

Koa Kau reports Mackay's Death

Letter from Koa kau to Rev. R. P. Mackay, D.D. from Tamsui, Formosa, July 13th 1901. [[Chinese translation](#)]

這封信的影本是住在加拿大多倫多市(Toronto)的馬偕牧師么孫女偕瑪烈(Margaret MacKay)提供的，陳俊宏譯「柯維思的馬偕臨終記錄」附錄錄出其內容如下：

Tamsui, Formosa, July 13th 1901

Rev. R. P. MacKay, D. D.

My dear friend:

Your most welcome letter dated Feb. 6th reach me the 18th of March. I am very sorry that I cannot answer you sooner during the time of my dear Teacher's illness.

I just came back from Kap-tsu-lan (about 70 miles from Tamsui) with Rev. Wm. Gauld, visiting the chapels. Last Sunday we had Lord's supper at Taⁿ-ma-ian (a memorial chapel of Margaret Maher). Now here is a chance for me to send you a long letter also the particulars of Rev. Dr. G. L. MacKay's sickness.

He got cold on April last (1900) but he paid no attention to it, so on May 12th he went to visit chapels. On 19th we reach Kap-tsu-lan and we went to every chapel; after so many days traveling, on 29th of May we returned from Kap-tsu-lan.

But alas! he caught cold again on the way home; and his voice began to get hoarse; but still he thought that was only cough and he went on in the usual work visiting chapels preaching and teaching students, and drilled them every night in the week if he were not away.

He did not stop talking until Oct. 16th. A Doctor (Miss Crowther) came from Amoy China. She belongs to E. P. Mission, and told Dr. MacKay that he must not speak nor work in the present time; and let the throat have a chance to rest, so he began to keep quiet at that time.

Oct. 28th Sunday I went with him to a country chapel (He-io-a) and he baptized 10 persons, this was the last time he baptized them.

Oct. 31st Dr. Otte came from Amoy China persuaded him to go to Hong Kong to get better treatment.

Nov. 1st he embarked on a steamer bound for Hong Kong. His health improved a great deal thought not his throat. The last week of Dec. and the first of Jan. 1901, in Hong Kong he slept very little. Alas! He got cold again.

Jan. 11th 1901, he returned to Tamsui and his voice was just about the same as when he had left for Hong Kong.

Feb. 5th frost at night; it was a very cold day. He got up very early and found great difficulties in breathing; and at once sent for a Doctor.

Feb. 11th had a narrow escape from death; He was taking his dinner; and suddenly some phlegm came up. He tried hard to cough but in vain; he got choked and could not breathe for about 5 minutes, then we did our best for him. I put my finger into his throat first, but it did not make him any better. Then I pulled both his hands up over his head and down to his side for about 2 minutes and George gave him some ammonia dose to his nose, and Bella ran to call Rev. and Mrs. Gauld, others went to get a Japanese Doctor, but after Gauld's came he got better. Then George sent a telegram to Dr. Wilkinson in Toa-tiu-tiaⁿ (10 miles from Tamsui) and he came here after an hour or so. From that day to June 2nd there were always some body with him even day and night, to look after him.

Feb. 13th Dr. Wilkinson advised him to go to Toa-tiu-tiaⁿ to have his throat operated as it was not safe to have him in such a condition. So we all went with him, as it was his wish that we should be with him.

Dr. Wilkinson allowed me to inject morphia into his arms to make him sleep. Then he seemed to be better.

Feb. 18th his breathing was very very hard; and suffered greatly, indeed more than I could say. He did not sleep a minute that night nor I, therefore I understood him better. We used very hot cloth to put around his neck all night; to make him breathe easier. Feb. 19th had his throat operated by Dr. Wilkinson and a Japanese Dr. Kuroiwa and two Chinese assistants they did not use chloroform yet the borne like a soldier though the operation lasted over an hour. He seemed to be getting better after the operation. He took more food than usual, and slept well without medicine. A silver tube was put into the opening (operated) to enable him to breathe. After a few days his neck begin to swell and became bigger and bigger till Feb. 26th Doctor cut a little hole in his right side where the matter would come out, after the matter was squeezed out; he felt better, but alas! Another operation was necessary above the silver tube in the middle of his neck. Dr. Wilkinson dressed him once a day. For week after week did not get any sign of healing, some times stuck by ever.

March 25th Dr. Wilkinson examined his throat again and told him there was no hope; Ah! How awful my dear poor Teacher felt on that day; he took less food and slept less; at length Dr. MacKay asked Doctor to let him return to Tamsui; for there are more rooms to walk about.

March 27th Rev. W. Gauld went to see Dr. MacKay and told him he would send a telegram to Dr. Maclure(McClure) in North China.

April 2nd so we all moved back to Tamsui.

April 3rd he slept 10.5 hours, afterwards his neck get smaller and he felt better, so far until the last of April.

April 25th Dr. Maclure came, 26th Dr. Wilkinson and Dr. Maclure examined his throat and said that it was getting larger inside it was malignant.

May 1st both Doctors examined his throat again, and told him the spot in the throat was getting larger; consequently it was getting worse, my dear poor Teacher wept and could not eat but little, after having told that he was getting worse, and no hope of his recovery.

Dr. Maclure come daily, from May 4th to 9th he took very little food, he looked very sad, indeed he sat almost all day without asking anything, but he kept very quiet. Ah! I knew his heart was smelting with sorrow.

From 10th to 12th he took little soup only and could not sleep at all, so Dr. Maclure gave him morphia every night by injection.

From 13th to 17th he tried to talk all day long; but there was no meaning; for he talked everything and laughed, he seemed forgetting all about his neck.

On 17th morning he told us to send a telegram to George to get home, so we did.

May 22nd George William MacKay came back from Hong Kong and he hurried out to meet him on the road. Dr. Maclure saw him walk so strong and he was surprised.

May 23rd when he tried to take soup it ran out from the middle hole of his neck. The hole was about the size of a ten cent piece, through which one could see the inner part of the throat.

May 24th the hole got larger, the flesh around the hole putrefied; he took very little food; seemed very tired; though used morphia; he slept only 2 hours and 25 minutes the hole of his neck was getting larger and larger every day.

May 29th he could not take soup at all and Dr. Maclure tried to put a rubber tube in his mouth and then pour soup into his it, but did not success. Then Dr. Maclure showed me to use syringe(syringe) to feed him in the other way; afterwards I gave him beef tea or milk once in every 3 hours, until June 2nd, ah! My dear poor Teacher often told us that he was very hungry and thirsty. So he used cold water to wash his mouth all day and night; for he could not drink and he was very thirsty, his wind pipe was rotten and the swallowing tube too.

Your welcome telegram reached him on May 30th and said "committee's deepest sympathy" and he asked Dr. Maclure "You think there is a hope?" Dr. Maclure answered "Not at all." my dear poor Teacher whispered to me that "Doctor said I have no hope."

May 31st the hole in his neck was much larger; sleepless at 12 o'clock (midnight) he got up and dressed himself and told one of us that (always had somebody with him, we took turns to watch him through day and night) he would like to go to Oxford College. The boy who was taking care of him tried to stop him and could not, then he went to call me; after he went to Dr. MacKay's room again he was not to be found, so he ran to me again and say he could not find Dr. MacKay; so we tried to find him for about 15 minutes then one student brought him back from Oxford College. No sooner had he been back, then he told us that he would like to go again. We could not stop him, so Mrs. MacKay, a student and I went with him to the College hall, and said that students should be gathered for examination. Mrs. MacKay told him that it was midnight and no one was there, they were sleeping; better come tomorrow. Then we brought him home. We wondered how he could remember the examination time. (June was the time of our annual examination for students and preachers) for he had told them be ready in June. Though he was very sick yet his heart was always in Churches and Oxford College.

June 1st He suffered intensely, for he was very thirsty and could not drink any water, about 6 p. m. he told me that "I could not live to night."

June 2nd 12:40 a. m. I gave him milk and eggs by using syringe, from 2 a. m. to daylight he could not sleep at all. He was very thirsty and he used water to wash his mouth all the time, at 5 a. m. I tried to give him some food again, but did not succeed for he was too weak. Then he got up and walked, but it was beyond his power; and he nearly drop to the ground; he was fainting. I brought him to bed; after a few minutes he said "Taⁿ khah ho" meaning "Now better," and told us to send for Dr. Maclure, 8 a. m. he got up and tried to go to his study room and he nearly fainted again; so I carried him to bed. That morning he suffered very much; for his breathing was very quick, he tried to sit up in bed time after time, but he was too weak. He called George thrice; but when he reached his bedside, he did not say anything. He could not speak much nor could we understand what he said but he pointed up with his hands to heaven several times that day.

10 a. m. to 12 m. he was very quiet and his body did not move much. At noon he moved a little and looked about, and he still recognized every one of us, and we dipped a piece of cotton in water and put it in his mouth to enable him to suck, so he suck it very hard like a hungry child. Ah! It is a piteous sight to see him; but what could we do? We had done that all we could. His breathing became gradually slower.

At 10 minutes to 4 p. m. his breathing became very slow. At 5 minutes to 4 p. m. he breathed his last. He show no sign of suffering during these trying time, his body did not move a bit since about 3 p. m. He died as if he was sleeping. Among those present when he passed away were Mrs. MacKay, George, Mary, Bella, Rev. W. Gauld, Dr. Maclure, Chheng-gi and myself, many came in a few minutes after he passed away, and there was not

a native who could keep back, his or her tears, even young or old. Dr. Maclure dressed him the afternoon.

June 3rd making the coffin; black without and white within, the inner covering on top was made of glass, so that every body who wished to see their beloved pastor can at any time look in.

Many young men wept like a little child, as well as old men, women and children. Some would touch dear Teacher's face and remaining weeping over the coffin for a whole hour; then they would go out of the room, then they would reenter again weep more bitterly than before; some lifted up their children to have a parting look at their sincere friend. Some would yell and cry about; as it is the custom of the East. Indeed the whole house was full of mourners. Fully three hundred were with wet eyes. The Japanese pastor knelt beside him and wept like a child, also remained till midnight with us; (June 3rd Monday night) ready to help us, in every thing that we would ask.

June 4th placed my dear Teacher in the coffin. At 11 a. m. Rev. and Mrs. Gauld, Dr. Maclure, Rev. Kawai(Japanese) and all the converts came. Eight Elders and Deacons with ten old preachers carried the coffin to Oxford College and placed in the centre of the hall. At 12 o'clock Rev. Giam Chheng-hoa read out a hymn then all the converts sang.

Khoan-ju(earliest preacher except Giam)prayed, Rev. Kawai delivered a speech, then prayed and sang a Japanese hymn with the Japanese Christians; then Rev. W. Gauld spoke a few minutes then closed up with a prayer. Every body then passed round the coffin to have a farewell look at their friend whom they had once hated and despised and now they mourn for him more bitterly at having once hated him. When all had gone out we took our turn. Then the heavy cover of the coffin was lifted up and placed over the coffin with my dear Teacher inside of it.

The coffin was then ready to be carried to the cemetery, Rev. Gauld, Rev. Giam, Rev. Kawai, and Dr. Maclure were ahead of the coffin, then the coffin; after the coffin were all of us with Mrs. Gauld and Mrs. Kawai; behind us were the Europeans and Japanese Christians(many officers among them) behind them came the preachers and students, the the converts, then the ladies. In all 451, almost 300 nonChristians gathered to see the burial. We bury him in his own choice in the middle of his private cemetery (this cemetery was purchased by him and offered to the native Christians).

June 5th many preachers and converts came, they wept like one having lost a father; at having not seen the face of Dr. MacKay. They had nothing to see, but only the grave, they were very sorry. Some traveled 3 days without food; for they are so sad. From beginning to the end my dear poor Teacher only said "Kan-kho, goa beh tsai-iuⁿ?" These words were only spoken when he was in great pain. The above sentence means "Miserable, what shall I

do?" or "Miserable what will become of me?" These were the only words which he spoke concerning his suffering.

In April I tried to encourage him by saying "There is a hope yet; for Dr. Maclure is coming." and he answered me, "You must not expect too far, no Doctor in the East can do for me." When Dr. Maclure came and said he would not do any for him, and he answered to Dr. Maclure the words "God reigns." on slate.

Dr. MacKay was a brave man and "A hero of the Cross;" but during the illness, some men regarded him as not a brave man; but the number was very few. The greater number said that he was a very brave man or else how could he stand his sufferings without expressing it. It would look as if he was not a brave man for persons who did not stay beside him during his trying hours. I know perfectly well how he was, and how he felt; for I was with him for over a dozen years; and was with him from beginning to end, during his sickness. He was sad; because he knew perfectly well that he could not recover; and that his hope to work for Christ for many years more, ended. These were the thoughts which filled his heart and made him sad. Indeed he spoke more about Oxford College and Churches than about his life.

Once he called the students to sing one of his favorite hymns "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord," he was in bed, at that time; and when those beautiful words were heard then he grasping his hands; with tears in his eyes and sat up straight; as if he was in the street of the city of "Bang-kah." He often said when he could recover he would redouble his work for Christ.

Even when he was confined to bed, he often asked (in the native tongue) "How are the students getting on? and what are they learning? We had to tell him what they were learning and then would be satisfied.

I suppose Rev. W. Gauld had written to you the full account concerning my teacher's illness; and I too feel it is my duty to write to you; since you were his sincere friend long before I was born.

Our grief over our great loss which we had experienced so recently could not be expressed neither by pen nor by words; but, the beautiful words of the Apostle Paul(Philippians I:21,) relieve our sorrow, not a little.

I scarcely know what to write; but to be enjoying in good health and successful in your work is the prayer of yours.

Sincere Formosan friend

Koa Kau