

The Protestant Missions to South-East Asia: Experimental Laboratory of Missionary Concepts and of Human Relations (Circa 1780–1840)

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Abstract

The relationship between the Anglo-Scottish Ultra-Ganges Mission and the Dutch missionaries in South East Asia, both missions based at Batavia and at Melaka (Malacca), could be described as “distant but cordial” – even during times of colonial conflict – but the same cannot always be said about the internal conditions of the British mission. This article will attempt to place the relationship between the Anglo-Dutch missionary enterprises into a historical context which includes the complex networks built up by the missionaries with the colonial administrations, as well as with the local Malay and Chinese communities. Ultimately, the success of their mission depended as much on such external factors as on the internal cohesion between the individual missionaries. Much of the historical sources for this article has been derived from the Special Collections archives kept at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

Keywords

Ultra-Ganges Mission – Dutch missions – Melaka/Malacca – Batavia – Singapore – Asian Christianity – Bible translation

1 Introduction

The relationship between the Anglo-Scottish Ultra-Ganges Mission and the Dutch missionaries in South-East Asia (Melaka and Batavia) could be described

as ‘distant but cordial’ – even during times of colonial conflict – but the same cannot always be said about the internal conditions of the British mission. The present paper will shed light on the complex web of interests connecting the Ultra-Ganges missionaries and the Dutch mission during the crucial decades of the early nineteenth century, as well as both of their connections with the local Malay and Chinese communities. This article is mostly derived from correspondence kept at the missionary archives of the SOAS Library (University of London),¹ but also makes use of printed literature from the colonial era. Whilst much of the relevant material is dominated by sources originating from the London Missionary Society (and passively by the Church Mission Society), this article is concerned with a representative selection of historical voices commenting on the ability to form bridges between different ethnic communities and Christian denominations. The inability of certain missionaries to accomplish the same between their own personal visions and some of their Western contemporaries has recently been analysed in a historical context.²

However, the historical context for Melaka,³ Batavia and Singapore in the early nineteenth century would be incomplete without reference to the preceding eras of Arab-Indian trade and the expansion of the Portuguese merchant companies. Prior to the Dutch, Melaka had been under Portuguese tutelage for 130 years, but significantly, the territory had been a protectorate of Ming China, with an arsenal for Chinese troops and a fortified harbour – used for instance by Zheng He. This link with fifteenth-century China would place Melaka (馬六甲) on the map of future Chinese settlers, also when successive European powers took over control. The language spoken by the population in Melaka contains many loanwords of Portuguese origin, but hardly any of Dutch or English ancestry. Given that the Portuguese presence (1511–1641) was briefer than that of the other two European powers (Dutch: 1641–1824; British: 1824–1957), could this be explained in terms related to differing approaches employed by the

1 All archival sources, unless otherwise indicated, originate from SOAS Special Collections. The relevant documents are kept in Box 1 ‘Incoming’ [correspondence to the London Missionary Society] (1814–1843), distributed into Jacket letters A–D. In this article, no jacket letters are given, since date and location of the letters are always indicated, and the letters and reports are thus easily located. Readers may note that the SOAS Library technical conservation team have ear-marked the Ultra Ganges collection for prioritised digitisation.

2 See the letter by John Christopher Supper on the ‘sectarian’ conditions within the Ultra Ganges Mission; Batavia to the LMS, 17/03/1815. See also R.G. Tiedemann, “Early Nineteenth-Century ‘Murmurings and Disputings’ in the Ultra-Ganges Missions,” *Studies in World Christianity* 27/3 (2021), 232–52.

3 In this article, the historical geonyms ‘Malacca’ and ‘Malaca’ (in titles) shall be used alongside the present spelling ‘Melaka’; ‘Batavia’ is used instead of ‘Jakarta,’ since the colonial name is intentionally different from the present Malayan term.

missionaries who stepped ashore with the Portuguese traders? An early indication of the strength of the Portuguese influence can be gleaned from the pronouncement by Governor General Cornelis van der Lijn (1608–1679) who opined that people of all ethnic groups in Batavia used Portuguese as their lingua franca.⁴ Four centuries later, in the recollections of Manuel Teixeira, the patois spoken by the Malay in the former Portuguese settlements was referred to as “*Christão*,” while Portuguese dances such as Gingli or Branhô had become popular pastimes.⁵

2 Commerce and Politics in the Anglo-Dutch Duopoly

In the beginning, there were spices. For both the British and Dutch explorers to the East, it was the prospect of access to the precious commodities in and beyond India that provided the impetus for the creation of specialised commercial monopolies in Britain and the Netherlands. However, the common political and cultural identities of both states went far beyond shared commercial interests. A non-negligible factor, during the crucial colonial period, was that England, Scotland and the Netherlands were being ruled over by the one and the same king, William of Orange (1650–1702; William III, known as William II in Scotland). Following the successful invasion of England in 1688 (Glorious Revolution), against the forces of his Catholic uncle King James, William and his Queen Mary became champions of the Protestant cause in Europe. William’s Hanoverian successors on the English/British throne cemented the role of this Anglo-Dutch duopoly as a stalwart of Protestant interests in Europe and in the gradually increasing European colonial domination.⁶ The gradual decline of Portugal in eastern Asia not merely increased the commercial fortunes of the Dutch and the British trading monopolies, it also provided the two Protestant twins with the opportunity to replace the

4 “Alsoo de Portugeesche spraecke onder alle de natiën op Batavia seer gemeen is, dat aldaer in de Portugeesche spraecke oock prediciën gedaen sullen werden” (Trans. “Portuguese is so common amongst all the peoples in Batavia that speeches and sermons are held in the Portuguese language”) A. Algra, *Het Principaelste Wit de Kerke Christi te Batavia: Iets uit de geschiedenis “van de eerste kerke en de gemeynte Jesu Christi der stadt Jacatra op Java Mayor in Asia”* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1946), 132.

5 Manuel Teixeira, *The Portuguese Missions in Malacca and Singapore (1511–1958): Malacca*, vol. III, (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1961), 368 (caption of illustration).

6 On an Anglo-Dutch mission of diplomatic nature, see Simon Groenveld, “William III as Stadholder: Prince or Minister?”, in Esther Mijers and David Onnekink (eds.), *Redefining William III: The Impact of the King-Stadholder in International context* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2007), 31.

Catholic imprint created by the Catholic missions under the imperial patronage (*Padroado Ultramarino Português*) system of the Portuguese state. Images of decaying churches, such as the Mater Dei cathedral in Macau or the Jesuit College in Melaka, were water on the anti-Roman Catholic mill, so often used to rationalise disasters such as the Great Fire of London (1666) or the wars waged by Catholic powers against the northern Protestant powers.⁷ This policy only ended in 1829, with the Catholic Emancipation Act in Britain and similar socio-legal changes in the Netherlands, perhaps as a late consequence of the Spanish Succession War.⁸

At this point we ought to recall that neither the English nor the Dutch could claim to have been the first Christian Occidentals to have engaged in trade, or indeed in missionary activity. This privilege fell to the Portuguese who, once they had completed the extension of their Reconquista *plus ultra* into the Atlantic coasts of Brazil and Africa, established fortified commercial ports in India, the South China Sea and northwards via Macau, Taiwan (*Ilha Formosa*) all the way to Nagasaki. In fact, the missionary outpost at Melaka gained the status of a diocese already in 1558, during the period of Portuguese control (1511–1641).⁹ By the time of the Anglo-Dutch duopoly in south-eastern Asia, many of these now disused *fortalezas* had fallen into disrepair, some being razed, others being reinforced, and others yet left to stand as a *memento mori* to earthly power.¹⁰ With the sole exception of the Philippines, which formed the westernmost possession of the hemisphere allocated to Spain in the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), the Arab-Indian trade that had endured for one and a half millennia, gave way to a Lusophone sphere which encompassed all of South-East Asia. Malaya was thus exposed to Portuguese trade, Catholicism and language, and with them to the merchants and labourers who had acquired a working knowledge of Portuguese, from eastern Asian, but also from the Indian subcontinent and even Africa. In other words, the Portuguese language had become a communication tool, a universally understood lingua

7 Keith Tan, *Mission Pioneers of Malaya: Origins, Architecture and Legacy of our Pioneering Schools* (Subang Jaya: Taylor's University, 2015), 23–5.

8 The enormous expense and bloodletting of the Spanish Succession Wars, concluded by, inter alia, the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, saw the beginning of a gradual relaxation of relations between Spain as the overlord over the southern Netherlands (later Belgium) and the Dutch Republic, which ended the war financially exhausted. Robert Hunt, Lee Kam Hing & John Roxborough, *Christianity in Malaysia: A Denominational History* (Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1992), 8–10.

9 Manuel Teixeira, *The Portuguese Missions in Malacca and Singapore (1511–1958): Malacca*, vol. 1, (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1961), 7–12, 24–9.

10 Tan, *Mission Pioneers of Malaya*, 7, 17 for Dutch sketches of the Fortaleza de Malaca (1676) and of the Fortaleza Velha (Melaka). See also the maps of Melaka in 1604 (ibidem, 12).

franca, in the South China Sea, which both indigenous communities and travelling merchants were well advised to master. If not in the epic poetry of Luís Vaz de Camões, then at least in its creolised form,¹¹ a precursor of the later pidgin English, the commonly understood commercial patois ('pidgin' equalling 'business'), which blended basic English with Cantonese, Malay and Portuguese vocabulary and expressions.¹² And not only European traders followed this pattern of linguistic adaptation.¹³ The city where Camões wrote his *Os Lusíadas*, to cite Alexander Michie,¹⁴ was the harbour with the first modern lighthouse, the first moveable printing press, the first Western hospital and the 'City in the Name of God' which witnessed the first missionary activities in China, by the Jesuits in the late sixteenth century. And when Robert Morrison 馬里遜 (1882–1834) took up his duties in Guangzhou in 1807, the first 'East Asian language' which he would have become conversant in was creolised Portuguese. Due to this reason, Batavia counted not merely one "Portuguese church" inside the city, but also a large church outside the city walls, capable of absorbing a large Lusophone congregation.¹⁵ The number of faithful who listened to sermons in Portuguese would decrease over time, but the legacy of the language for proselytisation becomes evident when the quantity of missionary material in this language during the nineteenth century is taken into account.¹⁶ Donations of printed books and pamphlets thus included consignments for "work amongst the Portuguese."¹⁷

The English (as of 1707: British) East India Company (EIC) and the Dutch *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC)¹⁸ were to become the vehicles that would take the states which had engendered them to the status of colonial empires in eastern Asia. Both were the product of mercantilism, a commercial

11 See Algra, *Het principaelste wit de Kerke Christi te Batavia*, 125.

12 Rogério Miguel Puga, *The British Presence in Macau, 1635–1793*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 94–95.

13 For an analysis of the influence of Portuguese, English and Dutch on the Japanese language, see Zhu Feng/Shū Hō 朱鳳, *Mo-ri-so-n-no "Ka-Ei – Ei-Ka jiten" to Tō-Zaikata bunka kōryō*, モリソンの《華英 英華字典》と東西方文化交流, 188–192.

14 A. Michie, *The Englishman in China during the Victorian Era: As Illustrated in the Career of Sir Rutherford Alcock*, (Edinburgh: Wm. Blackwood & Sons, 1900), 296–298, as cited in Rogério Miguel Puga, *The British Presence in Macau (1635–1793)*, Translated by Monica Andrade (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, University of Macau, 2013), 132.

15 Algra, *Het principaelste*, 124 and the photograph on 1 ("Interieur van de Portugeesche buitenkerk te Batavia").

16 Algra, *Het principaelste*, 132.

17 Gratefully acknowledged by J.C. Supper; Batavia to LMS, 17/10/1816.

18 For a meticulously compiled list of the Dutch governors, of key dates and of the government structure, see Teixeira, *The Portuguese Missions*, vol. III: *Malacca*, 412–6.

system which aimed at maximising the profit which the central governments in early modern Europe could derive out of international trade. The East India Companies were mere extensions of the fiscal administration; the higher the profit for the Company, the greater the income for the state. The commercial officials travelling on these hazardous journeys and concluding the lucrative trade deals, however, were left with a fixed, relatively meagre state salary. But ‘greed maketh man’, and in due course the management of the EIC and the VOC had ensured that their personal profits became healthy.¹⁹ Profiteering and morality only rarely go hand in hand, and in fact the only moral obligation which the VOC had in its preamble was to “maintain the public faith,” rather than to promote (Protestant) Christianity – as was the case with the Dutch West Indian Mission.²⁰ In Java and Sumatra, there was even less church-led engagement than in Taiwan or Ceylon – perhaps due to a relative lack of previous Portuguese, thus Catholic, competition. The presence of Islam, however, was seen by the VOC as an immutable obstacle; in its agreements with the local sultans, the undertaking of not expanding into Muslim communities was taken very seriously by the VOC. The non-missionary *Realpolitik* of the Company stood in contrast to Christian intellectuals such as Justus Heurnius (1587–1652) who had studied medicine at Leiden and theology at Groningen, who underlined the necessity of spreading the Gospel in the East Indies.²¹ The early fervour also resulted in the translation of tracts and of the Bible in the seventeenth century.²² In this most polarised environment for any Christian undertaking, the mission to the Malaysians and to the Chinese would take root.

The British Ultra-Ganges Mission stood, akin to the commercial relationship between the EIC and the VOC, in direct affinity with the Dutch colonial administration centred in Batavia. When William Milne 米憐 (1785–1822) arrived in Melaka, he praised the port as being “more vibrant than Pinang and much healthier than Batavia.”²³ The conditions which can in no small manner be compared with the Alaskan gold rush also provided the conditions that led

19 The neutrality in terms of Christian missions is underlined as a key feature of both trade monopolies in Andrew Phillips, *How the East Was Won: Universal Conquest and the Making of Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 259.

20 Jan Sihar Aritonang & Karel Steenbrink (eds), *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, [Studies in Christian Mission, 35] (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 100.

21 Jacobus Richardus Callenbach, *Justus Heurnius: Eene bijdrage tot de geschiedenis des Christendoms in de Nederlandsch Oost-Indië* (Nijkerk: C.C. Callenbach, 1897), 41–3.

22 Notable are the translations by Melchior Leijdecker in 1691 of the Bible into Malay, printed 1731–33 in Latin letters and in 1758 in Arabic script. Aritonang & Steenbrink (eds.), *A history of Christianity in Indonesia*, 101, 127.

23 Brian Harrison, *Waiting for China: The Anglo-Chinese College at Malacca, 1818–1843, and Early Nineteenth-Century Missions* (Hongkong: Hong Kong University Press, 1979), 20.

to organisational and personal conflicts which greatly affected the Christian missions. In fact, what made Melaka a lucrative location for the Europeans was the abundance of tin, which was mined in Bangka Island and used as currency by the local traders. Even after the cession of Melaka to the EIC in 1824, the VOC retained the exclusive purchasing rights over Bangka.²⁴ The expansion of the EIC into the Malayan peninsula was a logical conclusion once the expansion of British colonial activity from the Indian subcontinent into expanding slices of Burma is taken into account. Already in 1772, the adventurer and merchant Captain Francis Light (c.1740–1794) argued in favour of the Company's expansion into Malaya; by 1795, Penang was obtained after forceful negotiations with the Sultan of Kedah; Singapore followed suit after Stamford Raffles persuaded the Temenggong of Johor to cede the island of Singapore in 1819. As a meeting place between indigenous Malayan and implanted Chinese communities, the island would become a magnet not merely for entrepreneurs, but also for devoted linguists, such as the missionary Claudius Henry Thomsen (1782–1834).²⁵ And when five years later, in 1824, the Dutch swapped Melaka for the entirety of Java with the British imperial state, the Straits Settlements were born. Based on agriculture and tin mining, the Settlements grew in economic stature and were granted self-administration within the British colonial system of governance in 1867.²⁶

3 Protestant Churches in the East Indies

Despite their common origin as Protestant monarchies with a shared hostility to the Catholic Habsburg Empire and to the expansive French state under Louis XIV, the denominational landscape in both countries was rather different. In England, a state church resembling the previous Roman Catholic Church had sprung up, the chief difference being that the clerical authority was under the auspices of the British monarch. Early encounters with dissenting churches had led to a migration of the latter to the American colonies, in search of more tolerant conditions. The English Civil War, which saw major confrontations not only between Royalists and Parliamentarians, but also between differing interpretations of Protestant Christianity, was a major factor for the reestablishment of a stabilising state church following Cromwell's defeat. By the late eighteenth century, the evangelical dissenters had become

²⁴ Ibidem, 20.

²⁵ See the ardent praise communicated by John Slater to the LMS; Singapore, 01/03/1823.

²⁶ Hunt, Hing & Roxborough, *Christianity in Malaysia*, 34.

a tolerated component of religious life in all parts of Britain. The Church Missionary Society,²⁷ founded in 1799, was the Anglican alternative to the Congregationalist/Reformed London Missionary Society (LMS, 1795) and the Baptist Missionary Society (1792). The Netherlands featured a similar variety of Protestant denominations, from original Calvinist Protestantism, the broad Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*) and Lutheranism in the Netherlands.²⁸ What both Protestant landscapes had in common was a relative reluctance to take their faith to civilisations beyond Europe – in contrast to the missionary zeal of the Catholic Church.²⁹ Whilst Robert Morrison and his wife were generally tolerated in Macau, with few notable exceptions, the arrival of William Milne and his wife caused protests by the local authorities – as well as deportation orders by the Qing representatives. Indeed, following William Milne's abortive attempt to join Morrison on the China coast, William Milne arrived with his wife in Macau on 4 July 1813, but Portuguese opposition in Macao and Chinese restrictions in Canton eventually forced Milne to leave the China coast. In August 1814 he came to Melaka on a brief exploratory visit, where Morrison had as early as 1812 intended to establish a Chinese mission.³⁰ Milne settled permanently in Melaka in 1815. The latter remained the sole LMS agent there until his death in 1834. Since it seemed all but impossible for Protestant missionaries to enter the interior of China,³¹ and certainly not for the sake of producing Christian writings in Chinese,³² subsequent LMS reinforcements established themselves at various points in Southeast Asia, with principal stations in the colonial enclaves of Melaka, Penang, Singapore and Batavia. This mission territory to the east of Bengal, which soon became

27 Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (eds.), *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799–1999* (Grand Rapids/Richmond: William B. Eerdmans/Curzon Press, 2000).

28 See the sketch of the Dutch Church and Stadhuis, January 1807, as architectural proof that the Dutch Mission had some lasting impact. Harrison, *Waiting for China*, illustration 12. John Pinkerton, *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World; Many of which are Now First Translated into English; Digested on a New Plan*, vol. 8 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1811).

29 See also Christopher A. Daily, *Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 156.

30 Ernest Hayes, *Robert Morrison: China's Pioneer* (London: Livingstone Press, 1937; original edition: 1925), 67. Contemporary readers should, however, keep in mind that blaming Catholic authorities for mishaps of any kind remained publicly accepted well into the twentieth century in Protestant countries.

31 See Milne's report for his activities in Melaka. W. Milne to LMS, 1815.

32 William John Townsend, *Robert Morrison: The Pioneer of Chinese Missions* (London: Partridge & Co., 1891), 61.

known as the Ultra-Ganges Missions (恆河外方傳教會),³³ extended therefore from Morrison's outpost on the south-eastern coast of China to the British colonial bridgeheads at the Malayan Strait, to the Dutch-controlled island of Java,³⁴ and beyond. In spite of all denominational differences, and not least overcoming any commercial rivalry, the missionary correspondence reveals the extent to which the contacts between the British and Dutch, as well as with other European traders, had remained cordial at a personal level – despite the diplomatic disruptions caused by the Napoleonic wartime alliances. We hence learn that William Milne entertained best relations with the “Gentlemen & Ladies of the ... Dutch and Swedish Factories.”³⁵ Jointly with Gottlob Brückner responsible for the Ultra Ganges Mission, John Christopher Supper (died 1816) wrote in his report to the London Missionary Society in 1814 that he accepted to work within the Dutch congregation in Batavia.³⁶ The growing cooperation between the British and Dutch missionary enterprises became clear when the newly re-established Dutch authorities requested British missionaries from Madras for a duration of two years, “to be useful among the Heathens.”³⁷ British expertise in local languages was also readily recognised by the Dutch authorities, providing a genuine demand for missionaries with linguistic skills.³⁸

When William Milne (1775–1822) arrived at Melaka in 1815, the state of Christianity there bore the marks of the preceding centuries of colonial activity. The main body of Christians in Melaka consisted of Portuguese and Dutch Eurasians, the latter often with landed property and of modest wealth.³⁹ The descendants of the Portuguese settlers still professed the Catholicism of their Lusophone ancestors, while the other Christians belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church. Whereas the Dutch had initially attempted to eradicate

33 The name ‘Ultra-Ganges Missions’ was adopted by Robert Morrison and William Milne in the “Resolutions of the Provisional Committee of the Ultra-Ganges Missions”, signed by them on 2 November 1817. See William Milne, *A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China* (Malacca: Anglo-Chinese Press, 1820), 198–201.

34 Between 1811–1816 the Dutch possession of Java was under British control. Similarly, Melaka was administered by the British East India Company between 1795–1818 and from 1825.

35 Report to the LMS by Wm Milne for 1815.

36 Report sent 29/06/1814 by Supper to the LMS. Bruckner, referred to in this article without the *umlaut* as referenced in the Ultra Ganges archives, would take charge of the Dutch church at Semarang, whilst their fellow missionary Kam made his way to Amboyna. Gottlob Brückner (1783–1857) was German-born in Lower Silesia (southern Poland) in 1783, who would die in his mission field of Semarang in 1858.

37 W. Milne to the LMS; Melaka, 15/09/1818.

38 See letter by W. Milne to the LMS; Guangzhou (Canton), 06/02/1815. And note by T. Beighton and J. Ince to the LMS; Melaka, September 1818.

39 Harrison, *Waiting for China*, 20–21.

Catholicism in its territories by means of discriminatory limitations⁴⁰ and the expulsion of the leading clergy,⁴¹ Catholicism during the Dutch period of control witnessed the inculturation of Christianity into a popular Malay religion. The completion of the Catholic St Peter's Church in 1710 should be regarded as symbolising the failure of the Dutch policy of containment, since the Catholic faith had only strengthened during its underground existence.⁴² What do we know about the contribution of the British authorities during the Napoleonic interregnum? In simple terms, the East India Company had a policy of non-proselytisation, which entailed that the Anglican clerics travelling onboard were mainly tasked with looking after the spiritual wellbeing of the EIC staff.⁴³ Although the latter almost entirely consisted of either members of the Anglican Church or Nonconformists, the Company was mostly concerned about maintaining a working relationship with the Muslim elites and commercial counterparts – a policy which the EIC had already put into practice in Bengal, where it was also applied to Hindus. Except for education, the leading Anglicans regarded themselves as a non-proselytising minority, their church being a de facto extension of the state.⁴⁴ Whereas Melaka did not count many Hindus amongst its population, there was a resident Chinese community (some 25%) with its own religious traditions. In the words of Joseph Henri Marie Prémare S.J. of 1698: "There are mosques for the Moors, a temple dedicated to the idols of China, in short, the practice of all sorts of sects is allowed by the Dutch. The only one banished is the true [Catholic] religion."⁴⁵ The oldest temple on the entire Malayan peninsula dedicated to the Bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音 thus stood at Melaka. The Chinese community deserves some explanation: as the descendants of labourers from southern China, the so-called Babas continued their civilisational traditions but had taken over the dress and speech of the local Malay.⁴⁶ Despite their marginality in local society, the European missionaries regarded them as the ideal experimental objects for practising the prohibited task of preaching in China.⁴⁷ In a letter from Melaka of 1815, William Milne stressed the need for a Chinese Mission Library, containing

40 For instance the removal of icons, rosaries and "other superstitious relics of the Roman religion"; see Teixeira, *The Portuguese Missions: Malacca* vol. II, 305.

41 Teixeira, *The Portuguese Missions: Malacca* vol. II, 313–5.

42 Hunt, Hing & Roxborough, *Christianity in Malaysia*, 7–8.

43 *ibidem*, 36.

44 *ibidem*, 38.

45 Teixeira, *The Portuguese Missions: Malacca*, vol. I, 323.

46 Harrison, *Waiting for China*, 25.

47 Any missionary work was forbidden in China since the Yongzheng emperor's edict of 1724. See Lars Peter Laamann, *Christian Heretics in Late Imperial China: Christian Inculturation and State Control, 1720–1850* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

“Books in Arabic, Malay, Chinese, Siamese, Burmah, Greek, Latin, French, Spanish, Dutch and English” – all to be obtained by means of donations.⁴⁸ The first school was opened by William Milne on 5 August 1815, teaching basic literacy and numeracy to Chinese boys, with Hokkien (the northern Fujian version of Chinese) as the spoken medium.⁴⁹ The emphasis of providing education for the Chinese community underlines the fact that Melaka was regarded by most Protestant missionaries as a “staging post for China.”⁵⁰

In the early missionary correspondence,⁵¹ three themes emerge as central: 1. Missionary implantation and propagation; 2. Education and 3. Provision of funds. A letter from Batavia prior to its return to the Netherlands⁵² and a report produced by the same author, Mrs Thomsen, ten years later in Singapore,⁵³ highlights the degree to which all three were interlinked. Thomsen himself had previously emphasised that a school was needed in Batavia “for boys belonging to the Province of Canton, for ... people from several provinces rarely understand each others’ dialects.”⁵⁴ The investment of effort was to be indemnified by a total of “130 Spanish Dollars”. The same letter accounted for the visible blessings of the donations received during the previous years. In a different correspondence, the Malay Female School report for 1825 rather proudly states that

There is little variety in the routine of their employment, so that by mentioning one single day’s occupation, it may be seen how the time of those living in the compound is occupied. Every week day morning at seven O’Clock they are called together for prayer; after which they go to their books till about half past eight when they have breakfast – At 10 O’Clock they collect again, when they are engaged in sewing.⁵⁵

The quintessential problem faced by the missionaries was how to transform the considerable revenue generated by the trade with Qing China into income

48 Wm Milne; Melaka to LMS, 30/12/1815.

49 Harrison, *Waiting for China*, 24.

50 Hunt, Lee & Roxborough, *Christianity in Malaysia*, 36.

51 Derived from the Council of World Missions material, Special Collections, School of Oriental and African Studies Library, University of London.

52 Correspondence by Mrs Thomsen; Singapore, 22/05/1815.

53 Thomsen to LMS, 1830. See also report of the Singapore Malay Female School for the first two years, commenced in May 1823, to May 1825, under the Superintendence of Mrs Thomsen, Singapore, 1825.

54 Letter by C.H. Thomsen, Singapore, 1815.

55 Report of the Singapore Malay Female School, 1825.

for the missionary projects.⁵⁶ Passionate appeals to the wealthy traders to part with some of their money for providing financial support for the dissemination of knowledge partially bore fruit, for instance by means of “A monthly ... investigation of the sentiments and morals of society,” namely the 察世俗每月統計傳.⁵⁷ The increased need for printed material in Chinese, such as *The Monthly Magazine*, caused William Milne to seek the woodblock cutting expertise of a certain Liang Fa 梁發, who would in time become China’s first indigenous Protestant missionary.⁵⁸ This effusion of creative linguistic activity would in due course result in the preparation of the Old Testament in Chinese. A not negligible achievement was also the translation of the Kangxi emperor’s Valedictory Edict (聖訓), sent as a gift to Stamford Raffles.⁵⁹

That appeals for charitable donations did not always fall on deaf ears can be seen from a letter by William Milne to the Reverend George Burden in 1815.⁶⁰ As a result of the superior wealth of the European merchant community in the Straits settlements, Charles Marjoribanks eulogised in 1831 that “the son of a Malacca peasant [could] derive an enlightened education denied to the son of the Emperor of China.”⁶¹ So did the British missionaries initiate educational charity in and beyond Melaka? Perhaps Marjoribanks was unaware that some two centuries earlier, between 1629 and his death in 1661, Meester Cornelis van Senen had promoted Malay as a liturgical language beyond any other for teaching at schools and for preaching in the (Reformed) churches. The (School) Master Cornelis was a Malay native of the Banda island of Lonthor, born into a family of Christians who had originally been converted by the Portuguese and who spoke a form of Malay strongly influenced by Portuguese. His charitable work extended from providing health care to education, whilst his considerable wealth enable him to purchase a sizeable part of present-day Jakarta.⁶² Master Cornelis’s school education in Malay was copied by the Dutch missions – in stark contrast to the LMS missionaries of the early

56 Wm Milne’s report for 1815, in a paragraph aimed at the Bible Society.

57 *Cha shisu meiyue tongjizhuan*, English parallel title *The Monthly Magazine*, first issued in 1815, ending with the 80th monthly issue in 1821. See Chen Sung-chuan, “The British Maritime Public Sphere in Canton, 1827–1838” (unpublished PhD thesis: University of Cambridge, 2009).

58 Harrison, *Waiting for China*, 25.

59 William Milne to the LMS; Melaka, 10/05/1814 and 01/07/1814.

60 Reply to an earlier letter by Milne by George Burden, evoking the importance of the wealth created by the trade from Java, then still under British control. Burden to Milne (Melaka); Batavia, 06/02/1815.

61 Brian Harrison, *Waiting for China: The Anglo-Chinese College at Malacca, 1818–1843, and Early Nineteenth-Century Missions* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1979).

62 Meester Cornelis was at that point in his life a warden (*voorzitter*) in a Malayan church.

British period, who clearly focused on providing education in Chinese for the Babas. The Melakan locals had to wait until the Holstein national Claudius Henry Thomsen opened the first school taught in Malay. Eager to convey the latest achievements of Western knowledge by means of the latest teaching methods, Thomsen settled to work in 1818.⁶³ Although he had been trained at the same Gosport Academy,⁶⁴ near Portsmouth, where the originator of the Ultra Ganges Mission, Robert Morrison, had been trained prior to leaving for Guangzhou in 1807, Thomsen objected to the emphasis on concentrating on the Chinese-speakers of Melaka and left for other parts of Malaya and, eventually, Singapore.⁶⁵ Although Morrison had a clear preference for reaching out to potential Chinese converts,⁶⁶ the divisions which had arisen out of the divergent missionary methods and target communities, left an indelible impression of disunity. The return of the first Dutch governor-general following the Napoleonic interregnum, Godert Alexander Gerard Philip (Baron van der Kapellen, 1778–1848), was thus welcomed as a healing factor for Christian Batavia.⁶⁷

The mission school operated by William Milne in Melaka may have been the very reason for Thomsen's premature departure.⁶⁸ Firstly, the teaching methods could hardly be described as 'enlightened' by any modern standards. Devised by the Quaker Joseph Lancaster (1778–1838), the emphasis was on military discipline and precision. This teaching ethos suited Milne, who soon developed a reputation for adopting an autocratic style and for not consulting his colleagues. As far as Milne was concerned, the school was the Mission itself, and he was in charge of this Christian enterprise.⁶⁹ But rather than presenting a 'United Front of Faith,' the missionaries were human creatures of diverging opinions and natural dispositions. The younger missionaries in particular took

63 Harrison, *Waiting for China*, 134–5.

64 The core 'mission factory' of what has recently been analysed as Robert Morrison's "Plan for China". See the book derived from the doctoral thesis by Daily, *Robert Morrison*.

65 Gary Tiedemann devoted a specific subchapter to determining the precise origins of C.H. Thomsen, who is sometimes referred to as "Danish", sometimes as "German". See Tiedemann, "Early Nineteenth-Century 'Murmurings and Disputings,'" 241–3.

66 In fact, a mere three years following his arrival in Guangzhou, Morrison was able to state that his greatest pursuit would be to translate the Chinese classics into English – since faithful translations only existed in Latin and in French. See his letter to the LMS from Guangzhou, 28/12/1810.

67 J.C. Supper from Batavia to the LMS, 02/04/1816 and 18/06/1816.

68 Strongly implied by John Slater; Batavia to the LMS, 16/01/1822. The letter contains an enclosure, dated 03/06/1821, by G. Huffman, who pointed his finger directly at Milne as the "direct cause" of the Melaka dissensions.

69 Harrison, *Waiting for China*, 52–53.

exception to Milne's style, for instance Claudius Thomsen and David Abeel 雅裨理 (1804–1846).⁷⁰ The early 1820s thus formed the peak of dissensions in the Ultra Ganges Missions, by now increasingly located in Melaka. Walter Henry Medhurst 麥都思 (1796–1858), freshly arrived at Batavia in 1822, stated the creation of a Malay Bible as his primary request. Medhurst would subsequently become known for his meticulous study of the Chinese classics,⁷¹ though his appreciation of Malay culture is noteworthy.⁷² Whereas Thomsen opened his own school, devoted to education in Malay, with students including Melakan Malays, Chinese and Portuguese – bearing in mind that the latter two categories were the outcome of long-term intermarriage,⁷³ Abeel focused on editing the *Chinese Repository*. Having arrived in Guangzhou in 1830 as the first American-born (New Jersey) Protestant missionary,⁷⁴ he quickly developed a working relationship with Elijah Coleman Bridgman (1801–1861), the long-time American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.⁷⁵ James Legge 理雅各 (1815–1897), finally, pursued the quest for linguistic perfection. However, since teachers of all major regional languages, as well as of the official *guanhua* 官話, were not always easy to locate, even James Legge's semantic choices display a fair degree of fluidity.⁷⁶

The final chapter in the proliferation of Christian education came as a by-product of the support which the French state afforded to the Catholic Church and its missionary orders. On the frontline of the Asia Missions stood the *Missions Étrangères de Paris*, whose travelling clerics established schools which represented new educational methods for the inhabitants of Malaya. The pedagogical methods of Jean-Baptiste de la Salle (1651–1719), who inspired Catholic educators over the centuries to teach the poor youth, owe their implantation in Melaka, Singapore and Penang to a host of schools which were not primarily intended as Christian conversion grounds. In a reversal of longstanding

70 Letter by W.H. Medhurst to the LMS; Singapore, 07/03/1830. See also G.R. Williamson, *Memoir of the Reverend David Abeel, D.D.: Late Missionary to China* (New York: R. Carter, 1848), 177–204.

71 W.H. Medhurst from Batavia to the LMS; 15/01/1822.

72 J. Slater from Batavia; 16/01/1822.

73 Harrison, *Waiting for China*, 134–5.

74 R. Morrison to the LMS; Guangzhou, 09/10/1833, the very year when David Abeel sailed to England in order to preserve his health. See Puga & Andrade (transl.), *The British Presence in Macau*, 132 (footnote 7).

75 Harrison, 178, fn. 13.

76 Lauren F. Pfister, *Striving for "The Whole Duty of Man": James Legge and the Scottish Protestant Encounter with China. Assessing Confluences in Scottish Nonconformism, Chinese Missionary Scholarship, Victorian Sinology, and Chinese Protestantism* (Frankfurt am Main/Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004), 123–4.

diplomatic practice, the Anglo-Dutch authorities now openly supported the contributions made by the Parisian missionaries. In particular, the admiration which non-Catholic observers expressed for the efforts of the Jesuit missionaries in the various parts of Malaya controlled by Protestant powers are surprising. A couple of generations earlier, it would have been inconceivable for a Protestant to publish in glowing terms their insight into the educational, economic and general civilisational achievements of this Catholic mission.⁷⁷ Equally confounding for the Catholic believers was the competition between the Portuguese *padroado* clerics and the French missionaries. The papal edict to place the entire East Indian mission under the aegis of the MEP in 1841 only exacerbated this crisis of “spiritual property.” In Singapore, for instance, the Catholic cemetery has a dividing line demarcating the (posthumous) zones of influence of the two competing churches, otherwise a marker of intense sectarian conflict.⁷⁸

4 Batavia and Melaka in 1824

The colonial mirror image which Dutch commercial interests had established in Java and Sumatra and which extended eastwards from the increasingly British-dominated eastern India was briefly contorted during the only period when the Netherlands found themselves under Napoleonic rule and the British navy took care of the new situation by occupying Batavia and the other Dutch-controlled territories. All commercial and military responsibility had been taken over by Stamford Raffles during this period. Raffles made a name for himself by intervening into the governance of the local Malay communities and by destroying the palaces of the rulers in the interior. Reluctant to give up Batavia following the Congress of Vienna, Raffles had to be recalled by the British imperial authorities to the newly acquired Singapore. The latter had been a thorn in the side of the Dutch East Asian interests from the beginning.⁷⁹ Situated within the Dutch-controlled Sultanate of Johor, tense negotiations about a clearer division of territorial influence began in 1820, to be concluded four years later in the Treaty of London (1824). During the

77 Alfred Russell Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago: The Land of the Orangutan, and the Bird of Paradise. A Narrative of Travel, with Studies of Man and Nature* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1869), 34, writing about Bukit-Tima, in the centre of Singapore Island.

78 Hunt, Lee & Roxborough, *Christianity in Malaysia*, 13.

79 Peter Borschberg, “Dutch Objections to British Singapore, 1819–1824: Law, politics, commerce and a diplomatic misstep,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 50/4/ (2019), 540–61, fn. 16.

time of the British interregnum (*tussenbestuur*) in the Napoleonic era, the true affinity of the British presence in south-eastern Asia towards the Dutch effort had become evident, despite previous discord. As the potential successor to Dutch rule over Batavia, Stamford Raffles did his utmost to protect the interests of the Dutch mission,⁸⁰ whilst professing a genuine interest in the customs of the Javanese people.

As a result of the treaty of 1824, Britain agreed to withdraw from Sumatra and Java, renouncing any future negotiations with local potentates. In return, the Netherlands were to cede all territories in subcontinental India and on the Malay peninsula. This stipulation also concerned Melaka, controlled by the VOC since 1641. The VOC and the EIC agreed to cooperate with each other in all commercial and diplomatic affairs, renouncing any unilateral treaties with local rulers without taking the interests of the other London Treaty partner into account, and, importantly for both trade monopolies, to combat piracy. The *status quo ante* of the Anglo-Dutch conflict that would result in the peace treaty and territorial exchange of 1824 was that Britain preferred to utilise the Chinese merchant settlements in order to exert control, rather than to forcibly unify the territories controlled by independent Malay states. The assassination of James Birch⁸¹ provided the pretext for the war and the eventual absorption of colonial Melaka into greater British India. Remarkably, the creation of a British protectorate in continental Malaya was preceded by a military rout at the hand of the population of Perak. The original agreement reached between the local sultans and the British representative (Resident) had been not to interfere with the social customs and religious life of the local populations. By the time of James Birch's succession to this pre-colonial title, however, this wisdom had begun to escape the British rulers, thus provoking a violent rejection of the Resident system.⁸²

But how did the new arrangement between the two European powers affect the Christian mission to the Malay? The evidence left behind in 1823 by the missionary Claudius Henry Thomsen, then based in Singapore, is revealing.⁸³ The more means could be made available from the projects planned by Stamford

80 In the words of C.W.Th. Baron van Boetzelaer van Asperen en Dubbeldam: "Persoonlijk heeft Raffles gedaan, wat in zijn vermogen lag, om de kerk te helpen en te steunen [trans.: Raffles did what he could in order to help and support the church]." *De Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië: Haar ontwikkeling van 1620–1939*, (Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1947), 275.

81 James Wheeler Woodford Birch (1826–1875), First Resident of Perak.

82 Emily Sadka, "The Journal of Sir Hugh Low", *Journal of Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1877, 1–108, 11–12.

83 Detailed financial declaration by C.H. Thomsen; Singapore, 31/01/1823.

Raffles, such as land leases and (limited) funds, the more projects could be endeavoured. This could include mundane possessions relating to real estate, or indeed official and missionary material emerging from the Ultra Ganges printing press.⁸⁴ The propensity of Raffles to extend the activity of Protestant educational work is further underlined by the fact that Europeans from beyond the “EIC-VOC duopoly” found their way to Batavia during the British tutelage over the colony.⁸⁵ Thomsen’s report produced for 1823 names the building of a Malay Chapel and of a Female Malay School amongst the most urgent projects for the young colony. The latter was soon to include Chinese girls from the colony.⁸⁶ Two years later,⁸⁷ the schools had grown in size and range, and thus become a fixed feature of life in Singapore. The 1823 report mentions the necessity of missionary funding due to “Difficulties of opening up work in Dutch colonies” – without indicating whether Dutch opposition or indigenous resistance was to be blamed.⁸⁸ One further contributing factor for this decline, not related to spiritual or missiological disunion, was the occasionally eccentric behaviour of individual Westerners. When John Slater, the great benefactor to the English community in Batavia, stood accused of immoral conduct (“ill treatment of slave boys”),⁸⁹ Ultra Ganges dignitaries such as Thomas Beighton (1790–1844), John Ince (1795–1825), C.H. Thomsen and W.H. Medhurst cautioned the LMS of the negative effects on the entire mission.

5 Converting the Heathens – and the Chinese!

The early missionary challenge was to enable the trade monopolies to build up stable entities which in essence mirrored the religious communities of the Protestant societies in north-western Europe. The first clerics of the Ultra-Ganges Mission in Melaka found an ideal territory for practising their methodological skills – for at this point the Protestant missions were still in their infancy. Whereas the first overseas empire had taken English and later also Scottish religious communities to North America, where they could experiment with proselytising to unfamiliar indigenous civilisations, the second – Indian and Ultra Ganges – Empire encountered formidable cultural obstacles.

84 See the annual report by W.H. Medhurst to the LMS; Batavia, 01/01/1824.

85 Such as the Swiss A.D.T. Pahud, who arrived in 1814 to open a boarding school (*kostschool*). See Boetzelaer, *De Protestantsche Kerk*, 274.

86 Financial declaration to the LMS for the Singapore mission for 1829.

87 Financial declaration to the LMS for the Singapore mission for 1831.

88 C.H. Thomsen, Singapore 31/01/1823.

89 W.H. Medhurst to the LMS; Batavia, 23/08/1823 (see also *idem*, 03/06/1823).

Whether Hindu or Muslim, the local communities defended their own traditions with a vehemence that the British clerics had not anticipated. The same was true for the Muslim populations of Java and Sumatra. From the experience of earlier European explorers, not least of the Catholic Portuguese, the Dutch had already concluded that any conversion efforts directed towards major Muslim populations would prove futile. Instead they focused on the publication of the sacred scriptures. The translation of the New Testament into Latinised Malay published in 1681 in Amsterdam, and printed in 1753 in Batak script is a prime example.⁹⁰ Robert Hutchings, the second EIC Resident and chaplain in Penang, was fluent in Malay and recognised the agency of the local population. In 1814, he thus commissioned the translation of the Dutch Bible into Malay, printed in the Jawi script.⁹¹ The animistic 'heathens' of the rain-forest interior were a more promising destination, although any missionary activity was accompanied by untold dangers. In Batavia, the Dutch administration had aided the missionaries substantially, which resulted in the ample availability of missionary materials in the Dutch language compared to the negligible availability of books for missionary use in English – a fact which by 1814, after more than one decade of British control – caused some consternation amongst the British missionaries.⁹² The ideal target group for conversion were hence the Chinese settlers, who had established themselves along the coastlines of the Nanyang for many centuries. The first Chinese settlers who the British encountered were thus the expatriates around Melaka, who certainly originated from the same shores as the Nanyang settlers, but who were fewer in number and less well connected in terms of trade. Chinese commercial activity was also quintessential to the Dutch interests in eastern Asia, not least because the Chinese trading houses gained access to harbours which were off-limits to Europeans after the establishment of the Canton System in 1756. Even after having been routed by Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (Koxinga), Taiwan proved to be a formidable bridgehead for Dutch trade with China's south-eastern provinces. Britain could only dream of the same ease of access. Whereas a Dutch trade mission had established favourable terms for merchants from the Netherlands in 1795,⁹³ the mission by Lord McCartney in 1796 was deprived of similar diplomatic success.⁹⁴

90 Algra, *De Kerke Christi te Batavia*, 132.

91 Hunt, Lee & Roxborough (eds), *Christianity in Malaysia*, 37.

92 Popkins to George Burden (London); Batavia, 03/07/1814.

93 See Tonio Andrade, *The Last Embassy: The Dutch Mission of 1795 and the Forgotten History of Western Encounters with China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).

94 James Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

6 Batavia and Melaka in the 1840s

The Ultra-Ganges Mission after the Opium War (1840–42) changed drastically in character, chiefly since its purpose had been altered beyond recognition. No longer obliged to stay beyond the boundaries of the Qing realm, the British missionaries either moved to the new safe haven of Hong Kong or focused on the conversion of the Malayan population. The former became possible when the Anglo-Chinese College⁹⁵ became re-established in the Crown Colony. The latter, however, proved more cumbersome, chiefly because the Malay were Muslim and conversion proved to be a delicate affair, for socio-cultural reasons. Be this as it may, the development resulted in a steady decline of church services in the English language in Batavia.⁹⁶

For the remaining British missionaries in Batavia, the dissolution of the British presence in the Dutch East Indies meant that they were simply no longer needed. In order to guarantee an at least token presence of the British missionary effort, John Slater in 1819 purchased land for a temporary English church, which by means of a public subscription effort became permanent by 1823.⁹⁷ Despite the dissension created by his determined opinions concerning the different ethnic communities, Milne's death in 1822 temporarily stopped the proliferation of literary work in Chinese. Plans were drawn up by Walter Medhurst and John Slater to proselytise the entire western Pacific, from Calcutta to Nagasaki, by engaging in a translation exercise which seemed clearly inspired by the earlier Jesuit Asia Mission.⁹⁸ Two missionaries arriving rather late in the process of Anglo-Dutch reorganisation were Jacob Tomlin (1793–1880) and the Pomeranian Lutheran Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff 郭實獵 (1803–1851). Both were mentally focused on the China mission, but both also worked on the missionary encounter with South East Asia. Walter Medhurst thus proudly communicated the planned missionary journey of the two missionaries to Siam (Thailand), which could be achieved in 1828.⁹⁹ On the Dutch side, all Protestant missionaries, including the Reformed and Lutheran denominations, were being unified in a single church authority. The resulting lack in spiritual essence was perhaps a result of this degree of institutionalisation.¹⁰⁰

95 Tiedemann, "Early Nineteenth-Century 'Murmurings and Disputings,'" 246.

96 W.H. Medhurst to the LMS; Batavia, 20/05/1826.

97 J. Slater to the LMS; Batavia, 12/01/1823.

98 W. Medhurst and J. Slater to the LMS; Batavia, 22/10/1822.

99 W.H. Medhurst to R. Morrison; Batavia, 13/01/1828. See also letter by L. Tomlin to the LMS; Batavia, 01/01/1828.

100 Boetzelaer, *De Protestantsche Kerk*, 289. Van Boetzelaer remarked that the resulting Church lacked any sense of Mission and, worse, of a confessional identity ("Deze kerk

Amongst the local Christians a considerable process of inculturation set in. Nominally Protestants of Anglo-Dutch missionary descent, many Christians preserved Catholic features such as public processions and sacral music during church feasts and weddings, accompanied by indigenous gongs and dances. By the end of the nineteenth century, their language retained a high proportion of Portuguese, despite the fact that the local Christians had lived in close everyday contact with Dutch (Batavia) and English (Melaka) for many generations. After all, it was a well-known fact that Robert Morrison entertained close contacts with Roman Catholic priests, who must have taught Morrison a fair working knowledge of the Portuguese language.¹⁰¹ Going far beyond religious terminology, even the names for birds, trees and domestic objects were of direct Lusophone origin.¹⁰² In spiritual terms, the influx of missionaries belonging to diverse evangelical backgrounds, coupled with the emergence of indigenous Malay and Chinese churches, provided the biggest discontinuity with the religious practice established by both the Dutch and the Ultra-Ganges missions.¹⁰³

7 Conclusion: A South-East Asian Missionary Experiment

The aim of the present article was to demonstrate the experimental nature of both the Ultra-Ganges Mission and the Dutch Batavia Mission. Both had originated from earlier missionary contacts with populations in those parts of the British and Dutch imperial expansions where religious boundaries stood clearly demarcated. This was the case with the Muslim and the Hindu populations in India, for instance, where neither mission managed to make significant inroads. The qualitatively new factor lay in the presence of significant Chinese populations, to whom religious allegiance generally mattered less than family affiliations. And it was precisely this blend of ‘predictable non-converts’ (i.e. Muslim Malay) and ‘potential converts’ (Chinese and non-Muslim Malay) which made the Melaka Mission experimental from the outset. The same went for the maintenance of Christian fervour and purity within the convert communities. Whereas the Catholic ‘old Christians’ in China had adapted the

was dus niet alleen een kerk zonder Zending, maar wat nog erger was, een kerk zonder Belijdenis”, *ibidem*, 304).

101 See also Pfister, *Striving for “The Whole Duty of Man”*, 149.

102 Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*, 307.

103 Rolf Gerhard Tiedemann (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in China, volume II (1800–present)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), xii.

Christian teaching to the features of Chinese culture, the Protestant Ultra Ganges missionaries could only sense a deplorable lack of genuine faith.¹⁰⁴

Whilst the Dutch East Indies never became colonial settlement territories, the cultural profile of Dutch Protestantism had to remain shallow. Confidently Malayan and Muslim in nature, any conversion to Christianity from the side of the local population was predestined to be marginal. The same was true for the Dutch, and then British, experience in Melaka. As a colonial bridgehead in South-East Asia, the Protestant presence could only be maintained by the mutual support between the “Anglo-Dutch duopoly,” even during the Napoleonic era. Furthermore, since the Muslim majority was (almost) a priori excluded from missionary activity, the Nanyang Chinese, as well as the animists from the interior, became the focus of both the Dutch and the Ultra-Ganges missions.¹⁰⁵ While the Chinese served as a preparation ground for the ultimately hope-for mission to China, tensions emerged between those missionaries aiming at focus on working amongst the local Malay and those who specifically wanted to convert Chinese settlers. The output in published religious pamphlets and biblical texts in Chinese stands in no relation to the number of the Chinese settlers (in Melaka some twenty-five percent of the population). Only the establishment of the Anglo-Chinese College in Hong Kong would end the functioning of Melaka as a Chinese satellite at the southern end of the South China Sea. Finally, the Protestant missions also fell victim to the obstinacy – in theological convictions, but also in terms of working methods – of individual missionaries.¹⁰⁶ The Protestant mission field between Batavia and Melaka thus became as diverse and disorderly as the European homelands whence their religious calling had hailed from.

104 G. Bruckner from Semarang to the LMS, 23/08/1815.

105 Akin to other pre-20th Century Christian missionaries, a distinct admiration for the steadfastness of the Muslim faithful can be discerned in the writings of the Ultra Ganges Missionaries. See J.C. Supper’s comments on the conduct of the local Christians; letter from Batavia to LMS 28–29/11/1815.

106 Quite apart from the Protestant tendency towards an exclusive *besserwisser* mentality, the missionaries of the Ultra Ganges Mission were also known for their extraordinary diligence. Or, in the Scottish prose of James Legge, of their “six muckle feerdays every week”. See Pfister, *Striving for “The Whole Duty of Man”*, 157.