

George Ede

1854-1908

By Ian Keller

(Edited by Douglas Fix)

Mr. George Ede was educated at Moray House, Edinburgh, receiving training as a teacher rather than as a minister. Afterwards he and his wife sailed to Formosa to work with the Presbyterian Mission there, arriving on December 23, 1883.(1) Initially, Ede worked on his proficiency in the Amoy vernacular in Taiwanfu, while undertaking some work at the church college in Taiwanfu, and showing scriptural slides to hospital patients on his "magic lantern," an early form of image projection equipment.(2) He also made plans for opening a middle school in the Taiwanfu and submitted them to the mission council in May 1884.(3)

This initial work was interrupted by the French blockade of Formosa during the Sino-French war (1884-1885). The Edes left for Amoy (Xiamen) in September or October of 1884 and did not return until May 12, 1885.(4) Mr. Ede resumed his educational work and on September 21, 1885, the middle school was opened. However, as the new building had not been completed, the school was housed temporarily in the old mission house. Initially there were ten pupils, but by the end of term this enrollment had increased to 22.(5)

In early 1886, Ede took a break from his duties and began a journey north towards some Presbyterian stations in Changhua County. He was accompanied by several of his students who were returning home for the holidays. Along the way he preached, sold tracts, and conducted Sabbath services.(6) During a second trip, begun in mid-December 1889, Ede traveled to the more dangerous and less often visited area of eastern Formosa; he often slept in military camps for safety. He went southeast from Taiwanfu, and from there he crossed the mountains to the east coast and traveled up along the shoreline as far north as Chock-e-day. He carried out much the same pastoral missionary work as before, although he did bring a "magic lantern" with him and used it on multiple occasions to show scenes from the Bible. In Chock-e-day Ede met the Pan-cha aborigines (also known as Lam-si-hoan) and recorded some vocabulary words from them. In mid-February, 1890, he returned the way he can come.(7)

The battering of heavy rains and the ravages of white ants put the "Old Mission House" in such bad shape that it was deemed unsafe for further use as a middle school

site. As repairs were not practical, the middle school was closed in July 1890.(8) In January 1893 construction of a new middle school was begun inside the Taiwanfu mission compound.(9) Over five hundred pounds had been raised by the students at the Glasgow Free Church College for this building project.(10) The new middle school had rooms for sixty pupils and opened in February, 1894.(11) In September 1896, Ede sent the mission \$190.19 to form the nucleus of a scholarship fund for the college and middle school.(12)

During his time with the Presbyterian mission in south Formosa, Ede made a number of policy recommendations, some of which influenced church policy. He recommended that no funding be given to schools in which the Bible was not read regularly and also objected to the appointment of teachers who were "heathen."(13) He proposed creating a "Normal Institute" for training teachers, a "Probationary Student's Seminary" in connection with the middle school, and a "Children's Sabbath" for all churches. Ede also promoted the teaching English and Japanese in the middle school.(14) In December 1895 he had the misfortune to serve on a committee dealing with a massacre of Christians in Mwatau. Ede was made so uncomfortable by what he perceived as the victims clamoring for revenge that he asked to be removed from the committee.(15)

In addition to his educational work, Mr. Ede prepared Romanized colloquial editions of the *Ban-kok Ki-liok* (also known as the *Wanguo jilu* [Geographical primer], printed at his own expense), a catechism entitled *Shengjing wenda* [Questions and answers on the Bible], and the *Sanzi jing* [Three-character classic]. The *Sanzi jing* became the basis for the entrance examination at the middle school.(16)

Mr. Ede left Formosa in September 1896 and was transferred Wujingfu in northeast Guangdong with the hope that the climate would be more favorable so that his wife could rejoin him there.(17) George Ede died in Wujingfu 1908.(18)

Publications:

Ede, G. "Journey to north Formosa." *The Presbyterian Messenger* (23 July 1886): 5-8; (1 August 1886): 8-10; (6 August 1886): 6-9.

Ede, George. "A tour through eastern Formosa." *Presbyterian Messenger* 1 Oct 1890):6-9; (1Nov 1890): 4-7; (1 Dec 1890): 6-10; (1 Feb 1891): 5-6; (1 Mar 1891): 2-3; (1 Apr 1891): 3-5, 8-10; (1 May 1891): 12-14; (1 Jun 1891): 11-14.

Notes:

1. Edward Band, *Working his purpose out: The history of the English Presbyterian mission 1847-1947* (London: Publishing office of the Presbyterian Church of England, [1948]), Vol 2, p. 111.

2. "Formosa: Letter [dated April 2, 1884] from Mr. Ede," *The Messenger and Missionary Record of the Presbyterian Church of England* (August 1884): 157-158.
3. Rev. William Campbell, *Handbook of the English Presbyterian mission in south Formosa* (Hastings: F. J. Parsons, 1910), p. 55.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.
5. Band [1948], Vol 2, p. 115.
6. The record of this journey was published as: "Journey to north Formosa." *The Presbyterian Messenger* (23 July 1886): 5-8; (1 August 1886): 8-10; (6 August 1886): 6-9.
7. "A tour through eastern Formosa." *Presbyterian Messenger* 1 Oct 1890):6-9; (1Nov 1890): 4-7; (1 Dec 1890): 6-10; (1 Feb 1891): 5-6; (1 Mar 1891): 2-3; (1 Apr 1891): 3-5, 8-10; (1 May 1891): 12-14; (1 Jun 1891): 11-14.
8. Campbell, 1910, p. 114; Band [n. d.], 115.
9. Campbell 1910, 136.
10. Band, p. 115.
11. Band, p. 115; Campbell, 1910, p. xxv.
12. Campbell, 1910, p. 190.
13. Campbell, 1910, p. 55, 108.
14. Campbell, 1910, p. 86, 88, 97, 181.
15. Campbell, 1910, pp. 178-179, 184-185.
16. Campbell, 1910, p. 86, 189; *Taiwan lishi cidian* [Dictionary of Taiwan history] (Taipei: Wen Jian Hui, 2004), p. 340, 527.
17. Band, p. 116.
18. Campbell 1910, p. xxv, 267.