

George Leslie Mackay

21 March 1844 - 2 June 1901

By Samuel Stephenson

George Leslie Mackay was born the youngest of six children of George Mackay and Helen Sutherland, farmers, in Zorra Village,(1) Zorra Township, Oxford County, Ontario, Canada.(2) The community in which Mackay was raised in Oxford County was primarily Scottish, and a number of Mackay's family members were Calvinist Presbyterian ministers.(3)

Mackay received his primary education in Zorra at the Woodstock Grammar School, beginning in 1850 and graduating in 1855.(4) Mackay then began teaching at the Toronto Omeme Teacher's College in 1855, and subsequently became a local primary school teacher for two years at Maplewood and Maitlandville beginning in 1859.(5) From 1865 to 1867 Mackay studied the arts at Knox College, Toronto, and served as a student missionary during the summers. In 1867 Mackay enrolled at Princeton Seminary, and he graduated from that institution on 26 April 1870.(6) The following summer Mackay spent in the Presbytery of Toronto, working in the mission stations of Newmarket and Mount Albert.(7) After his appeal to become a foreign missionary for the Canadian Presbyterian Church was rejected, Mackay began studying South Asian language and culture under the noted missionary Alexander Duff at the University of Edinburgh.(8)

While in Scotland studying and working as a missionary in Cowgate and Grassmarket,(9) Mackay applied for foreign missionary status and was later accepted, being commissioned as the first foreign missionary of the Canadian Presbyterian Mission on 9 March 1872. After spending the summer of 1871 in Canada gathering support and funds, Mackay was ordained on 19 September 1871 and left for Hong Kong via San Francisco one month later.(10) After spending six months in Swatow in southern China, Mackay was hosted by Reverend Hugh Ritchie for three months in Takao, Formosa. Ritchie and Maxwell encouraged Mackay to establish a Presbyterian mission in the north.(11) By early March 1872, Mackay and Ritchie set out together to establish Mackay's new mission station in Tamsui in northern Taiwan.(12)

Mackay made numerous routine evangelical and medical trips around the northern part of the island during his career as a missionary there, being especially well known for his dental work among Chinese and aborigine communities.(13) He founded the

Mackay Clinic in Tamsui in 1880, which was the first Western-style hospital in northern Taiwan.(14) In 1878, he married a local woman, Tui Chang-mia, who was probably a native Taiwanese,(15) and they had one son and two daughters.(16)

He took his first furlough in 1881-1882, during which time he and his wife worked to raise £6,125 for the construction of Oxford College in Tamsui (originally called the Tamsui Middle School). During his subsequent trips around Taiwan he collected various specimens of flora and fauna that served as the basis for a museum at the College, as well as contributing to collections of the ethnological department of the royal Ontario Museum.(17)

In the late 1880's Mackay traveled to Amoy *en route* to Hong Kong, where he joined his family. Mackay reported that during the French blockade of Taiwan in 1884-1885 there was a widespread outbreak of anti-Christian sentiment resulting in the death of at least two native Christians and the burning of seven of the northern mission chapels.(18) Mackay's mission was nonetheless quite successful, boasting 16 chapels and some five hundred native Taiwanese converts by 1888, and more than 60 churches and 4,000 converts in the course of his whole missionary career in Taiwan.(19)

Mackay took his second and final furlough from 1894 to 1896, during which time he wrote *From Far Formosa*. During this furlough he was also elected the moderator of the General Assembly of the English Presbyterian Church.(20) Although Mackay had suffered from both meningitis and malaria, he died of throat cancer in Tamui on 2 June 1901.(21)

Publications:

Mackay, George Leslie. *From far Formosa: The island, its people and missions*. Edited by J.A. MacDonald. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1896.

Mackay, G.L. "Unter den Aboriginalstämmen Formosas" [Among the aboriginal tribes of Formosa]. *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft (für Thüringen) zu Jena* 15 (1897): 1-21.

Honors and Memberships:

Honorary Doctorate granted by Queen's College, Kingston, 1880.(22)

Notes:

1. Mackay Memorial Hospital, Taipei, Taiwan, <http://www.mmh.org.tw/introduce/english.htm>, 23 May 2003; Otness 1999, p. 103.

2. Austin, Alvyn J., *Dictionary of Canadian biography* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1994), Vol XIII, 1901-1911, p. 653; *Biography index, A*

cumulative index to biographical material in books and magazines, September 1955-August 1958, Bea Joseph, ed. (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1960), p. 530; Otness, Harold M., *One thousand Westerners in Taiwan, to 1945: A biographical and bibliographical dictionary* (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Preparatory Office, Academia Sinica, 1999), p. 103; Lin Changhua, ed. *Ma Jie boshi shoucang Taiwan uuanzhumin wenwu* [The Taiwanese aboriginal artifacts collected by Dr. Mackay], Taiwan: Shunyi Taiwan Yuanzhumin Bowuguan, 2001, pp. 2-3, 13; Mackay, George Leslie, *From far Formosa: The island, its people and missions*, J.A. MacDonald, ed. (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1896), pp. 14-15.

3. Austin, 1994, p. 653. Both the age and composition of the Scottish community in Oxford County, and the exact number and relation of Mackay's family members who were ministers, are unclear in this source.

4. Lin, 2001, p. 13; Austin, 1994, p. 653; Mackay, 1896, p. 17.

5. Lin, 2001, p. 3; Austin, 1994, p. 653;
<http://www.mmh.org.tw/introduce/english.htm>; Mackay, 1896, p. 17.

6. Lin, 2001, pp. 3, 13; Austin, 1994, p. 653; Otness, 1999, p. 103;
<http://www.mmh.org.tw/introduce/english.htm>; Mackay, 1896, pp. 17-19.

7. Mackay, 1896, p. 19.

8. Lin, 2001, pp. 3, 13; Austin, 1994, p. 653;
<http://www.mmh.org.tw/introduce/english.htm>; Mackay, 1896, p. 20.

9. Mackay, 1896, p. 22.

10. Lin, 2001, pp. 3, 13; Austin, 1994, p. 653; Otness, 1999, p. 103; *Biography Index* 1949, p. 605; <http://www.mmh.org.tw/introduce/english.htm>; Mackay, 1896, pp. 22-28.

11. Austin, 1994, p. 653; Campbell, William, *Sketches from Formosa* (London, New York: Marshall Brothers, 1915), pp. 49-50.

12. Otness, 1999, p. 103; Mackay, 1896, pp. 31-32; Carrington, George Williams, *Foreigners in Formosa 1841-1874* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, Inc., 1978), pp. 130-131, 260-261, 269-276; Campbell, 1915, pp. 49-50.

13. Allen, Herbert J., "Notes of a journey through Formosa from Tamsui to Taiwanfu," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 21 (1877): 258-266; Otness 1999, p. 104; Goddard, W. G., *Formosa; a study in Chinese history* (London: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 3, 17; Campbell, 1915, p. 153; Austin, 1994, pp. 653, 654, states that Mackay claimed to have removed some 40,000 teeth in 30 years in Taiwan.

14. <http://www.mmh.org.tw/introduce/english.htm>.

15. Austin, 1994, p. 654, states that Mackay's wife was Pe-po-hoan. Otness 1999, p. 104, however, claims that, "she was generally reported to be Chinese but some accounts speculate that she may have been at least part-aborigine."
16. Austin, 1994, p. 653.
17. Austin, 1994, p. 654.
18. Campbell, 1915, p. 156.
19. <http://www.mmh.org.tw/introduce/english.htm>.
20. Austin, 1994, p. 654.
21. Austin, 1994, p. 654; *Biography Index* 1960, p. 530; Otness 1999, p. 103; <http://www.mmh.org.tw/introduce/english.htm>.
22. Austin, 1994, p. 654; <http://www.mmh.org.tw/introduce/english.htm>.