

**THE STRAITS TIMES
SINGAPORE
19 MAY 1908
(page 5)**

BUDDHIST MISSION.

**RANGOON LADY BEARS COST
OF MONK'S ENGLISH TOUR.**

Efforts to Convert Britain.

The visit for the first time in history of a Buddhist monk to England on a six months' mission has been brought about by the generosity of a Burmese lady, who, as the leader of society in Rangoon has entertained princes and potentates.

Mrs. Hla Oung—for such is the lady's name—belongs to a noble Burmese family. Wealthy, cultured, and of prepossessing appearance, she speaks English fluently with a voice of singular sweetness. For generations, her ancestors have worshipped at the shrine of Buddha, and imbued with a desire to propagate the tenets of her faith, Mrs. Hla Oung, conceived the idea of the English mission, which she is financing.

Like all Buddhists, she is modest in regard to personal matters, but a Daily Chronicle representative who interviewed her at Barnes—the headquarters of the mission—discovered that she had already made princely benefaction to the Buddhist cause.

Her husband was the Comptroller-General of the Indian Treasuries at Calcutta. She is one of the eight daughters of C. K. Tseekai Maung Tawlay, the chief of the Talaings who founded the town of Maulmein, and who was largely instrumental in the success of the first British expedition to Burmah.

At Rangoon, where Mrs. Hla Oung lives, she had entertained monarchs and viceroys, and the principal representatives of Anglo-Indian society. One of her guests was the Prince of Wales who, during his world-tour in 1905, visited Rangoon, where he opened the Victoria Park. Lord Curzon and previous Indian viceroys have been hospitably received by Mrs. Hla Oung who also recalls an interesting visit made to her by Lady Randolph Churchill (now Mrs. George Cornwallis West.)

Extensive Benefactions.

This is the second visit to England of this Eastern lady. Her first was in 1899, when she was presented to the late Queen Victoria. On the present occasion she is accompanied by her son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Bah-Hla Oung. Her father, at a cost of £21,000, gilded the celebrated Shwe-Dagon Pagoda at Rangoon, which, according to a Burmese legend, was built on three hairs from the head of Buddha himself, brought by two travelers from Benares.

Mrs. Hla Oung has, at a cost of several thousand pounds, built three Buddhist monasteries at Rangoon, in which European monks are installed in order to study Pali, the language of the Buddhist scriptures. She pays for their maintenance. Large sums have also been subscribed by her for the printing and circulation of Buddhist literature.

The Buddhist monk now in England was ordained at Akyab, at the house of Dr. Tha Noo—a nephew of Mrs. Oung—who was hon. Assistant to the Indian Viceroy. The monk subsequently visited Mrs. Oung at Rangoon, where she kept an open house for Buddhist priests and others, and eventually was placed in charge of one of the monasteries.

Altogether, Mrs. Oung's benefactions to the cause reach a total of nearly £30,000. She however, modestly claims that there is nothing unusual in this, because it is the custom for people of means in Burmah to distribute their wealth in this manner, and this explains why in every village there are monasteries, houses of rest, and wells.

The monks, Mrs. Oung explained, lead a simple life. They live on what is voluntarily given to them, and, although they do not solicit alms, begging bowls are suspended from their shoulders into which food is placed. They are not allowed to touch money.

From England the mission will proceed to Germany.

Monk an Englishman.

The missionary, whose other name is Allan Bennett Macgregor, was born in South London, thirty-five years ago, and, his parents dying in his infancy, was brought up by Cyrus Field, of Atlantic cable fame. He became an analytical chemist, and a close student of physics, but about seven years ago attacks of asthma brought a promising London career to a close, and he was compelled to go to Ceylon.

Already a student of Oriental religious systems, he began a close examination of Buddhism with the result that a year later he was ordained a Buddhist monk at Akyab, on the Burmese coast. Five years ago, he went to Rangoon and founded a monastery, from which he has organized the International Buddhist Society, of which the Buddhist Society of Great Britain is an offshoot. The headquarters of the International Society he is now moving to London, together with the Buddhist, the review he edits.

Travelling with him to England were a number of Buddhist laymen—also three Burmese ladies.

Already there are nearly 100 English adherents of the faith, and the monk has gone to England on a preaching mission to win the others.

In all, 272 rules govern the monk's life. These enjoin celibacy, vegetarianism and abstinence from alcohol. No solid food must be eaten after 12 o'clock noon. All his drinking water must be filtered, lest living animals be consumed, and thus killed. This rule against taking life also prevents the use of leather in any form.

Nor must the monk look on the face of a woman. When lecturing to a mixed congregation he screens his eyes with a fan.

Vowed to poverty, he is only allowed eight possessions—his three robes, a begging bowl, a rosary, a filter, a razor, and an umbrella. At the house he is to occupy at Barnes, one room is to be fitted up as a temple for his meditations.

His first public lecture will be delivered in the rooms of the Royal Asiatic Society, 22, Albemarle-street, W., on May 8, at 8 p.m. Twice a week meetings are held at the London headquarters of Buddhism, at 14, Burystreet, near the British Museum.

To a press representative, the Monk stated that the Buddhist religion was not necessarily in opposition to Christianity, but would be a strength to all thoughtful men striving for the truth against the gross materialism of the Western world.