and a Charlemagne.<sup>106</sup> Despite the evidence of the last two names, ideas of democracy and western style government also spread among the Karens.<sup>107</sup> They also took more readily to the use of western medicine than the Burmans.<sup>108</sup> In the 1880s an American-trained Karen doctor set up his own small hospital, planning to train his own assistants and develop a small community,<sup>109</sup> and this tradition was continued by the most well known of all Karens, the indefatigable promoter of the Karen cause, Dr. San C. Po, also American trained.<sup>110</sup> Nursing became one of the traditional occupations for Karen women, as did teaching for both sexes, and many girls became children's ayahs.<sup>111</sup> Work in the homes of foreign families must have

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<sup>105</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 158.

<sup>106</sup> Morrison, pp. 52, 83, 125.

<sup>107</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 158.

<sup>108</sup> Burma Gazetteer, Bassein, p. 123.

<sup>109</sup> Burma Settlement Dept., Bassein and Thongwah, p. 13.

<sup>110</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karen People of Burma, p. 310.

<sup>111</sup> Jesse, p. 87.

contributed to the process of westernisation, and some even went abroad with the families they served, to England or to America.<sup>112</sup> Karen willingness to accept the material culture of the west has already been noted, as has their acceptance of such institutions as Credit Societies. During World War One Karens served abroad, in Mesopotamia, Egypt, India and the Malay States, and they cannot have failed to acquire new attitudes and ideas as a result, as did many other colonial peoples who served their rulers in this war. The same conflict also gave many of them a headstart in the career of motor mechanic, as a result of skills learned in army service.<sup>113</sup>

A settlement report written at the end of the nineteenth century shows some of the richer Karen cultivators caught between two worlds. In their newly built and substantial houses they had deck and lounge chairs, but no dining chairs as many of them still preferred to eat while sitting on the floor. They usually had European lamps, but still used unrefined oil. Their houses were decorated with Christmas cards, cheap coloured prints and photographs from illustrated papers. Sons, home for the holidays from schools in Bassein or Rangoon brought back with them new standards of comfort and "all the glory of brown boots and silk stockings",<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karens of Burma, p. 11.

<sup>113</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karens of Burma, p. 33.

<sup>114</sup> Burma, Settlement Dept., Report on the Revision Settlement Operations in the Myaungmya District; Season 1897-8 (Rangoon: Govt. Printing, 1899), p. 7.

The importance of the missionary role in initiating this interest in things western is obvious, as is the influence of the trader. The Burman was, of course, influenced by the latter, but Christian Karens were open to persuasion by both groups, and thus more willing to abandon the old ways, ideas and artefacts.

If westernisation was a potent force, however, particularly for the Christian Karens, the tendency towards Burmanisation was equally important, especially among the Buddhists and animists.

By the early 1920s it was evident that many Karens, particularly those on the plains where contact with Burman neighbours was closer and more frequent, had adopted much of Burman culture. Guns, looms, agricultural implements and techniques, houses, kitchen utensils, mats, dress, food, hairstyles, medicines, music, musical instruments, and customs were extensively imitated.<sup>115</sup>

Buddhism was increasingly widely adopted, until about three-quarters of the plains Karens declared themselves Buddhists at the end of this period. Traditional animist practices could still be retained by such converts and thus Buddhism demanded less of them than Christianity. In addition, there was little hope of achieving equality with the westerners, even by conversion, whereas acceptance by, and even integration with, Burmans was a possibility for those who accepted the majority religion.

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<sup>115</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation" pp. 40, 51-2, 54, 57.

As Buddhists, Karens could attend festivals and pagodas and even make mixed marriages. Astrology, puberty rites, the more relaxed Burman attitudes to marriage and divorce, funeral and childbirth customs were increasingly adopted, and an additional advantage was that Karen Buddhists were likely to be better treated by Burman officials.<sup>116</sup>

Many Karens, however, tried to preserve their isolation from Burmans, either by living in separate hamlets, or in distinctly Karen sectors of a mixed village or town. However, in many cases Karen families moved into predominantly Burman areas and the process of Burmanisation began. Typically the new arrivals first learned a few words, such as weights and measures, necessary to enable them to bargain and not be defrauded, although Karen women, generally less outgoing than the Burmans, tended to hold aloof, continued to use Karen at home, and resisted changes in clothing and culture. Burman and Karen children, however, played together, used the Burman language, and the boys usually attended the local monastery school together. Children would go through the Burman puberty rites of tattooing and earboring, and often came to despise their parents' retention of Karen customs. Girls were sometimes sent to mission schools where Burmanisation might temporarily be halted, but usually the period in school would be short and irksome. Often both boys and girls would subsequently marry Burmans, bringing up their children according to Burman customs. Thus many Karens were first culturally, and then in the

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<sup>116</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", pp. 106-107, 115-117. "Self-Supporting", p. 343.

next generation, physically assimilated.<sup>117</sup>

Although missionary actions in the field of education tended to retard the acquisition of the Burmese language, other forces were working in a contrary direction. Burmese was necessary for government service, and at a lower level for village trading, and therefore it was found desirable to have some knowledge of it. So diminished was the use of Karen that missionary schools even found it necessary to hold classes for Karens to teach them how to speak their own language, considering the subject so important that students were permitted to study Karen instead of taking Bible classes.<sup>118</sup>

Sometimes the missionaries approved of the process of Burmanisation, particularly in the matter of bathing and the changing and washing of clothes, activities traditionally more popular with Burmans. Adoption of Burman style clothes facilitated this, as handwoven Karen garments were more expensive and difficult to make, and Karens often possessed only one smock as a consequence.<sup>119</sup>

However, missionary attitudes were in general hostile to assimilation, particularly since it involved the adoption of at least nominal Buddhism. Burman contempt for Karens also tended to retard Burmanisation<sup>120</sup> as did the increasing unification of the Karen tribes

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<sup>117</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", pp. 21-2, 121, 130, 159-163.

<sup>118</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", pp. 72, 118.

<sup>119</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", pp. 59, 63.

<sup>120</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 12.

themselves, which provided an alternative and increasingly successful image with which to identify.

By 1900 there was already a Karen national anthem, "expressing very proud and lofty sentiments". It was considered significant that the last note on which the Karen anthem ended was the key-note for the opening of God Save the King, and the Karens also had their own "National Dum Flag".<sup>121</sup>

The Daw Ka Lu also continued to function, although references to it during this period are scattered and meagre, indicating that it did not live up to its earlier promise. It should be noted, however, that as a secular organisation it may have received scant attention in missionary accounts. It continued to promote the educational and economic interests of the Karen race as a whole and to represent it at public functions.<sup>122</sup> A weekly paper, the Daw Ka Lu, written in Sgaw, was printed for many years in Bassein. In 1916, its circulation was about one thousand copies.<sup>123</sup> During the First World War, the Association proclaimed Karen loyalty and did some active recruiting.<sup>124</sup> There were to be problems in the twenties, however, as the younger generation lost interest, branches split away from the parent organisation, and a rival organisation, the Pwo Karen Organisation,

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<sup>121</sup> Baldwin, p. 109.

<sup>122</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karen People of Burma, p. 312.

<sup>123</sup> Compare the twice weekly English paper, with its circulation of six hundred, the English-Burmese weekly with two hundred, and the Burman weekly, eighty. Burma Gazetteer, Bassein, p. 128. See also Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 125.

<sup>124</sup> H.I. Marshall, Karen People of Burma, p. 312.

was formed.<sup>125</sup> The last development indicates to what extent, despite the original intentions, the Daw Ka Lu had come to represent the Sgaw Christian Karens.

As early as 1886 some of the missionaries recognised that, however great their influence on the Karens had been in the past, as Karen self-confidence increased, even the Christians were less willing to submit to missionary control. Nichols, a missionary at Bassein, analysed the reasons for this change in a letter written in 1886. At first the Karens had been willing almost to worship the white missionaries because they seemed so superior, and yet condescended to become involved with Karen problems. As education became more widespread, however, they no longer felt so inferior. Furthermore, he thought, as the Karens began to "chafe under foreign rule", they identified the missionaries with the British because both were the representatives of western culture, and attacked both, therefore, insisting "there should be independence of foreign superintendence". He illustrated this trend by referring to the Daw Ka Lu, with its secular aims, wholly independent of missionary controls; and also to the desire on the part of the older missions to run their own affairs, in his opinion not very successfully. A certain note of hurt pride runs through the analysis, but he concluded "tendencies must be taken into account by the missionary, and so far as laudable, encouraged;

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<sup>125</sup> Lewis, "Burmanisation", p. 125.

and so far as they are the outcome of individual ambition to be wisely checked as far as may be practicable."<sup>126</sup>

The developments of the 1880s might have been expected to lead to great strides towards Karen emancipation from external controls, as Nichols forecast. Developments which the missionaries had initiated in earlier periods, such as the growth of plains villages, continued, with little or no need for close missionary supervision, but the kind of self assertion described by Nichols did not, apparently, increase significantly in this period. It was not until the highly politicised developments following the First World War that the Christian Karens reasserted, with any vigour, their desire for control of their own churches and lives.

The Third Burmese War was perceived by the missionaries, Christian Karens and Burmans alike as a holy war, one in which religion and culture, as well as governments, clashed. In the heat of battle it is difficult to distinguish between related groups, and many of the heathen Karens were drawn to the missionaries for protection. Some of these remained to swell the ranks of the converts of the period, but many others drifted back to their old lifestyles, or to their traditional refuge in difficult times, a Karen Messiah of some kind. The most important consequence of the war was, contrary to contemporary missionary thought, less the positive strengthening of the concept of a Karen nation, then the negative development of a deeply rooted Karen-Burman hostility. It was possible that such suspicion

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<sup>126</sup> C.A. Nichols, "Annual Report from Bassein, Burma", Baptist Miss. Mag., 66 (August, 1886), pp. 333-4.

and hatred might be allayed, but only if there were no further events to stimulate resentment and fear.

The war contributed less than might have been expected to closer Karen-British relations. Missionaries and Christian Karens alike believed their efforts went largely unappreciated, and delays over the issuing of gun licenses and the organisation of levies appeared to be the product of British mistrust. The Government's gratitude immediately after the war did little to improve matters. Smeaton's pleas on behalf of the Karens reinforced both their own ideas that they were poorly treated and Burman beliefs that they were unduly favoured, without affecting very significant changes in British policy. Protection of Karen lands, encouragement of officials to learn the language, and other measures, did more to convince the Burmans that the Karens were in a favoured position than the Karens themselves. Smeaton's suggestion that the Government should experiment by allowing a nation in embryo to grow, found little favour with officials, who were beginning to realise the problems that divisive policies might cause, while his book provided ample ammunition for later Burman historians and politicians who could use it as an illustration of British "divide and rule" techniques. Throughout the period the Karens continued to feel slighted by English and Burman officials alike, blaming the ignorance of the former and deliberate spite of the latter. In legal matters the need to use the Burmese language put them at a disadvantage, and even in the economic sphere the growing problem of agricultural indebtedness affected the majority of Karens including many Christians. This made the movement

to the plains, which the Government had encouraged, seem to be less of a blessing than they had formerly believed. At the same time, while Burmans were offended by the preference shown for recruiting Karens into the military police and army, the Karens themselves felt their services were not valued highly enough, and the lack of officers of their own race seemed to be a clear indication that they were despised.

Missionary propaganda at the time of the Third War undoubtedly inflamed the Christian Karens with a sense of their religious, and even racial, superiority. This mood, however, seems to have subsided with the crisis, leaving an uneasy feeling that the promise of 1886 had not been fulfilled, and a strong conviction, shared by the Burmans, that the two racial groups were natural enemies. It is ironic that as missionary convictions that their policy had been the correct one declined, Karen belief that their race formed a justifiable separate entity grew, under the stimulus of the political developments after the First World War.

The Karens themselves were emerging from the tutelage and control of the missionaries, although not with the vigour their mentors of the eighties had feared. This may have been partly due to the unfavourable economic climate, since a people struggling with increasing indebtedness has little energy to assert itself in other ways. One portent of the coming changes, however, was the increased pace of westernisation, which in greater or lesser degree, affected all the inhabitants of the area, bringing not only changes in material culture, but in knowledge of the world and awareness of the possibility of political change.

Although Christian Karens were less subject to the processes of Burmanisation, the majority of Karens were animist or Buddhist, and in the material, social and religious spheres they came strongly under the influence of their Burman neighbours. Westernisation was not necessarily the enemy of integration, since it was a process which Burmans were also undergoing, and consequently in some ways led to greater closeness between the races. So powerful was the movement towards Burmanisation that, had it not been for the political awakening during and after World War One, it might have counteracted the tendencies towards a split between the Burmans and the Karens. The weakness and fragmentation of the Daw Ka Lu provides evidence for this possibility.

The missionary forecasts of 1886 came to seem less appropriate as the Third War receded into the past, and an observer towards the end of this period might well have found it hard to believe that those prophecies would soon seem only too accurate again.

## CONCLUSIONS

Three fundamental questions arise from this examination of Karen history in the period preceding the First World War.

The first concerns the nature of the changes which had taken place in the attitudes of the Karens towards themselves and others, and the extent to which they had become aware of themselves as a distinct and separate group, with interests common to themselves but in conflict with those of the races around them, particularly the majority Burmans.

The second concerns the nature of the policies which, accidentally or deliberately, had contributed to or detracted from the development among the Karens of a sense of separation.

The third, inevitably more speculative, is the consideration of the extent to which the developments of the years up to World War One contributed to the insurrections thirty years later.

The first question can best be answered by comparing the situation of the Karens at the arrival of the westerners and approximately a hundred years later, towards the end of the First World War. Their language, economic condition, religion, geographical situation, relationships to government, to Burmans and to the British form convenient points of reference for such a comparison.

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century the Karens were observed to be a loosely related group of clans, speaking numerous dialects which were almost incomprehensible to other groups, and showing centrifugal tendencies towards greater separation. Those in contact with Burmans had learned to speak the majority language, a tendency which greater contact might be expected to accelerate. The likelihood of achieving linguistic unity, except by wholesale adoption of Burmese, did not seem very great.

A century later two contrary developments were in evidence. Among Christian Karens, Sgaw was increasingly becoming the dialect most widely understood, partly as a result of the larger number of Sgaw converts, and partly as a consequence of its use for the majority of missionary translations into Karen, although English was also a medium of communication among highly educated Karens. Localised dialects were dying out to some extent, as trade and church meetings promoted greater contact between neighbouring Karen clans. On the other hand, as a result of increased contact with Burmans, a greater number of Karens were speaking the language of the majority. In reaction to the increase in both Sgaw and Burmese speakers, however, some Pwos were beginning to emphasise their own linguistic individuality, although on balance this appeared to be a forlorn attempt to cling to the past.

On the whole the likelihood that linguistic unity would be achieved through increased use of Burmese seemed to be the greater probability, since the proportion of Christian Karens (the promoters of

Sgaw) was small. Subsequent developments, however, might make the use of a Karen language more desirable.

At the beginning of the period the Karens were primarily agriculturalists, although the casual collection of honey, wax, semi-precious stones, rhinoceros horns and other natural products allowed some diversification. Their lifestyles varied, however, from the slash-and-burn subsistence agriculture of the hills to the more sophisticated cultivation of the Delta farmers with their surpluses for sale to neighbouring Burmans and Mons.

A century later agriculture was still the primary occupation, but it took a wider variety of forms, and the Karens thus occupied had even less in common with each other. While on the one hand there were still hill cultivators using the swidden techniques of their ancestors, others had learned to grow oranges, betel and sessamum. On the plains large numbers of them had adopted the Burman techniques of wet rice cultivation. Even in the rich lands of the Delta, however, their economic situations varied. While the majority of Karens had become as deeply ensnared in debt as the rest of the Delta inhabitants, a few, mainly Christians, had survived by good management, missionary assistance and the adoption of such western ideas as cooperative credit societies. Other Karens, primarily those educated in mission schools, were teachers and pastors, some were soldiers, mechanics, nurses, and a few of the highly educated had become lawyers or doctors.

Despite studied efforts dating from the 1880's by the Christian Karens not to become estranged from their fellows, it was inevitable that there would be even less in common, in occupational and economic terms, between the Karens of the twentieth century than there had been between their ancestors in the nineteenth. It would be difficult, even with the most conscientious attempts on the part of the better educated, to build any sense of unity from this economic diversity.

Before the arrival of the British the majority of Karens were animists, whose customs and beliefs varied as much as their dialects. Resemblances could be detected, but differences were equally noticeable, despite later missionary propaganda to the contrary. Those in contact with Burmans had often adopted Buddhism, although in many cases, this was out of convenience, and they retained many of their animist practices.

A century later variety in the matter of religion was even greater. The hill Karens were still mainly animists, but about three-quarters of those who had moved to the Delta were nominally Buddhist. A total of about one-sixth of the Karens were Christian, although their numbers seemed greater as a result of their educational and occupational attainments. Even this group was fragmented, however, about three-quarters of them being Baptists, and the rest Roman Catholic or Anglican. This situation did not augur well for united action unless circumstances arose which would drive the less educated and less economically successful behind the Christian minority, who were capable of decisive and informed leadership.

The fact that the Christians were the most visible and vociferous of the Karens, however, tended to distort the picture which others, including the Burmans, held of the Karens as a whole. If "to be a Burman is to be a Buddhist", then the Karens seemed to be outsiders, and the fact that the majority of them were not Christian was forgotten, for the Buddhists and animists among them were far less conspicuous, and their numbers were ignored.

In the nineteenth century the majority of Karens lived in the Kareni area, and in the hill regions to the south along the Salween. Some had drifted into the most inaccessible parts of Tenasserim, and a few had ventured down into the Delta area where they lived in scattered communities as inconspicuously as their commercial function would allow. In the last two regions they formed a tiny minority of the population, and were widely separated from each other, but even in the areas to the north where the inhabitants were almost exclusively Karen, there was very little contact between the villages, as the geographical and traditional barriers were considerable.

By the twentieth century, some of the geographical barriers had been overcome. The trader, the missionary and the British official had, each in his own way, contributed to the breakdown of the barriers between the clans in the hill areas. By contrast, however, the British-sponsored movement to the plains dispersed the Karens over an enormous area of the Delta. The inhabitants of this region included both the poorest and wealthiest, the least and the most educated, the most Burmanised and the most conscious of their Karen identity. Should any Karen nationalist

movement develop, this widespread diffusion would present a problem, as no territorial entity could satisfy the requirements of such a community, and yet, including as it did the most potentially politically conscious of the Karens, the loudest demands could be expected from the region where they would be the hardest to fulfil.

Politically the pre-conquest Karens had been fragmented, although their system of government, by chiefs and elders with the consent of the villagers, was almost universal among them, and provided a possible point of contact. Villages were usually the largest units of government they recognised, however, although in the Kareni paramount chiefs did from time to time gain power over larger areas, and in Burma the hamlets were subordinate to the system of oks and myooks. The closest which Karens ever came to overcoming this tendency to political fragmentation was in the Karen King cults that arose from time to time and which sometimes brought together Karens from different areas and backgrounds. It may be presumed, however, that whenever these movements strayed from the religious to the political, that they were quickly and expeditiously dealt with by the Burmese government.

By the time of the First World War some steps had been taken which helped to overcome this tendency to disunity. The British desire to deal with tidy units strengthened the three chieftainships of the Kareni. Within British Burma a relatively uniform system of administration put Karens everywhere into the same relationship with the government, and their experiences in dealing with it formed a bond of common experience,

although on a larger scale this could be said of all the inhabitants except in the Frontier Areas, regardless of race.

The establishment of the Daw Ka Lu, with its avowed intentions to unite the whole Karen race, represented an intention rather than an actual achievement, and despite its financing by Ko San Ye and its recruitment campaign during the First World War, it was a relatively feeble instrument for acquiring political power. The flag and Karen National Anthem can be regarded in the same light. The lack of interest on the part of Karen youth was a clear indication of the Association's weakness of appeal, as was the founding of the Pwo Karen Association. Nevertheless, the very existence of the idea that unity was possible between Christian, Buddhist, and animist, rich and poor, educated and untutored was significant, and even more important was the fact that it was promoted by Karens acting on their own initiative and without missionary sponsorship.

Equally important was the increasing political awareness of at least the Christian minority, and their relatively sophisticated ability to manipulate the techniques of government, which they had learnt through long apprenticeship in Baptist organisations, from village churches to All-Burma Conventions. A Karen, San Crombie Po, had even been chosen to be a member of the Legislative Council in 1916, although the educated Karens felt frustrated at the overall failure of the British Government to recognise their worth by employing them to any great extent in the Civil Service. If events should require political ability it was available,

and the Christian minority had already demonstrated their willingness to throw in their lot with the rest of the Karens.

The concept of a Karen "nation" had little currency outside Christian circles, however. There the idea had grown from small beginnings in the casual comments of missionaries thinking in the alien terms of the west; had flowered prematurely, and almost withered, in Mrs. Mason's active mind; sprung into full and exotic bloom under the frantic ministrations of the missionaries of 1886, only to fade away to near extinction by the beginning of the twentieth century. The climate of the times was not suitable for continued growth. The seed, however, had been planted and lay dormant. New conditions might cause it to stir into life again, and if they proved more suitable, it might yet grow and thrive.

For the majority of the Karens the concept of a Karen nation was not only something alien, the very condition of being a Karen was, if not a matter for shame, at least not a matter for pride. The increasing use of the Burmese language and adoption of Burmese customs and religion all indicated a desire to be assimilated by the majority, rather than to vaunt one's origins. Should the situation change, however, the idea and the leaders were available, and the idea of Karen nationality might find wider acceptance. The Christian Karens were already largely beyond the control of their missionaries, and thus, even if the Americans were to repudiate the nationalism their predecessors had tried to instill, as they were to do in the 1920's, it would have little effect on the Karens.

To a great extent the attitudes of a people to themselves are

formed by those around them, particularly if they are in a minority position within a larger political unit. At the beginning of the period the Karens under Burman control were a subject people and, in particular those who were not Buddhist, were considered to be inferior, figures of fun to be mocked for their foolish ways. In contrast those beyond the borders were thought to be wild and savage. The impossibility of determining whether the Karens were unduly harassed by the Burmans has already been discussed at length, but they believed themselves to be an oppressed people, and their conviction was reinforced, at least among the Christian segment of the population, by missionary propaganda.

By the twentieth century two contrasting self-images had developed. Many of the Buddhist Karens, and some of the animists, were conscious of a sense of inferiority, and would have been content to have been accepted into the Burman population. Indeed, by a process of marriage and cultural assimilation, such a trend was actually in progress.

The Christians, on the other hand, had been infused by the missionaries with a sense of self-worth, and even of superiority. This was reinforced by their educational and economic success. The other side of the coin, however, was the growth of a deep rooted fear and distrust of the Burmans, which the events of the three Anglo-Burmese wars exacerbated. This might have been expected to affect only the relations between the Christian Karens and the Burmans, but the latter tended to class all Karens together in this regard, a potentially dangerous development which was to culminate in the B.I.A.-Karen clashes of a later date. Thus what might

have been hostility between a small group of Karens and the dominant race in Burma became, by the process of stereotyping, a deep distrust separating the two ethnic groups.

In some ways, however, the Burmans and Karens were closer by the beginning of the twentieth century than they had been a century before. Both groups had been subject to the effects of western culture and consequently had more in common with each other, in both material matters and the realm of ideas. Seeds of division lay even here, however, since the concepts of nationalism and responsible government filtered through to both groups from their ultimate source in the west.

Attitudes to the British were not universally favourable among the Karens at the beginning of the twentieth century, despite the impression that the events at the time of independence might convey. The first contacts with the British, during the earliest of the three Anglo-Burmese wars, seem to have been markedly commercial, although the Mon-Karen rebellion in the Delta after the British withdrawal indicates that the presence of a potential conqueror could trigger revolt. In the second war enthusiastic response came largely from the Christian Karens, as it did again in the third. Karen King cults directed against the British, as successors to the Burmans, indicate a fundamental opposition to authority. Even the relationship between the Christian Karens and the British developed considerable undertones of resentment, the former berating their rulers for failing to recognise the virtues and usefulness which were so obvious to the missionaries. The majority of Karens on the

plains had not even as much reason as the converts for feeling grateful to the British, for the rising tide of agricultural indebtedness and anarchic violence threatened to drown them along with their Burman neighbours.

Thus the situation by the second decade of the twentieth century was by no means clear cut or simple. In some ways the Karens had moved closer to an awareness of a common identity among themselves while, in other ways, disintegrating tendencies could be seen to be at work. That the situation had changed significantly in the century following western intervention was undeniable, but which trend would prove to be dominant would have been hard to predict.

The second question which arises from an examination of this period concerns the nature of the actions and policies which, accidentally or deliberately, contributed to the changes which took place in Karen attitudes. The traditional approach to this question is to allot blame, disclaim responsibility or justify past actions. While these are natural reactions on the part of politicians and nationalists on all sides, they obscure the real nature of the developments, which were often less the result of actions taken with conscious deliberation, than out of expedience, haste, ignorance or lack of foresight. Also obscured are the vacillating policies and goals of the groups concerned, and the many internal disagreements and contradictions inherent in their decisions and actions.

The importance of Buddhism to the Burman sense of identity was recognised long before Burman nationalism became a force with which to reckon. This may help to explain why the Mons, despite their history of bloody conflict with the Burmans, were observed to be disappearing by assimilation into the majority group in the early twentieth century, while others such as the Karens became a more distinct element. Consequently any development which led to conversion to a religion other than Buddhism was considered to be seriously divisive.

Christianity, particularly in the form purveyed by the Baptists, had in many ways a strong appeal for the Karens. One reason for this attraction was the close relationship which both Karens and Burmans observed, although with different reactions, between the interests of the British and the missionaries. An alliance was suspected as soon as the first war broke out, and the suspicion was confirmed by the missionaries' assistance to the British at the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Yandabo. From minor tasks, such as the translation of letters, to major contributions in the form of military aid in the second and third wars, the missionaries were obviously wholeheartedly in favour of the British cause. The British appeared to reciprocate, with personal and official help to the Baptists, donations of money and land, protection and support. It was also apparent that in religion, skin colour and lifestyles the Americans and British were alike. Consequently to throw in one's lot with the missionaries was, hopefully, to achieve favour in the eyes of the new rulers. Double security seemed to be the result.

Furthermore the missionaries appeared capable of manipulating the incomprehensible laws made by the British, and could gain the ear of officials in ways impossible for a Karen. Missions also offered medical assistance and famine relief during times of crisis. Nor did they seem to be quite as alien as the representatives of the British Government since both by accident and by design their organisation and attitudes fitted in well with those of their potential converts. This was particularly true of the Baptists whose strict moral regulations matched traditional Karen attitudes to such matters as marriage and honesty. Total immersion also appealed to animist Karens by reason of its direct dramatic impact. Baptist hymns evidently suited Karen musical tastes as numerous visitors testified. The comparatively simple and direct nature of Baptist doctrines were more easily grasped than those of the Catholics or Anglicans, although they had an advantage in that they both permitted the use of alcohol.

The decentralised form of church government favoured by the Baptists both fitted in with traditional tribal government and strengthened Karen abilities to organise. Semi-formal church meetings took the place of councils of elders, the pastor replaced the local chief, the American missionary succeeded to the paramount authority, while the confederacies of clans were transformed into the various church associations. The choice of Karen as the language of conversion made acceptance easier, while the integration of their legends into Baptist teachings both gave the new religion an aura of familiarity and regenerated the traditions

themselves, preserving them permanently in such compilations as the Karen Thesaurus. The use of the most able Karens as teachers and pastors, although out of necessity rather than design, further promoted conversion, since these men understood the thought processes of their fellows, and could adapt the new religion to local ways.

The decision to employ education as an instrument of conversion was crucial. More than any other single step this offered the Karens the status their inferior position as a subject people had previously denied them. Had the missionaries followed Malcom's advice in the 1830's, the situation a century later might have been very different. However, believing that western education was an effective instrument against Buddhism, and correctly surmising that it was the most potent inducement to the Karens to make contact with the church, the missionaries insisted on continuing the policy. The failure of both monastic schools, and until a relatively late date, the government establishments to provide an attractive alternative, ensured that the Karens came to think of the missionary institutions as the best source of western education. The Baptists therefore benefitted to a considerable degree from the rejection of Malcom's recommendations made during the early years of the mission.

Just as the adoption of Christianity increased the gulf between Burmans and Karens, so did the Karen support of the British conquerors which made them traitors in Burman eyes. British policy, at least until the third war, was based almost exclusively on expediency, with little or no regard to the long term consequences of any action. Thus the British

used Karen help in all three Anglo-Burmese wars, and also in World War One, yet despite the gratitude officially expressed and the constant missionary urging, did little to capitalise upon Karen support during the interwar periods. With the realisation during the third war that a dangerous degree of hostility had been created, the British became more cautious about showing overt favouritism, but were not above using the hostility when it suited them, as in the creation of Karen military and police units. On the whole, however, although the British became more aware of the danger of provoking racial animosity, their policies remained haphazard and contradictory, causing the Burmans to believe that they favoured the Karens, and the Karens to consider that they preferred the Burmans.

While the Karens believed themselves in general unappreciated, some British officials and policies caused them to feel a degree of warmth towards their conquerors. Men like Phayre, Butler and Smeaton were generally regarded as sympathetic to Karen problems. Loans of money and grants of land may also have evoked some gratitude, but as these were often channelled through the missionaries, the latter probably seemed to be the real benefactors. In fact it is doubtful whether, without constant missionary propaganda, the Karens would have seen the British as protectors and saviours at all. British rule, however, enabled the missionaries to function successfully in the first place and, at least until the conquest of Burma was completed, it was in their interest to support the British cause, often more enthusiastically than the British

themselves. Consequently they urged the Karens to fight for the British, personally led their protégés into battle, and cast the British in the role of the legendary younger white brother, all the while berating the officials for their lack of appreciation. Baptist high schools taught English, which freed the Karens from the need to learn Burman to obtain an education, and at the same time gave them a greater, if false, sense of identity with their rulers.

Although these considerations apply mainly to the Christian Karens, many children spent at least a short time in local village schools run by Baptist teachers, and thus acquired a smattering of missionary attitudes. Furthermore, British rule was, in general, less disturbing for the Karens than for the Burmans. The British substitution of geographical units of government for those of the Burmese which were largely based on social divisions, was less upsetting for the Karens, who were accustomed to government by village rather than occupation. In addition, with the British conquest, the Burmans lost their independence, the Karens merely substituted one master for another. The Burmans lost status and self confidence, the Karens gained the hope of improving their circumstances. The Burman religion lost state support and fell into confusion and disrepute, the Karen animists had no such organisation to lose, and some at least could turn to a new religion which offered considerably more than was theirs before.

Thus the British government appeared in a positive light to those Karens who became Christian, although towards the end of this period even they were taking over the traditional missionary role of complaining about lack of appreciation. Non-Christian Karens, though less enthusiastic,

did not usually feel as negatively towards the British as did the Burmans. Resentment on the part of the latter, however, led to increased hostility to the Karens.

In general, a very potent force for the growth of separatist feeling is hostility between majority and minority groups. A number of developments during this period contributed to the growth of such animosity. Some were the results of deliberately divisive policies, or of decisions taken with the full knowledge of the possible consequences; others were accidental; while not a few fell into the grey area in between.

Many missionary and Burman accounts describe a deeply rooted hatred for the Karens on the part of their rulers during the pre-British period. Accounts of punishing taxation, vicious treatment and unfair exaction of services run through Baptist literature. All these charges are vigorously denied by Burman historians and nationalists. As previously noted, the truth is hard to determine, but the legends lingered on, and became as potent as if they had been indisputable.

As a result of the three wars the Burmans came to regard the Karens, almost without exception, as traitors and undoubtedly took their revenge as effectively as they could. Added bitterness was injected into the situation by the insistence, on both sides, that the third war was holy. Under British rule Burman hostility continued to be made manifest by Burman subordinate officials, although to an extent which can only be guessed.

British policies contributed to the deep divisions, although usually officials acted out of a sense of crisis rather than a deliberate

attempt to divide and rule. The use of Karens during the wars, the attempts to form levies and the appointment of Karen magistrates to the annoyance of Burmans, fell into this category. Policies which, directly or indirectly, enabled Karens to compete with Burmans in education and the acquisition of land, seem to have been accidental. Decisions following the third war in connection with the army, police and land protection were made with greater awareness of the possible consequences, although not with the deliberation suggested by Smeaton.

Missionary policies had much to do with the growth of mutual hostility. The deliberate fostering of "a Karen identity" they justified by extolling Karen virtues. Stories of Burman persecution they accepted uncritically and passed on. They considered Burman Buddhists to be not only misguided but evil, and the British therefore to be saviours. In their own eyes all this was justified by the supreme cause they served. Probably too they envisaged a British Empire that would last into the unforeseeable future, and the realisation in the twentieth century that things were changing, came too late.

National differences between Burman and Karen also played their part. Most observers agreed that the shy, quiet Karen had little in common with the quicksilver Burman. The cementing force of Buddhism was also absent in most cases, and even when animist Karens adopted the religion of the majority, it was rather out of convenience than conviction.

Even if there had been no overt hostility between Burmans and Karens certain developments in addition to those already mentioned during the century following the British arrival contributed to the physical and cultural separation of the races. The two groups attended different

types of schools, Karen women resisted integration, and the very proximity of other races led, at least initially, to vigorous attempts to preserve their racial identity.

An increase in Karen self-confidence also contributed towards a division of the races. Practical as well as more theoretical education, books, newspapers, travel to India or the United States for further training, experience in the use of democratic methods, self support, Home Missions, and economic successes all contributed to bolster the self confidence of the Christian Karens. The Government added to the effects of missionary policies by accepting Karens into the army, admitting one to the Legislative Council, and widening the range of jobs and experience open to them. Positive experiences ensured that the Christian Karens at least would not be hesitant about demanding a role in the country's affairs if the opportunity arose.

The Christians were, however, by far the most successful, and little could be expected in the way of Karen achievements if only one-sixth of their number was involved. Nor could much be done if the clans remained separate, or if new divisions developed among them.

The Christian Karens made heroic efforts, at first encouraged by their missionaries who hoped to convert the entire race, to draw together Karens of different backgrounds, as the establishment of the Daw Ka Lu witnessed. If not totally successful with the race in general, at least within the Christian community many divisions were overcome. As most high schools were virtually free, rich and poor could attend together. Sgaw became more widely read. Both the seminary for pastors and Judson College

brought together Karens of many different tribes, and the Home Missions further contributed to this trend.

The frequent resurgence of the Karen King traditions cut across both clan and religious distinctions and thus even outside the Christian community, movements existed which both symbolised and reinforced the realisation that Burmans and Karens were distinctly different and potentially in conflict. Such movements owed only superficial debts to Christianity, springing from deeper roots within specifically Karen culture. Demands within the Christian missions for greater Karen power also indicated an unwillingness to remain subordinate much longer.

While many factors contributed to the growth of a sense of Karen identity, others tended towards the merging of the tribal people into the Burman majority.

Christianity had a strong appeal, but in some ways the pull of Buddhism was even more powerful. Many animist beliefs and practices could be incorporated into it, and adherence to it did not demand, at least in practice, as strict a lifestyle as did the Baptists. To converts it offered the possibility of assimilation into the majority, whereas Christianity could never guarantee equality with the white foreigners. For the new arrival on the plains it was all pervasive, and less alien than Christianity, and the Buddhist Karens were sometimes better treated by petty Burman officials. Missionary protection could not always guarantee the same to their converts. Furthermore divisions and even competition between the Baptist, Catholic and Anglican missionaries were

confusing, and the doctrinal vagaries of semi-Christian messiahs, poorly educated pastors, and even Mrs. Mason, proved thoroughly bewildering. Consequently large numbers of Karens particularly on the plains were converted to Buddhism rather than Christianity, while in the hills the traditional animist practices, unencumbered by prohibitions against alcohol or drugs, survived among the majority of Karens, despite signs following each war that conversion to Christianity might take place en masse.

Burmans were not always seen as the ogres that missionary propaganda described. Assimilation was taking place even before western intervention, and the early accounts describe joint villages, considerable trade, the use of Burmese and observance of Buddhist practices among Karens in the Delta. The terms Mon-Karen and Burman-Karen both illustrate the process of assimilation. Furthermore, even Christian Karens were not necessarily the enemies of the Burmans for the latter were not always hostile to Christianity. Judson, Kincaid and others had received kindly treatment, and even between the first two wars, the fear of losing population, and therefore taxes, had led to a policy of toleration on the part of the Burman government. Even the bitter violence of the war periods did not totally preclude eventual reconciliation. By the twentieth century the Mons, once bitter enemies, seemed to be almost totally assimilated into the Burman majority, although their adherence to Buddhism may have been the major factor in making this possible.

Although among the Christians there could be detected an increasing sense of separation from the Burmans, the overall trend was to much

greater contact, and even interaction. The most important element in this development was the British sponsored movement to the plains, largely dictated by a desire to protect the teak forests. It is conceivable that, as it had in the past, this movement would have continued anyway, although at a much slower rate, for another effect of the British conquest was increasing overpopulation of the hill areas, apparently accelerated by the more stable conditions. The move to the plains increased Burmanisation in every conceivable way, from the material to the spiritual and cultural. Even the missionaries approved certain features of this trend, particularly the increase in personal cleanliness which ensued. Government requirements for grant-aided schools, through most of the period, promoted the use of the Burmese language, as did its use in the law courts and marketplace. The missionaries contributed to this trend towards the end of this period by encouraging Karen pastors to learn and use Burmese in order to evangelise their neighbours, while their earlier adoption of Burmese characters for written Karen may have made the reading of written Burmese somewhat easier for literate Karens. With the use of the Burmese language came the attitudes, ideas and cultural patterns which modes of speech transmit.

A people with a sense of inferiority may well wish to be accepted by, and to integrate with, the group which seems to be superior. Five-sixths of the Karen people had no missionaries to assure them of their extraordinary qualities. Without the influence of outside agencies this sense of inferiority might have led to an absorption into the majority race. In many ways the British increased the Karen sense of inferiority. Their law undermined the traditional customs of the Karens; their plans

for Karen magistrates came to nothing; the move to the plains ended in indebtedness; Karen levies foundered in seas of recrimination. Even the missionaries contributed in a small way to the sense of failure by helping to create rising expectations which, in the economic climate of the Delta of the twentieth century, could not be realised; while by paying Burman pastors more than those of the Karens they even touched upon the raw nerves of the Christian community. Nevertheless, if a sense of Karen self worth lay anywhere, it was among the Christians, although it might be transmitted by them to other Karens if unity could be maintained.

There were, however, strong tendencies towards disunity. The different dialects remained although they were fewer in number, and the increasing preponderance of Sgaw led to a Pwo backlash. Geographical divisions persisted and the Karens were now spread even farther apart than they had been. The differing lifestyles of hill and plains Karens persisted, and education brought deep divisions to both groups. In the hills the competition for survival became even more intense, as land was included in British forest reserves, and as the population increased with greater security, medicine and sanitary measures, and as the soil became progressively more exhausted. As a consequence the Karens continued to drift to the plains, where competition in the chaotic delta areas reached violent heights.

As there can be no tidy answer to the first question concerning the condition of the Karens at the time of the First World War, so there is no neat description which will fit the processes which brought about the complex changes set in motion by the arrival of the westerners.

Both missionary and British policies had the consistency of expedience, but little more. It may be argued that missionary activities produced a group more self confident, organised, unified and educated, but they directly affected only a minority of the Karens. The effects of British policy were considerably more widespread, but in many ways tended to encourage the disintegration and disappearance of the race. Their very presence, however, and some of their actions, encouraged the missionaries. Nor can the Karens and Burmans be seen simply as pawns in a game played by others, as was becoming obvious by the end of the period with which this study is concerned.

The third, and more speculative, question concerning the extent to which the developments of this period contributed to Karen participation in the insurrections thirty years later can only be satisfactorily answered in the context of the events of the three decades following World War One. Two trends could be detected by about 1918, one towards the disintegration and disappearance of the Karen race, the other towards its strengthening and separation under leaders of the Christian minority.

The politicisation of Burman affairs, beginning during World War One and accelerating during the twenties and thirties; the B.I.A.-Karen clashes of World War Two and the Karen assistance to the Allied Forces during that period; and the urgent demands for Burmese independence following the war, all contributed towards the emergence of a wider Karen nationalism. If the groundwork had not been laid during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this could not have been the case, but the direction which Karen affairs would take was in no way certain as the First World War drew to a close.

# APPENDIX

## Dr. Mason's report on his school<sup>1</sup>

The school opened on the 22nd of April, and closed on the 16th of October. The course of studies was:

- (1) READING. The Karens ... are exceedingly deficient in the art of reading.
- (2) WRITING. There has always been a daily exercise in writing.
- (3) ARITHMETIC. ... the best of them made amazingly slow progress in understanding it.
- (4) GEOGRAPHY. For about four months Mrs. Mason gave a lesson in geography daily.
- (5) ENGLISH. Whole class studied English daily with Mr. Bennett, not with a view to speaking the language, but to enable them to use English maps, and globes, etc., and with a view to their ultimately using tables or logarithms and other mathematical tables.
- (6) USE OF GLOBES. A few studied ... and were able to find the latitudes of the principal cities, the declination and longitude of the sun, and the place of the ecliptic for any given day of the year.
- (7) ASTRONOMY. I did little more than explain the motions of the sun, moon, and earth, and show the cause of the eclipses.
- (8) GEOLOGY. A beginning made, rather than a recreation ... to enable them to recognize the compositions and names of the most common rocks with which "they are familiar in the jungles".
- (9) MEDICINE AND MATERIA MEDICA. On some of the most prevalent diseases I wrote short articles, about twenty in number ... I wrote also fifty or sixty short articles on the materials of which medicines are composed. (Experiments were performed.) Mere verbal instructions are nearly worthless. This is the language and observation on the spot.
- (10) COMPOSITION. Advance seen in fewer errors in speaking.
- (11) PUBLIC SPEAKING. A part of the class was required to preach in the evenings occasionally; and their preaching was subjected to criticism.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, "Self Supporting"; pp. 90-91, quoting The Annual Report of the American Baptist Missionary Union (Boston, 1844), pp. 86-88.

(12) TAKING NOTES ON SERMONS. The pupil must give an account of the sermon heard on the previous evening.

(13) STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES. The principal study has been the Bible.

Helper, John William. Amherst Town in the Tenasserim Provinces. Calcutta: G.H. Huttman; 1839. Miscellaneous information on inhabitants, situation before British arrival and much more.

Second Report; The Provinces of Ye, Tavoy and Mergui on the Tenasserim Coast, Visited and Examined by Order of the Government, with a View to Develop Their Natural Resources. Calcutta: G.H. Huttman; 1839. A public relations job describing the area as a good place to live, with great potential for development.

Third Report from Tenasserim. Calcutta: G.H. Huttman; 1839. Very informative on a wide variety of topics, some relating to the Karens.

Kurz, Sulpice. Preliminary Report on the Forest and Other Vegetation of Pegu. Calcutta: C.B. Blewis; 1875. Serious concern about the fate of the teak forests if taungya system allowed to continue.

Lewis, G.C. The Tribes of Burma. Ethnographical Survey of India, Burma. Rangoon: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1910. Includes material on the Karens.

O'Riley, E. Report of Mr. O'Riley's Mission to Karennee. Calcutta: O.T. Cutter; 1865. Interesting references to minor Karen tribes and their relations to the Red Karens dominating the area.

Sconce, G.C. Journal of the Salween Surveying Expedition. Calcutta: O.T. Cutter; 1865. Brief but useful references to the Karens.

Selected Correspondence of Letters Issued from and Received in the Office of the Commissioner of the Tenasserim Division for the years 1825-6 to 1842-3. Rangoon: Superintendent of Government Printing; 1929. Practical studies of the area and correspondence concerning policies. Excellent for pre-British Karen situation. Should be read with Furnivall's "Leviathan" in hand.

Wilson, Horace Hayman, ed. Documents Illustrative of the Burmese War, with an Introductory Sketch of the Events of the War and an Appendix. Calcutta; 1827. Much descriptive and topographical material, journals and accounts in Government Gazette, depositions of Gough, Judson and others, Karen taxes and other miscellanea.

iv) Settlement Department. Reports published in Rangoon by the Superintendent of Government Printing. These reports include valuable social and economic information on the inhabitants of the areas surveyed.

Adams, H. Report on the Settlement Operations in the Tharrawaddy and Prome Districts 1883-4. 1885.

Bridges, J.E. Report on the Settlement Operations in the Bassein District, 1879-80. 1880.

Report on the Settlement Operations in the Bassein and Henzada Districts, 1883-4. 1885.

Grant, C.F. Report on the Original Settlement Operations in the Thakan and Kalateik Tracts of the Pyapon District, 1912-13. 1914.

Grantham, S.G. Report on the 1914-1916 Revision Settlement of the Promé District. 1917.

Hall, W.T. Report on the Settlement Operations in the Henzada District, 1885-6. 1886.

Jamieson, P.E. Report of the Operations of the Third Settlement in the Thabaung ... of the Bassein District, season 1912-14. 1915.

Jenkins, T.M. Report on the Settlement of the Karen Hills Subdivision, 1884-5. 1885.

Lowry, W.E. Report on the Revision Settlement Operations in the Myaungmya District, season 1897-8. 1899.

Mackenna, J. Report on the Revision Settlement Operations in the Bassein District, season 1897-8. 1899.

\_\_\_\_\_. Report on the Revision Settlement Operations in the Henzada District, 1899-1900 and 1900-1901. 1901.

McKerron, R.G. Report on the Revision Settlement Operations in the Hanthawaddy District, season 1897-8 and 1898-9. 1900.

Mathews, H.M.S. Report on the Settlement Operations in the Bassein and Thongwa Districts, 1888-9. 1890.

\_\_\_\_\_. Report on the Settlement Operations in the Thongwa District, season 1889-90. 1891.

Morgan Webb, C. Report on the Settlement Operations in the Mergui District, season 1905-6. 1907.

Parrott, B.A.N. Report on the Settlement Operations in the Syriam Township, Hanthawaddy Division, 1879-80. 1880.

\_\_\_\_\_. Report on the Settlement Operations in the Hanthawaddy and Pegu Districts, 1882-3. 1884.

Rees, O.M. Initial Report on the Revision Settlement of the Pyapon District, 1921-2. 1923.

\_\_\_\_\_. Report of the Mergui Resettlement, season 1920-21. 1923.

Smyth, S.A. Report on the Second Settlement of the Toungoo District, November 1910 - October 1913. 1914.

Tin Gyi, U. Report on the Original Settlement Operations in the Labutta Township of the Myaungmya District, 1924-5. 1926.

Wallace, W.V. Report on the Settlement Operations in the Bawni Circle of the Pegu District, season 1900-1. 1902.

b) Union of Burma.

Union of Burma, Government of Burma and the Insurrections. Rangoon, 1949. Includes detailed series of maps showing areas held by the various rebel groups at different dates.

2) PERSONAL ACCOUNTS BY OFFICIALS AND ARMY OFFICERS

Browne, Edmond Charles. The Coming of the Great Queen: A Narrative of the Acquisition of Burma. London: Harrison and Sons; 1888. Written by an eyewitness of the third war, this includes a favourable, but patronising, section on the Karens.

Buchanan, Francis. Copy of a Journal of Progress and Observations during the Continuance of the Deputation from Bengal to Ava in 1795 in the Dominion of the Burma Monarch. India office MSS European C 13. Brief but important references to Karens in the Delta area in the pre-British period.

- Cox, Hiram. *Journal of a Residence in the Burmhan Empire and more particularly of the Court of Amarapoorah*. London: John Warren, 1821. Very brief references.
- Crawford, John. *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General of India to the Court of Ava*, 2 vols. London: Henry Colburn, 1834. Includes details of Burman taxation of Karens, and eyewitness account of Talain-Karen revolt in the Delta after the first war.
- Crosthwaite, Charles. *The Pacification of Burma*. London: Edward Arnold, 1912. By the head of the civil administration in the pacification period after 1886. Includes copies of official letters, some concerning the Karens.
- Cuming, E.D. *In the Shadow of the Pagoda*. London, W.H. Allen and Co. Ltd.; 1893. These sketches of "Burman life and character" include descriptions of Karen village life.
- Forbes, C.J.F.S. *British Burma and Its People*. London: John Murray; 1878. Includes study of Karen customs and animist practices, by a Deputy Commissioner of Burma.
- Fytche, Albert. *Burma Past and Present*. London: C. Kegan Paul and Co.; 1878. Includes references to the Karens by Phayre's successor as Chief Commissioner. He had personal experiences with the Karen levies in the 1850's.
- Gordon, Charles Alexander. *Our Trip to Burmah with Notes on that Country*. London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, n.d. Diary and notes written after a trip in 1874, criticizes missionaries and Karens.
- Hall, D.G.E., ed. *The Dalhousie-Phayre Correspondence, 1852-1856*. London: Oxford University Press; 1932. Brief references to Karens after the second war.
- Laurie, William F.B. *Our Burmese Wars and Relations with Burma; Abstracts of Military and Political Operations, 1824, 1825, 1826 and 1852, 1853, with Various Local Statistical and Commercial Information*. London: W.H. Allen and Co.; 1880. Brief and generally hostile references to Karens. Good example of British "forgetfulness", see Pegu, by the same author.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Pegu, being a Narrative of Events during the Second Burmese War*. London: Scott, Elder and Co.; 1854. Much more favourable to Karens than in his later work. Brief references to their characteristics, little on actual military assistance.
- McMahon, A. Ruxton. *Far Cathay and Farther India*. London: Hurst and Blackett Ltd.; 1893. Includes a chapter on the Karens which is based on information from his other book.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Karens of the Golden Chersonese*. London: Harrison; 1876. Much more detailed. Based on surplus information collected for *Toungoo Gazetteer* from Mason, O'Riley and his own experience. Describes Karen life, legends, past, in sympathetic but balanced manner.
- Nisbet, John. *Burma under British Rule and Before*. 2 vols. London: Constable and Co.; 1901. Includes a miscellany of Karen customs and practices encountered by the author while he was Conservator of Forests.

Robertson, Thomas Campbell. Political Incidents of the First Burmese War. London: Richard Bentley; 1853. Brief but useful references by a retired civil servant.

Scott, James George. (Shway Yoe) Burma as it Was, as it Is, and as it Will Be. London: George Redway; 1886. Not as useful as his Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_. Burma, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day. London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd.; 1924. Less useful than his Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_. Burma: A Handbook of Practical Commercial and Political Information. London: Alexander Moring Ltd.; 1911. Classic example of a British official who thought the Karens timid and stupid. Includes descriptions of life in the hills.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Burman, His Life and Notions. First published 1882; reprint ed. New York: Norton Library; 1963. Includes the Karen book legends.

Smeaton, Donald Mackenzie. The Loyal Karens of Burma. London: Kegan Paul, Trench Co.; 1887. A plea for British encouragement of Karen nationhood, written by a civil servant during the crisis of the third war. Strongly influenced by contemporary missionary demands. Provided much material for Karen campaigns of the 1920s.

Snodgrass, J.J. Narrative of the Burmese War, Detailing the Operations of Major General Sir Archibald Campbell's Army From its Landing in Rangoon in May 1824 to the Conclusion of a Treaty of Peace at Yandabo in February 1826. London: John Murray; 1828. Brief but important references to relations between the British army and the Karens.

Symes, Michael. An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava, sent by the Governor General of India in the year 1795. London: W. Bulmer and Co.; 1800. Includes the account of the Carianers given to him by Sangermano.

Trant, Abercrombie. Two Years in Ava, from May 1824 to May 1826. London: John Murray; 1828. Written by an army officer, describes Sir Archibald Campbell's first meeting with the Carians.

White, Herbert Thirkell. Burma. Cambridge: University Press; 1923. General references to the Karens by a retired Lieutenant who had been a civil servant in Burma for thirty-three years.

Yule, Henry. A Narrative of the Mission Sent by the Governor General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855 with Notices of the Country Government and People. First published London; 1855. Reprinted London: Oxford University Press; 1968. Very brief references.

### 3. MISSIONARY MATERIALS

#### a) Personal accounts by Missionaries

Many of these works were published in both the United States and Britain and may therefore be obtained in different editions.

Bunker, Alonzo. Sketches from the Karen Hills. London: Fleming H. Ravell and Co.; 1910. Mainly concerns the Red Karens and includes stirring chapters on Bunker's leadership of the Karens into battle during the third war. Covers the period from 1866 to the end of the century.

Cochrane, H.P. Among the Burmans. London: Revell and Co.; 1904.  
Less useful for the Karens than for the Burmans.

Judson, Ann H. An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire: In a Series of Letters Addressed to a Gentleman of London. London: Butterworth and Son; 1823. Written before the Judsons had encountered the Karens, this is chiefly useful as an illustration of the difficulties involved in converting the Buddhist-Burmans.

Malcom, Howard. Travels in South-Eastern Asia; Embracing Hindustan, Malaya, Siam, and China with Notices of Numerous Missionary Stations and a Full Account of the Burman Empire. 2 vols. London: Charles Tilt; 1839. This invaluable book really lives up to its subtitle.

Marks, J.E. Forty Years in Burma. Edited, with introduction and selection of author's letters and reports by Rev. W.C.B. Purser. London: Hutchinson and Co.; 1917. Less useful than most other personal accounts.

Mason, Ellen Bullard. Civilizing Mountain Men, edited by L.N.R. London: James Nisbet and Co.; 1862. Battles against official hostility and Karen apathy fought by a strong-minded supporter of Christianity and female education. Particularly useful for the early years of the Toungoo Mission and the move to the Plains.

Titcomb, J.H. Personal Recollections of British Burma and its Church Mission Work, 1878-1879. London: Wells Gardens, Darton and Co.; 1880. By the first Anglican Bishop of Rangoon. Not very useful for the Karens.

b) Memorials and Eulogistic Literature with Useful Primary Content.

Baillie, J. Rivers in the Desert: or Mission Scenes in Burma. London: Sealey, Jackson and Halliday; 1859. Based on a variety of memoirs of Judson and his wives. Most of the material can be found elsewhere.

Carpenter, C.H. Self Support Illustrated in the History of the Bassein Karen Mission, from 1840 to 1880. Boston: Rand Avery and Co.; 1883. Less an history than a collection of letters, journals and eulogies. Extremely useful as it contains items connected with Sandoway and Bassein not found in other works.

Clement, J. A Memoir of Adoniram Judson, being a Sketch of His Life and Mission Labours. Buffalo: George H. Derby and Co.; 1853. Hastily published before Wayland's longer official biography, about half is made up of Judson's writings, mainly from missionary magazines.

Judson, Edward. The Life Adoniram Judson. New York: Anson D.F. Randolph and Co.; 1883. Written by his son, this is a goldmine for documents related to the Karens.

Judson, Emily (née Chubbock, Fanny Forrester, pseud.) Memoir of Sarah Boardman Judson. London: T. Nelson and Sons; 1859. This memoir of Judson's second wife was written by Emily before she became his third.

- Kendrick, A.C. Life and Letters of Mrs. Emily C. Judson. London: T. Nelson and Sons; 1861. Documents connected with Judson's third wife, who wrote under the pseudonym of Fanny Forrester, and survived him by four years.
- Knowles, James D. Memoir of Mrs. Ann H. Judson, Missionary to Burma, Including a History of the American Baptist Mission in the Burman Empire. London: G. Wightman; 1831. Memoir of Judson's first wife, includes many useful extracts from journals and letters.
- Luther, Calista Vinton. The Vintons and the Karens; Memorials of the Reverend Justus H. Vinton and Calista H. Vinton. Boston: W.G. Corthell; 1880. Written by their daughter, includes good coverage of the second war and the subsequent missionary split.
- Mason, Francis. The Karen Apostle; A Memoir of Ko Tha Byu, the First Karen Convert with Notices Concerning His Nation. Bassein: Sgaw Karen Press; 1884. Very useful, it includes descriptions of Tavoy at the time of the arrival of the British, and much material concerning the early Karen missions.
- Wayland, Francis. A Memoir of the Life and Labours of the Reverend Adoniram Judson D.D. 2 vols. London: James Nisbet and Co.; 1853. The official memoir, but it was bedevilled by problems with source material, much of which was accidentally lost or deliberately destroyed. Heavy reliance on published letters and the third Mrs. Judson's reminiscences.
- Wylie, Mrs. Macleod. The Gospel in Burmah. London: W.H. Dalton; 1859. Includes much useful source material.
- c) Letters and Reports to Missionary Magazines.
- Baptist Missionary Magazine. Boston: American Baptist Missionary Union. 1817-1909. Went under a variety of names: 1817-1836 The Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer; 1837-1873 The Missionary Magazine; 1874-1909 Baptist Missionary Magazine. Volume numbers run continuously throughout. From 1910 merged with Baptist Home Mission Monthly and Good Work to form Progress.
- Baptist Missionary Review. Cuttack, Orissa: Baptist Review Co. Ltd.; 1895 onwards. Represented the Bengal-Orissa, Telegu and Burma Missions. Aimed to bring missionaries and home audiences together.
- Beecher. "Letter from Bassein, Dec. 28 1852." Miss. Mag. 33 (June 1853) 165-168. Concerns second war.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Letter from Bassein, April 21 1853." Miss. Mag. 33 (Nov. 1853) 462-464. Disturbed conditions following the second war.
- Bunker, Alonzo. "Toungoo: Gleanings from Letters, Nov. 19 1885." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (Feb. 1886) 48. Written immediately after the British arrival at commencement of third war.
- Cross, Mr. "Journal". B. Miss. Mag. 59 (Nov. 1859) 389-393. Concerns Tavoy mission.
- Cross, B.P. "Eastern Yoma Karens." B. Miss. Mag. 67 (Oct. 1887) 400-401. Dacoits cause heathen Karens to turn to the Baptists.

- Cross, E.B. "Letters from Toungoo, Feb. 2 1887." B. Miss. Mag. 67 (May 1887) 135-136. Effects of third war on animists.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Letter from Toungoo, July 1886." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (Oct. 1886) 393-394. Effects of dacoities.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Report of the Toungoo Paku Karen Department." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (July 1886) 237-239. Buddhist attacks and missionary leadership.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Karen Mission, March 1886." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (June 1886) 150-151. Karen involvement in defence against raids.
- Darrow, A.C. "Industrial Education in Burma." B. Miss. Rev. 26 (March 1920) 77-85. Karen economic problems.
- Editorial. "Advance into Upper Burma." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (March 1886) 59. Rejoicing at defeat of Buddhist King.
- Editorial. "Upper Burma in the Hands of the English!" B. Miss. Mag. 66 (Jan. 1886) 1. Reactions of pleasure to the first news of the British victory!
- George, William. "Letter from Zeegong, April 1 1886." B. Miss. Rev. 66 (Aug. 1886) 335-6. Dacoit problems.
- Granger, J.N. "Letters from Rangoon, Sept. 7 1853." Miss. Mag. 34 (Jan. 1854) 24-28. Other letters pp. 42-48, 65-78, 97-105. A member of the deputation which provoked the split after the second war. Very informative on post-war situation.
- Harris, E.N. "The Conservation of a Race as a Missionary By-Product." Biblioteca Sacra 87 (1920) 147-164. Very important as a statement of the justification for missionary efforts to preserve and strengthen the Karen race.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "What is the New Emphasis Needed in Mission Vernacular Schools?" B. Miss. Rev. 26 (March 1920) 70-74. He answers vernacular education, cooperative societies, sanitation, world affairs, better understanding of local affairs.
- Hattersley, L.W. "Making Our Schools a Better Instrument for the advancement of God's Kingdom in Burma." B. Miss. Rev. 27 (Feb. 1921) 35-41. Despite Baptists' head start their pupils are doing less well in Government exams.
- Ingalls, M.B. "Letters from Thongzai, May 6 1886." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (August 1886) 336. Attacks on mission headquarters.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Letter from Thongzai, May 24 1886." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (Oct. 1886) 392-3. Problems at mission H.Q. as a result of the war.
- Kincaid, Eugenio. "Letters from Rangoon, Oct. 8 1851." Miss. Mag. 32 (March 1852) 90. Conditions prior to outbreak of second war.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Letter from Rangoon, Nov. 13 1851." and "Letter Nov. 28 1851." Miss. Mag. 32 (April 1852) 100-104. The tense situation in Rangoon.
- Nichols, C.A. "Annual Report from Bassein, Burma." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (August 1886) 333-4. Growth of Karen desire to be independent of missionary control.
- Phinney, F.D. "Letter; June 8 1886." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (Sept. 1886) 377. A war for law and order, not religion; an unusual view for a missionary of the period.

- Plant. "Letters to Mr. Crumb, March 1886." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (June 1886) 152-153. Copy of a letter from Commissioner of Tenasserim, Col. Plant to Rev. Mr. Crumb, thanking Karens for their help and promising to allow them to obtain weapons.
- Rose, A.T. "The Advance into Upper Burma." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (Feb. 1886) 36. This war will destroy Buddhism.
- Seagrave, A.E. "A Survey of Burma's Needs and Opportunities, The Sgaws." B. Miss. Rev. 24 (Jan. 1918) 6-9. Certain districts completely untouched.
- Smith, David. "The Karens and the Dacoits." B. Miss. Mag. 66 (Aug. 1886) 331-333. Dufferin's meeting with the Karens.
- Soltan, Henry. "Mr. Soltan's Visit to the Karens." B. Miss. Mag. 56 (March 1876) 82-85. Includes opium and alcohol problems around Toungoo.
- Van Meter. "Letter from Bassein, Aug. 26 1852." Miss. Mag. 33 (Feb. 1853) 50-53. The Delta after the British conquest.
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- d) **Studies in Ethnology and Geography by Missionaries.**
- Lewis, James Lee. "The Burmanisation of the Karen People: A Study in Racial Adaptability." M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, Department of Practical Theology, 1924. Not by a professional ethnologist, but nevertheless useful.
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- Sangermano (Vincentius). A Description of the Burmese Empire. Translated by William Tandy. First published Rome; 1833. This edition London: Susil Gupta; 1966. Published under a variety of titles, includes intriguing glimpses of the Karens in the late eighteenth century.
- e) **Miscellaneous**
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Carpenter, C.H. The Anglo-Karen Handbook and Reader. Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press; 1875. Phrase book which contains section on Parliamentary Procedure.

Marshall, Harry I. Naw Su; A Story of Burma. Portland, Me: Falmouth; 1947. A Novel. Problems of adjustment to boarding school as experienced by a girl from a hill village.

4. ACCOUNTS WRITTEN BY OTHER VISITORS TO BURMA

Dautremer, Joseph. Burma under British Rule. Translated and with an introduction by George Scott. London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd.; 1913. Written by a former French consul in Rangoon, it contains the standard descriptions of the Karens.

Ferrars, Max and Ferrars, Bertha. Burma. London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co. Ltd.; 1900. Extremely well illustrated with photographs, contains a section on the Karens.

Kunstadter, Peter. "Spirits of Change Capture the Karens." National Geographic, February 1972. Excellent photographs of Karens living, as their ancestors did in the hills of Burma, in modern Thailand.

Morrison, Ian. Grandfather Longlegs: The Life and Gallant Death of Major H.P. Seagrim, G.C., D.S.O., M.B.E. London: Faber and Faber Ltd.; 1947. Chiefly concerned with World War Two, but useful incidental details about Karen life.

O'Connor, Scott. The Silken East: A Record of Life and Travel in Burma. 2 vols. London: Hutchinson and Co.; 1904. The author spent some time in a remote Karen village, but his descriptions are standard.

Rough Pencillings of a Rough Trip to Rangoon in 1846. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co.; 1853. This work was published anonymously, but drawings are signed C.G. Describes the Karens as drunken, dirty, timid, etc.

B. SECONDARY SOURCES

1. MISSION HISTORIES CONTAINING LITTLE PRIMARY MATERIAL

Bushell, W. "Notes on the Work Among the Pwo Karen." Baptist Missionary Review 24 (Jan. 1918) 9-12. Gives reasons for comparative lack of success.

Harris, E.N. "Seventy Five Years of the Shwegyin Karen Mission." Baptist Missionary Review 35 (Jan. 1929) 8-15. Useful account of the mission started in 1853.

Klein, C.L. "The Past and Future of Self Support among the Karens." Baptist Missionary Review 35 (Jan. 1929) 26-33. Brief but useful.

Lewis, James Lee. "Self Supporting Karen Churches in Burma: A Historical Study of the Development of Karen Stewardship." Doctor of Theology Thesis, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, 1946. Rambling, repetitive, but very useful.

"Seventy Years of Karen Mission Work in Toungoo." Baptist Missionary Review 35 (Jan. 1929). Includes some conversion figures, and references to Mrs. Mason's career.

Marshall, Emma W. "Beginnings of the Karen Mission in Burma." Baptist Missionary Review 34 (June 1928) 248-253. Covers the period up to 1853.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Karen Progress Through Three-Quarters of a Century." Baptist Missionary Review 34 (Sept. 1928) 405-410. Covers the period from 1853 to 1928.

Marshall, Harry I. "A Century of Karen Progress." Baptist Missionary Review 35 (Jan. 1929) 2-7. Concludes with the hope that Burmans and Karens will unite.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Devolution of the Karen Churches." Baptist Missionary Review 28 (May 1922) 159-165. Brief account of increasing Karen responsibility in the Karen churches.

Morgan Phelps, J.C. "Development of the Karen Work on the Henzada Field." Baptist Missionary Review 35 (January 1929) 21-25.  
From the mission's foundation in 1854.

2. OTHER WORKS WHICH INCLUDE INFORMATION ON THE KARENS

Baldwin, J.W. "The Karens in Burma." Journal of the Royal Central Asiatic Society 36 (1949) 102-113. Concentrates on pre-British period, including possible Karen writing and "national" traditions. According to Cady (p. 591) he was a British Seventh Day Adventist Missionary who actively joined the Karen Insurrection.

Cady, John F. A History of Modern Burma. New York: Cornell University Press; 1958. Invaluable, not only as background but as a general introduction to events concerning the Karens.

Cheng, Siok-Hwa. The Rice Industry of Burma, 1852-1940. Singapore: University of Malaya Press; 1968. Useful background for the situation in the Delta, with some references to Karens.

Desai, W.S. A History of the British Residency in Burma, 1826-1840. Rangoon: University Press; 1939. References to missionary assistance to the British in this period.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Karens of Burma." India Quarterly 6 (1950) 276-282. Brief summary of Karen history.

\_\_\_\_\_. A Pageant of Burmese History. Bombay: Orient Longman's; 1961. Contains brief references only.

Furnivall, John Sydenham. "The Fashioning of Leviathan." Journal of the Burma Research Society. 29 (1939) 1-137. A very amusing article, and a useful companion to the Selected Correspondence q.v. Problems of the first administrators of Tenasserim 1825-1843, with brief references to the Karens.

\_\_\_\_\_. Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and the Netherlands Indies. New York: University Press; 1956. Brief but useful references to the Karens, including summary of police and army recruitment.

Htin Aung, Maung. A History of Burma. New York: Columbia University Press; 1967. Brief references only, but useful as given from the point of view of a modern Burmese historian.

- Hsin Aung, Maung. The Stricken Peacock: Anglo-Burmese Relations 1752-1948. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff; 1965. Less useful than his "History".
- Hunter, Guy. South East Asia, Race Culture and Nation. / London: Oxford University Press; 1966. Only brief references to the Karens, but very useful for putting the subject in a wider perspective.
- Ireland, Alleyne. The Province of Burma. Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co.; 1907. A report prepared on behalf of the University of Chicago. Includes useful summaries of many official documents and references to the Karens.
- Jesse, Fryniwyd Tennyson. The Story of Burma. London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd.; 1946. Discusses British mistakes. Evidently influenced by the events of the Second World War.
- Kaung, U. "A Survey of the History of Education in Burma before the British Conquest and After." Journal of the Burma Research Society 46 (Dec. 1963) part II. Covers monastic and lay schools before the conquest, and those of the Catholics, Baptists and the Government. Extremely useful.
- Kunstadter, P. ed. South East Asian Tribes, Minorities and Nations. Princeton, New Jersey: University Press; 1967. Although not directly concerned with the Karens, this includes some very interesting discussions of the problems involved in the study of minorities.
- Lebar, F.M. et al. Ethnic Groups of Mainland South East Asia. New Haven: Human Relations Files Press; 1964. Contains a concentrated summary of anthropological data on the Karens.
- Pearn, B.R. Judson of Burma. London: Edinburgh House Press; 1962. Useful since it does not wallow in the sentimentality of the nineteenth century accounts.
- Po, San Crombie. Burma and the Karens. London: Elliot Stock; 1928. A plea for a Karen state and crucial for a study of the political developments of the 1920s; this contains some historical material, much of it based on Smeaton, and some sidelights on Karen eccentrics of the early twentieth century.
- Mya Sein, Ma. The Administration of Burma: Sir Charles Crosthwaite and the Consolidation of Burma. Rangoon: Zabu Meitswe Pitaka Press; 1938. Mainly concerned with Burman rather than Karen affairs.
- Smith, D.E. Religion and Politics in Burma. New Jersey: Princeton University Press; 1965. Although in no way directly concerned with the Karens, this study is important for its emphasis on the importance of Buddhism to Burmese nationalism.
- Stuart, J. Burma Through the Centuries. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Tribner and Co. Ltd.; 1910. A general history for the average reader.
- Tadaw, Saw Hanson. "The Karens of Burma: A Study in Human Geography." M.A. Thesis, University of London, 1958. Includes useful historical information.

Theodorson, George A. "Minority Peoples in the Union of Burma." *Journal of South East Asian History* 5 (1964). Deals briefly with the Karens among the other minority races.

Trager, Helen G. *Burma Through Alien Eyes: Missionary Views of the Burmese in the Nineteenth Century*. India: Asia Publishing House; 1966. Extensive quotations from original missionary sources, many with a bearing on the Karens.

Woodman, Dorothy. *The Making of Burma*. London: Cresset Press; 1962. Includes references to the Karens in the Delta.

### C. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDES

Cady, John F. *A History of Modern Burma*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press; 1958. pp. 651-666. Concerned with Burma in general, this still contains useful suggestions for matters connected with the Karens.

Embree, John F. and Dotson, Lillian O. *Bibliography of the Peoples and Cultures of Mainland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies; 1950. Very helpful, clearly organised and well annotated. Includes many references to the Karens.

Lewis, James Lee. "The Burmanisation of the Karen People: A Study in Racial Adaptability." M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago Department of Practical Theology. 1924. Appendices. Less useful than "Self Supporting Karen Churches."

\_\_\_\_\_. "Self Supporting Karen Churches in Burma: A Historical Study of the Development of Karen Stewardship." Doctor of Theology Thesis, Central Baptist Theological Seminary, 1946. pp. 380-402. Missionary materials predominate, but very useful for this subject.

Starr, Edward C. ed. *A Baptist Bibliography: Being a Register of Printed Material By and About Baptists Including Works Written Against Baptists*. Philadelphia: Judson Press; 1947-1971. This immense work reached the letter N. in 1971. Useful references are widely scattered.

Trager, Frank N. *Burma: From Empire to Republic*. New York: Praeger; 1966. pp. 435-7. A bibliography of bibliographies about Burma.

Woodman, Dorothy. *The Making of Burma*. London: Cresset Press; 1962. pp. 576-582. Not specifically useful for Karens, but suggests possible sources of information in the India Office Archives.