

バプテスト宣教の文脈からみる 19 世紀中葉ビルマのカレン像形成  
—— 宣教師メイソンによる『カレンの使徒』（1843）を題材に ——

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**Reconsideration of the Karen Image in Mid-Nineteenth Century  
Burma within the Context of the American Baptist Mission**

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**Abstract**

This paper aims to argue for a reconsideration of the historical interpretation of the Karen image in Burma through a contextual analysis of descriptions of Karen Baptists in the mid-nineteenth century.

Karen history has been written with a heavy focus on Karen Baptists, who account for only a minority of the Karen population, and has relied on missionary documents accumulated in the nineteenth century. This Baptist-centered viewpoint is under criticism since it overlooks the existence of the remaining majority, Buddhist Karens. In addition, it has been pointed out that the image of the Karens is biased since it is based on foreigners' views: missionaries' writings on the Karens were highly vulnerable to the missionaries' own motives to depict the Karens the way they wanted them to be. This paper sets its focus on the latter argument, since there has not been enough analysis on it; if the writings on the Karens are biased due to missionaries' views, those descriptions and background factors need to be understood within the context of the Baptist mission.

Examining a missionary writing, *The Karen Apostle*, as an example in the formation of the Karen image, this paper clarifies that Baptist doctrines and mission policies had an important influence on the depiction of Karen Baptists. The author Francis Mason described the first Karen convert, Ko Thah Byu, as an example of "ideally hardworking, pious Baptists" to emphasize the success of the Karen mission and obtain financial support for future development. This finding implies that the depiction of Karen Baptists in the mid-nineteenth century should be interpreted not only in terms of ethnicity or nation but also with reference to American Baptist history. This viewpoint calls for a need to reconsider the historical understanding of Karens from a different perspective, such as from within the context of the American Baptist mission.

**Keywords:** Karen image, American Baptist missionary, Burma of the nineteenth century, Karen history

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