The Transformation of an American Baptist Missionary Family into Covert Operatives

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Abstract—Harold and Vincent Young were brothers and Baptist missionaries who played a pivotal role in the formation of early American foreign intelligence in Southeast Asia. They capitalized on a unique combination of linguistic abilities, powerful local contacts, and the religious devotion of their followers to organize pro-American paramilitary forces during World War II and the Cold War.

Introduction

William Marcus Young was a pioneer American Baptist missionary who proselytized to the ethnic Lahu, Shan, and Wa peoples residing in the mountains of China and Burma (Myanmar). Their ancient oral mythology predicted a "White Man" in "White Robes" would bring them a sacred book containing knowledge of the one true God.[1] This providential folk tale provided an open door for Western missionaries who, in the early 1800s, began converting mountain dwellers in numbers hitherto unprecedented in the Baptist Foreign Mission Society.[2]

William's sons, Harold and Vincent, were born at the mission compound in China, and, though Caucasian in appearance, were raised with a mindset akin to the local mountain peasants.[3] At the outset of World War II, Harold and Vincent's intimate knowledge of the region and its culture suddenly brought them to the attention of America's fledgling foreign intelligence efforts in the Pacific. Unlike the former colonial powers, the United States had no significant international intelligence networks to draw on prior to World War II, and therefore sought missionaries as one of the only recruitment pools of Americans with on-the-ground experience, local knowledge, and high-level contacts in regions suddenly vital to U.S. national security. Fluent in six tribal languages, Harold and Vincent were recruited as tribal experts, able to influence the myriad ethnic groups of China, Burma, and Thailand who revered their family as a dynasty of prophets and bringers of the Word of God.

[1] Lintner 1999: 50-1; Smith 1999: 454-5.

[2] By William Young's own reports, total converts were as high as 40,000, a number confirmed by his supervisor, J.C. Robbins. American Baptist Foreign Mission Society [ABFMS] FM-307, April 16, 1936.

[3] Li 1987: 71.

This article argues that the Youngs were uniquely situated to serve the Baptist Foreign Mission Society as well as American and British intelligence services in Southeast Asia, initially through luck and coincidence, and later through a distinct set of specialized skills acquired through decades of life among the hill tribe people.

Pioneer mission: 1861–1899

William Marcus Young was born in 1861 to a Baptist farming family in St. Augustine, Illinois. At age seventeen he began preaching and by 1884 had a following of around sixty church members.[4] In the 19th century, American church theology taught that the Second Coming of Christ was contingent upon a worldwide acceptance of the gospel, citing, among other scriptures, Matthew 28: 16-20 (King James Version), in which the resurrected Jesus Christ instructs his disciples to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" within "the end of the age", i.e., before 2000 AD. This millenarian view was responsible for the rapid expansion of mission stations in Asia during the late 1800s,[5] and perhaps also for the vision William received on the night of his father's death as Christ appeared at his bedside and commanded him to leave his country and spread the gospel to the farthest corners of the earth.[6] William enlisted with the American Baptist Mission Society, which sent him to British Burma in 1891.

The British colonized Upper Burma in 1885, which circumscribed the Chin, Kachin, and Shan States into a growing province of British India. The northern limits of Upper Burma were referred to as the Frontier Areas or Unadministered Territories due to their distance from central government, their inaccessible mountainous terrain, and their ethnically diverse populations resistant to British rule. The British therefore welcomed American missionaries into these outlying territories, hoping they would act as "civilizing agents" and help reign control over recalcitrant areas.[7]

The first man to translate the Bible into Burmese was the American Protestant missionary, Adoniram Judson, in 1834. Most of his converts were among ethnic Karen, whose ancient traditions spoke of a "White Man" carrying a "Golden Book" who would one day arrive "to bring salvation," a legend that perfectly prepared the Karen to accept Caucasian missionaries—wearing cool white robes in the tropical climate of Burma and carrying Bibles embossed with gold leaf—as their prophets.[8] The Karen are an ethnic minority that live at the lowest elevation of all highland groups in Burma, and were a logical starting point for missionaries who wished to work their way uphill toward the Unadministered Territories. Many Karen were fluent in the languages of their highland minority neighbors through centuries of trade, intermarriage, and casual contact,[9] and as American missionaries arrived in British Burma, the Karen worked alongside them as

[4] Young, W. "Questions to Candidates for Missionary Appointment." ABFMS 1889.
[5] Hawley 1991: 21-36.
[6] Young, H. 2013: 12.
[7] Maung Shwe Wa 1963: 119, 160.
[8] Anderson 1956:.215-28.
[9] Renard 1979: 17-22.

interpreters, navigators, emissaries, and assistant preachers.

William arrived in Rangoon (Yangon) in 1892, was given a team of four Karen assistants, and trekked north through numerous hill stations within the Shan States of eastern Burma.[10] The Shan are a lowland ethnic group closely associated with the Thai. Every five days, as per local tradition, an array of ethnic villages would assemble into a huge bazaar organized by the Shan, and the missionaries knew this was the best place to reach a wide range of people from the surrounding areas.[11] William and his Karen assistants preached to the Shan people, but quickly found that they were unreceptive to new religious ideas, sticking adamantly to their Buddhist beliefs. During his first seven-year term of service, William had zero converts.[12]

Kengtung, Burma: 1900–1920

In 1900 William received permission to transfer to Kengtung, a small but relatively cosmopolitan town close to the China border. He hoped Kengtung's ethnic diversity would provide a wider array of cultures that might be open to conversion. Evangelizing at the five-day bazaar, William again got no response from the Shan; however, a group of migrant Lahu traders from China took interest in his sermons.

The Lahu are a hill tribe minority living at a higher elevation than the Karen, but had also acquired the mythology of the "White Man, Golden Book." The Lahu listened to William's message, and then returned to China to announce that their prophet had arrived. Another ethnic group, the Wa, who live in the highest mountains of China and Burma, also shared the "White Man and Golden Book" myth. Both the Wa and Lahu had contemporary spiritual leaders who, coincidentally, had been preaching for the last decade that "the true God will soon reveal himself" and "we must purify and prepare for his arrival".[13] Now, it appeared, their divinations were correct. These fortuitous elements came together, and within a few years, thousands of Lahu and Wa began requesting baptism at the Kengtung hill station.

During this period, William married a fellow missionary, Della Mason, and they had three sons: Harold Mason Young (1901–1975), Marcus Vincent Young (1904–1990),[14] and Clarence Young (b. 1907 and died before his second birthday). Harold and Vincent grew up speaking Shan, Lahu, and Wa—frustrating their parents by refusing to speak English for their first five years. By their early teens, they were accompanying their

[10] The word "Shan" comes from a Burmese corruption of "Siam", the former name of Thailand. (Burmese has no final "m" consonant, so "Siam" became "Syan".) The name indicates that the Shan are not related to any other ethnic group in Burma, and are closer to the Thai, Tai, and Lao people. See Lintner 1999: 52-3.

[11] Maung Shwe 1963: 208.

[12] Young, W. ABFMS FM-213, January 15, 1901.

[13] Young, H. 2013: 32.

[14] Marcus Vincent Young was known by his middle name, which he also used in correspondence. This article therefore refers to him as "Vincent" unless citing official Baptist Mission Board correspondence in which he used his full given name. His son, Oliver Gordon Young, took it a step further, using his middle name as his first name not only in everyday interactions, but also as a pen name for his published works.

father on mission trips through the hills for weeks at a time.[15]

As more Lahu and Wa traveled from China to be baptized, William realized that the biggest populations lay across the border, and received approval from the Baptist Mission Board to open a new station in Yunnan Province, China. But the British government in Burma considered the trip too dangerous, and refused to let him cross the border, citing two reasons: First, in order to cross into Yunnan, the Youngs would have to pass through the territory of the "Wild" Wa, feared for their tradition of headhunting. The Wa were infamous for ambushing and decapitating unsuspecting victims on jungle trails. The severed heads would be placed in wicker baskets atop long bamboo pikes, allowing the blood to drip into bowls of unmilled rice below. Once the rice was soaked with blood, the Wa would scatter it across the fields as a fertility rite for the soil. When the head was fully drained of blood and began to shrink and petrify, the skull was fixed to one of many wooden posts in front of the main village gate, creating a "skull avenue" as a foreboding entrance to a Wa village;[16] The second reason was that by 1920 southwestern China was in chaos, overrun with warlords and bandits. Between the death of Yuan Shi-kai, the first president of China, in 1916 and the rise of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in 1927, there was an eleven-year vacuum of power, giving rise to a number of powerful military cliques. This period of Chinese history, now referred to as the Warlord Era, was a time of violence and xenophobia towards foreigners, especially Westerners.[17]

The British therefore denied overland passage through Burma to China, and the Youngs instead had to make a dangerous roundabout voyage—sailing from Rangoon into the French port of Haiphong (in present-day Vietnam), then traveling by railroad north to Yunnan, and finally trekking by mule caravan to Yunnan's western border with Burma to establish a mission station in the village of Banna in 1920.[18] The railroad in Haiphong was especially dangerous, and was nicknamed the "Death Railway" due to the number of robberies and bandit attacks. One week before the Youngs' trip, a Baptist missionary named Dr. Shelton, who was en-route to Tibet, was kidnapped from the Death Railway and held for ransom.[19] William and his family, however, reached Banna without incident. The success of this trip into China, where others had perished, helped solidify in the eyes of his followers the mythological status of William Young as a prophet under God's protection.

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[15] Covell 1995: 227.

[16] There are a number of contemporary accounts of "Wild" Wa headhunting practices from British colonial sources (see Scott, James George. 1896. "The Wild Wa: A headhunting race." *Asiatic Quarterly* Review 3rd series, 1:138-152; Harvey, Godfrey Eric. 193.3 *Wa Precis: A Precis Made in the Burma Secretariat of All Traceable Records Relating to the Wa States*. Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery; Barton, G.E. 1933. *Barton's Wa Diary*. Rangoon: G.B.P.C.O), but the most thorough academic treatment is certainly Fiskesjö, Magnus. 2000. "The Fate of Sacrifice and the Making of Wa History," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Chicago.

[17] Ch'i 1976: 131.

[18] Li 1987: 38-41.

[19] Young, W., ABFMS FM-264, January 23, 1920.

Banna, China: 1920–1942

After a few months in Banna, William's wife, Della, fell ill, and William took her to a French hospital, leaving Harold and Vincent in charge of the mission work for the first time. The brothers were now in their late teens, had grown up speaking multiple tribal languages, had accompanied their father on dozens of mission trips through the mountains, and had traversed dangerous jungles filled with headhunters, thieves, and warlords. With this unique upbringing, Harold and Vincent were now able to manage mission responsibilities on their own, and discovered that they were quite adept working as a team. Harold was the statesman, greeting the headmen at each village, taking census, and determining food, medical and health needs, while Vincent excelled at preaching the gospel. Vincent was studious and reserved, while Harold was affable, gregarious, and, at times, irreverent.[20] The brothers proved, in certain ways, even more effective than their father because they could speak multiple local languages with native fluency, and were raised from birth in the milieu of various tribal groups and knew their psychology. Their mannerisms and speech matched the Lahu and Wa to whom they preached—but their outward appearance was that of the White Man of prophecy. This combination had a powerful effect upon a tribal listener already primed through generations of tradition to receive their message.[21]

In 1921 Della Young succumbed to an undiagnosed nervous disorder, and William returned to Banna, determined not to remarry and to focus the remainder of his life singularly to the mission. The next few years in China were difficult as William, Harold, and Vincent were met with constant opposition. Local Chinese warlords became suspicious of the foreign "agents" who held sway over the local Lahu and Wa and could possibly foment tribal insurrection. The warlords also resented the missionaries' prohibition on opium and alcohol consumption—two sources of income rendered obsolete in areas under Baptist influence. Local Chinese magistrates and military leaders often tried to commission the non-Christian Wa to assassinate the Youngs, offering "pony-loads" of silver as rewards.[22] But the Wa would always return empty-handed and terrified, claiming angelic figures blocked their swords and prevented them from decapitating the missionaries.[23]

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[20] Young, B., November 5, 2010; Young, G., May 8, 2015.

[21] Covell 1995: 225-236; Maung Shwe 1963: 412.

[22] Young, W. ABFMS FM-264, July 5-28, 1923.

[23] William Marcus Young related the most famous of these "dastardly attack[s]" firsthand in a letter to Dr. J. C. Robbins [ABFMS FM-213, February 18, 1925], when a "mob […] several hundred strong" of Wa and Chinese surrounded his family "in a great rage." Harold and Vincent readied their rifles, but William ordered them to disarm, kneel down, and pray "for the Lord's protecting care." The Lahu and Wa leveled their own rifles, but all misfired or jammed; others threw rocks, but all veered in "miraculous curves" around the missionaries' heads. The Chinese barricaded the gates to the village with huge wooden logs, but Harold "with superhuman strength" tossed them aside so they could escape. At this point, the Wa were so frightened that they turned their guns on the Chinese and insisted they let the missionaries leave unharmed. Regardless of the veracity of this story, the Wa and Lahu accepted it at face value, and retell it to this day as a validation that the Youngs were the true realization of the "White Man, Golden Book" prophecy.

The only sources for these confrontations are the firsthand accounts of the missionaries, or stories passed down through generations by the Shan, Wa, and Lahu, and are unquestionably exaggerated or confabulated. In fact, the images of angelic protection matched the prophecies of Lahu and Wa fortune tellers prior to the arrival of the Youngs in Southeast Asia, so it is reasonable to assume the stories were retrofitted to match their predictions.[24] True or not, the Young family did survive many years in hostile territory where other missionaries had been kidnapped, killed, simply avoided, or were barred from entering in the first place. As sensational stories spread through the hills, Wa warriors and chieftains began dropping their weapons and asking for baptism, and so began a watershed of conversion in the hills of southwestern China in the 1920s.

Because of his ability to survive in these harsh and unwelcoming areas, as well as his massive successes in converting tens of thousands of Wa and Lahu, and for providing medicine, education, and a written language to a formerly illiterate people, William Young was given the Lahu title of "*Jaw Maw*" or "Man-God." Harold and Vincent were each dubbed "*Jaw Maw Eh*" or "Son of the Man-God." They also earned the respect and allegiance of local strongmen and military leaders. In Banna, a Lahu warrior named Sala Chakaw became the chief security guard at the mission compound, and in Kengtung, a Shan warlord named U Ba Thein became an ardent Christian, volunteering to protect the missionaries from thieves and assailants. Later, when the Young family transitioned from missionaries into covert operatives, these warriors became valuable intelligence assets and guerilla recruiters furthering American military activity in Southeast Asia.

William Young died of pernicious anemia on April 8, 1936. He had worked for forty years as a pioneer missionary, personally performing over 40,000 baptisms,[25] and, to this day, the Lahu still refer to him as "*Ah Pa Ku Lo*" or "The Great Grandfather." After William's death, his sons inherited the title of *Jaw Maw* and split the mission field in half: Vincent took the China side, while Harold returned to Burma. The Wa States are divided by the China-Burma border, with the most dangerous and inaccessible villages in the center of Wa territory. Harold and Vincent's strategy was to try and penetrate these Wa States from both sides to fulfill their father's goal of converting the entire population of Wa and Lahu. The brothers opened new outstations in Pang Long in 1927, Mang Leun in 1937, and Mong Mao in 1939[26]—all circumscribing the most intractable of the Wa fiefdoms.

Covert operatives: 1942–1945

Missionary work was disrupted when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and then stormed Southeast Asia for three months, invading Siam (Thailand), the Philippines, Malaya (Malaysia), Borneo, Timor, Indonesia, and finally Rangoon, Burma on March 8, 1942. Under extenuating wartime circumstances, Harold and Vincent—both American citizens—were drafted by the British Army and given captain's commissions. As Axis Thai forces invaded from the south, and Japanese

[24] Li 1987: 52; Covell 1995: 222-41.
[25] J.C. Robbins, "God's Frontiersman" ABFMS FM-307, April 16, 1936,
[26] Maung Shwe 1963: 413.

Helina bombers approached from the north, Harold took command of two battalions of Shan warriors and Vincent two battalions of Lahu. They sent their wives and children on airplanes evacuating Burma to the safety of India.[27] The brothers were tasked with defending the territory and property of the hereditary Shan princes, but as the Japanese bombing escalated, the situation became untenable, and Harold and Vincent disbanded their battalions and fled Burma in opposite directions.

Harold trekked north from Shan State into Kachin State, to Burma's northernmost point, staying off the main roads where the Japanese were bombing and traveling under the cover of jungle. At Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State, a British Spitfire was able to fly Harold to a British Army base in Assam, India, where he resigned his post with the British Army and enlisted with the American Office of War Information (OWI). The OWI was the propaganda counterpart to the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which dealt primarily with intelligence and subversion operations.

The OSS had developed a three-pronged plan to drive the Japanese out of Burma: First, they would rebuild the Ledo Road, an overland supply route running from northeastern India, through northern Burma, and into southwestern China to send American weapons to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek at his base in Chongqing. Second, a supplementary air route would send additional planeloads of supplies from Assam over the peaks of the Himalayas to Chongqing—a mission so dangerous that pilots said they could eventually throw away their navigational equipment and just follow "the Aluminum Trail" of wreckage beneath them.[28] Third, the OSS recruited and trained Kachin guerrillas who knew their native terrain far better than the invading Japanese. The Kachin performed hit-and-run attacks, cut Japanese supply lines, built landing strips in the jungle, and staged other unconventional offensive measures that proved highly disruptive.

These objectives were part of OSS Detachment 101's Schools and Training division. Harold served these three objectives as an OWI jungle survival expert, teaching two-week courses in jungle familiarization at the forward training area in Taro, Kachin State. At 41 years of age, Harold translated his decades of experience in the mountains of Burma into intensive courses on how to find food and water, build shelters, hunt and trap, and create jungle medicines and poisons. As one OSS member recalled, they learned "how to butcher a boar, how to remove leeches without leaving the heads in your skin—the many uses of bamboo, from food to utensils, to housing, to weapons."[29] Harold compiled his coursework into a U.S. Army training manual, entitled "The Jungle."[30] Harold was also a member of the OWI Psychological Warfare Division (PWD), writing leaflets in the Shan language—one of his five native tongues—to be scattered by plane, containing information on how to resist and combat the Japanese. He helped produce instructional booklets, primers on foreign languages, and "black" counterfeit propaganda designed

[27] Young, Ruth. Interview by Herbert Swenson in California. OHE 1/80. Payap University Archives, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 1980; Young, H. ABFMS FM-352, September 12, 1942; Young, M. ABFMS FM-352, July 2, 1942.
[28] Webster 2003: 70; Thompson 2002: 51.
[29] Sacquety 2013: 147.
[30] A copy of the original manuscript is in the author's files.

to resemble Japanese leaflets but containing material that would offend minority groups in Burma, thereby fostering anti-Japanese sentiment.[31] Harold also got a job for his sixteen-year-old son, Gordon, developing photos in the OWI PWD darkroom.[32]

By 1943 the Japanese had been pushed away from the India-Burma border, and Harold was given command of a labor corps comprised of men from the Garo ethnic minority of northeastern India. The Garo were Baptist and related easily to Harold as he led them in rebuilding roads and repairing other infrastructural damage from Japanese aerial bombardment.[33]

While Harold's fate carried him west into India, Vincent moved east into China. In May 1942 Vincent led five British army officers and a fellow missionary on a two-month trek through 500 miles of jungle from Kengtung, Burma, to Kunming, China—a familiar route he had traveled piecemeal on previous mission trips. Vincent's linguistic skills, knowledge of the jungle, and personal familiarity with the locals allowed his party secure passage through hostile terrain, safe haven at night in Wa and Lahu villages, and the ability to forage for sustenance on long hikes through the forest.[34] On June 24, 1942, their party arrived in Kunming, capital of Yunnan province, where General Claire Chennault's 14th Air Force was organizing Chinese warlords into Allied paramilitary forces.[35] Vincent's six travel companions were airlifted to Calcutta, but Vincent himself was asked to stay on and, like his brother, work for the OSS.

Just as Harold was assisting in the training of Kachin guerillas on the Indian side, Vincent began organizing Lahu and Wa guerilla teams from China. He called upon Sala Chakaw, former security officer at the Banna mission station, and instructed him to move west toward the Burma border, recruiting Lahu and Wa from local villages who wanted to help reclaim their mission fields from the Japanese and Thai (or who were simply willing to take up arms as mercenaries). Sala Chakaw brought recruits to Kunming for training and coordination sessions with Vincent, and then sent them across the border to ambush enemy positions.[36] The Wa would split into groups: Most would lie in wait on a jungle trail, while a few would perch in trees near Axis encampments around the Shan States of Kengtung and Meng Hsat. When Japanese or Thai troops advanced far enough away from the safety of their base, the Wa in the trees would shoot mortar rounds into the air using homemade gunpowder, in what Vincent dubbed "jungle telegraphy." Three mortars resounding through the hills meant "ambush all trails", and Wa for miles around would spring simultaneously into action, brandishing Dha swords and homemade flintlocks to overwhelm the enemy.[37]

Both Harold and Vincent were thrust unwittingly into military roles at the outset of the Pacific War. Neither had any formal military training, but they grew up hunting with

[31] Fenn 2004: 16-19.
[32] Young, G., September 20, 2015a.
[33] Young, H. ABFMS FM-352, December 25, 1943.
[34] Telford, J. ABFMS, November 2, 1942.
[35] Yu 1996: 153, 154.
[36] Young, G. 2011b: 24-5.
[37] Bigart, H. "Japanese May Lose Heads to Wild Wa's Dah." *New York Herald Tribune,* March 28, 1944; Young, G. 2011b, pp. 78-81.

the Lahu, and learning ambush and hand-to-hand combat skills from the Wa. A lifetime of jungle living, knowledge of survival techniques, and their prolific linguistic mastery made the Young brothers prime candidates for recruiting and training local ethnic assets for the OSS and OWI. In return, the Lahu and Wa proved dedicated fighters who were willing to follow the lead of their *Jaw Maw*, and felt motivated by God to retake their lands from the Axis forces.

Post-war: 1945–1951

With the successes of the OSS operations and U.S. Marines beating back Japanese forces throughout the Pacific, both of the Young brothers were discharged from the American intelligence services. Vincent regarded his work with the OSS as a means to an end: namely, to protect the flock. The more pious of the two brothers, Vincent preferred preaching to cloak-and-dagger intrigue. In May of 1945, Vincent reenrolled with the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and returned to Kengtung to begin the long task of rebuilding the churches and dormitories destroyed during the war.[38]

Harold, however, seemed to have found his calling during the war. As a missionary, he preferred the administrative duties of the job to the evangelical, and when the British offered him a position in the newly reclaimed government of British Burma, Harold immediately accepted. He left India in May 1945 and returned to Burma as the Assistant Superintendent of the Northern Shan States, transforming his old mission station at Mang Leun into his new administrative headquarters.[39]

After the conclusion of World War II, considerable cleanup and rebuilding was needed to fix the damage done by the Japanese, who had not only bombed huge swaths of Upper Burma, but had also released criminals from jails and the mentally ill from insane asylums, who then absconded into the Frontier Areas in Upper Burma. Harold was placed in charge of multiple military units: The British gave him of a 350-man contingent of United Military Police; the Shan princes gave him control of their own personal defense force called the Amo Tham; and he was allowed 7,000 Gurkha troops for special assignments at the border. His tasks included flag runs to China to settle the Burma-China national boundary line, quelling gangs of dacoits pillaging villages along the border, and arresting known collaborators with the Japanese.

Harold made a few high profile arrests during this time. First, he captured Jao Maha, the prince of Vieng Ngern, father of the last prince of the Wa States and future head of the Wa National Army, Maha Hsang.[40] Harold arrested Jao Maha for revolting against British rule and put him in jail "to cool off" for a while.[41] Next, he arrested the Chinese Warlord Khun Ja, uncle and mentor of Khun Sa, who would later become the infamous

[38] Maung 1963: 415.

[39] Young, Harold. 1946. "Two reports and a letter concerning the Wa tribe and Wa States, by Capt Harold Mason Young (b. 1901), Burma Frontier Service 1946, Assistant Resident, Northern Shan States 1946." Mss Eur C710. British National Archives.

[40] For one of the only published accounts detailing Jao Maha as an influential Wa warlord of the late 19th century, see Scott 1901: 490-1.

[41] Young, B., November 17, 2011.

"Heroin King" and leader of the Mong Tai Army beginning in the 1970s.[42] Khun Ja was charged with banditry and collaboration with the Japanese. Harold, acting as prosecutor, judge, and jury, sentenced Khun Ja to death, ordering him executed by gunshot to the head, and that the corpse be floated down the Salween River "as a message."[43]

In 1948 Burma gained independence from the British, and Harold's commission as Assistant Superintendent came to an end. He fell back on his old profession and submitted an application to reenlist with the American Baptist Foreign Mission Service. It had been more than thirteen years since he had furloughed to the United States, however, so the Board told Harold to take some time off for training and reorientation. Arriving in California, he met with the Board, and was furious to discover that they had deceived him into returning to sign his termination paperwork in person.[44] The American Baptists were wary of political influence and partisan sway affecting missionary decision-making in the field, and they were suspicious of Harold and his service with the British Army, the OWI, and three-year employ as Assistant Superintendent in British Burma. Harold's son, Gordon, also applied for foreign mission service, and was also rejected, likely for the same reasons.[45] The Board, however, was unaware of Vincent's involvement with the OSS and allowed him to continue his missionary work in Kengtung unobstructed.

"Operation Paper"

In 1947 the OSS was absorbed into the newly created Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to better deal with the growing threat of communism.[46] In 1949 Communist forces took over China—then in 1950 they pushed south of Korea's 38th parallel to start the Korean War. The Truman administration scrambled to find a way to counter the threat of communist incursion further south into Indochina. One idea was to reequip the Chinese Nationalists—or Kuomintang (KMT)—who had fled into Burma after Mao Zedong's Red Army had forced them out of Yunnan.[47] The CIA believed that there were upwards of one million anti-communists in Yunnan, waiting for a catalyst to spark an uprising. The plan, code-named "Operation Paper", was to send airlifts of weapons and rice to the KMT in Burma, who would then storm back into Yunnan, strike at the communists, and rouse the latent million anti-communists to revolt. The CIA chose northern Thailand as a base of operations, creating the American Consulate in Chiang Mai in 1951 as a center for the clandestine activities of Operation Paper.[48]

In 1951 Harold Young and his son, Gordon, had been recruited by the CIA and sent to Chiang Mai. They wanted Harold for his respected status as *Jaw Maw,* and his high-level contacts inside Burma. Gordon was recruited as a Morse code radio operator, a skill he developed while serving in the U.S. Army in Korea. Their role in Operation Paper

[42] Khern Sai 1993: 4.
[43] Young, B. November 7, 2011.
[44] Young, B. January 8, 2011; Young, H. ABFMS December 30, 1951.
[45] Young, G. May 4, 2011a.
[46] Prados 2006: 32.
[47] Fineman, 1997: 137-43, 144-6; Smith 1999: 120, 152-8.
[48] Prados 2006: 134-8.

was to create Lahu intelligence teams who would go into China and radio information about numbers of communist troops, order of battle, deployment, weaponry, and troop movements. They used this information to coordinate airdrops to the KMT, as well as to plan incursive raids into communist territory in Yunnan.[49]

After arriving in Chiang Mai, Harold and Gordon called again upon their old family friend, Sala Chakaw, who traveled between Thailand, Burma, and China to recruit Lahu and Shan to work for the CIA. In Meng Hsat, Burma, Sala Chakaw made contact with U Ba Thein, the Shan warlord who had formerly provided protection to the Kengtung mission compound. U Ba Thein was facing imprisonment and possible assassination for clashing with troops of the newly independent Burma and was grateful to have refuge in Thailand where he would be protected and funded under the auspices of the CIA.[50]

With these two respected ethnic leaders functioning as principal agents, Harold and Gordon began expanding operations, establishing a safe house and a radio shack on Suthep Mountain on the outskirts of Chiang Mai to teach radio operation and Morse code to Christian Lahu and Shan recruits. After training, they dispatched the teams into Yunnan to gather intelligence. Baptist affiliation meant that most of the Lahu recruits were literate, able to read and write the Romanized Lahu alphabet that the Youngs had helped develop. The characters of the Lahu and Shan languages were truncated into "cut-code" or simplified Morse code used to relay short pieces of intelligence from the Yunnan field to the radio shack in Chiang Mai.[51] The Christian operatives also had the added motivation of fighting an atheistic communist enemy bent on eradicating their religion, "the opiate of the people."[52] Non-Christian Lahu and Shan, on the other hand, were neither motivated by faith nor could they serve as intelligence officers or radio operators. They were, however, excellent hunters and marksmen, and were able to provide security for the literate Baptist radio operators. Harold and Gordon were thus able to capitalize on their missionary background and adapt their experience into a specialized set of military skills that no other U.S. agents possessed.

Concurrent with Operation Paper in 1951, the CIA also helped Thailand create an elite unit of police Special Forces called the Border Patrol Police (BPP), which was supported by the Thai Royal Family, especially by King Bhumibol Adulyadej.[53] The BPP were mostly ethnic Thai, but were tasked with blocking communist incursion along the north and northeastern Thai border, composed mostly of ethnic minority and hill tribe populations. Harold Young was therefore recruited to instruct the BPP on what to expect in terms of ethnography, language, and terrain along the border. He also taught jungle survival, as he had done earlier with the OWI and OSS, using an empty field next to Suan Dok Temple just outside of Chiang Mai City, and taking the troops on long treks through the Suthep and Inthanon mountains.

As a cover for their covert activities with the CIA, Harold and Gordon received personal commissions as field collectors for the entomology and herpetology departments

[49] McCoy 2003: 339.
[50] Young, B. February 11, 2011; Young, G. May 2, 2011a.
[51] Young, B. February 19, 2011; Young, G. September 12, 2015a.
[52] Marx 1970: iv.
[53] Fineman 1997: 182-3; Warner 1996: 16, 76-7.

at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.[54] Both born and raised in a hill tribe environment, they were familiar with species that were then otherwise unknown to Westerners, and they were able to organize Lahu teams to collect animals throughout Thailand, Laos, and Burma. They housed larger animals on their family property in Chiang Mai, and as their collection grew, the prominent Nimmanhaemin family called upon the Governor of Chiang Mai and members of the Royal Forestry Department to designate a sizable portion of land to create a proper zoo. On April 6, 1957, Harold Young was named the first director of the Chiang Mai Zoological Gardens and held that position until the day he died in 1975. For the remainder of their employment with the CIA, the zoo served as a cover for Harold and Gordon's clandestine activities.[55]

In the end, however, Operation Paper was a dismal campaign, producing only negative results for the U.S. The supposed million anti-communists lying in wait proved a huge overestimate, and each time the KMT stormed Yunnan, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) quickly forced them back into Burma. After a failed raid in 1953, the PLA discovered the bodies of two CIA field advisors among the dead KMT soldiers. The Chinese brought this to the attention of the Burmese, who were furious that the U.S. was conducting illicit operations within their sovereign territory, taking voluminous evidence before the United Nations in condemnation of American covert activity.[56] The unintended consequences of Operation Paper for the U.S. included the effective severing of U.S.-Burma relations, as well as allowing the KMT to quickly rise as the dominant force in Burma's opium trade thanks to the supply of vast amounts of surplus American weapons.

Operation Paper also had a detrimental impact on Vincent Young, who had been working at his Kengtung mission compound since 1945. As Harold and Gordon's Lahu intelligence teams moved from Thailand into China and back again, they would rest overnight at the midway point in Kengtung. There is no evidence that Vincent was involved in his brother's covert operations other than providing food and sanctuary to the transient Lahu teams, but the Baptist Foreign Mission Board was nonetheless suspicious. An internal memo mentioned the "rumor in regard to Vincent's connections with the KMT" and whether they should renew his contract and "risk complications with either the Burma and Thailand governments."[57] In November 1956 the Board asked Vincent to return to California for a regular furlough, and when he complied, they forced him to sign termination papers—exactly as they had done to Harold eight years before.

Conclusion

Much of William Marcus Young's initial success as a Baptist missionary seemed almost preordained. The British desire to pacify the Frontier Areas allowed a symbiotic relationship in which American missionaries could thrive, and the legendary stories of the "White Man and Golden Book" made the missionaries' work much easier than they

[54] Young, G., April 30, 2011a.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Lintner 1999: 125-162; McCoy 2003: 162-78.
[57] Young, M. ABFMS FM-396, December 12, 1956.

expected. But the difficult conditions of the field—floods, malaria, hostilities from local rulers and warlords—meant that only a hardy missionary could survive. An obituary of William Young by his supervisor, J.C. Robbins,[58] entitled "God's Frontiersman", described his "vigorous personality, sturdy physique, and daring spirit" that allowed him to work the field for more than forty years, survive clashes with would-be assassins, and develop a legendary status amongst his tens of thousands of followers as a prophet protected by the force of God.

For William's sons, Harold and Vincent, the transition from missionary to covert operative was involuntary; they were compelled by the conditions faced during World War II to restructure members of their congregations into guerilla and intelligence operatives. Funding and logistical support from American clandestine services allowed Harold and Vincent a way to safeguard their beloved Wa, Shan, and Lahu congregations—but it ultimately cost them their jobs as missionaries as the American Baptists grew wary of clergy using evangelism as deep cover for covert activity. In short, the Young brothers were forced to become spies during World War II, estranging them from the Baptists, and pushing them deeper into the arms of the OSS and CIA.

Even though some of their covert activities yielded negative results, Harold and Vincent thrived in their respective positions. As native highlanders themselves, they were uniquely suited to carry out American military operations using local proxy forces, and could communicate and empathize with their agents in ways no American-born operative ever could. Their remarkable linguistic and cultural know-how were valuable assets during the 1940s and 1950s, and helped rebuke the cartoonish stereotype of the ignorant, hapless, and arrogant American operatives depicted in Lederer and Burdick's *The Ugly American* (1958) or Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* (1955). At a time when America had few trustworthy assets in Burma, China, or Thailand, the Young family became ideal liaisons between the United States and Southeast Asia.

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