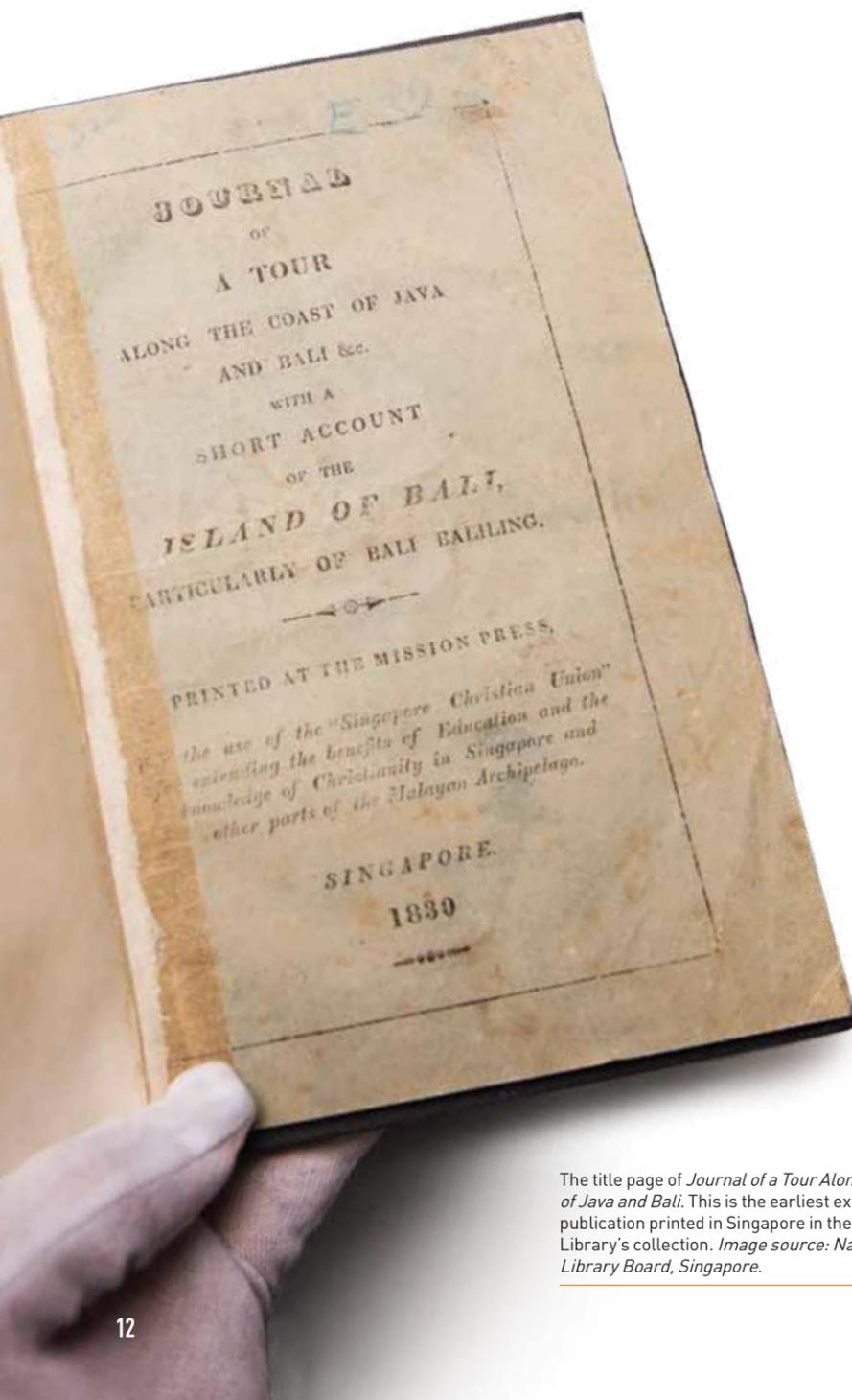


# A MISSIONARY'S GUIDE TO JAVA AND BALI



The title page of *Journal of a Tour Along the Coast of Java and Bali*. This is the earliest extant English publication printed in Singapore in the National Library's collection. Image source: National Library Board, Singapore.

**Title:** *Journal of a Tour Along the Coast of Java and Bali etc, with a Short Account of the Island of Bali Particularly of Bali Baliling*  
**Author:** Walter Henry Medhurst (1796–1857)  
**Year published:** 1830  
**Publisher:** Mission Press (Singapore)  
**Language:** English  
**Type:** Book; 40 pages  
**Call no.:** RRARE 992.2 JOU  
**Accession no.:** B03013533B

The earliest extant English publication printed in Singapore in the National Library's collection is a report on Java and Bali published in 1830.

Written by the English Protestant missionary, Walter Henry Medhurst, it is one of the earliest published accounts of the history and culture of Bali in English.

In August 1828, Medhurst left his post in Batavia (now Jakarta), Indonesia, and travelled to Singapore. His intention was to meet with two fellow missionaries, the Reverend Jacob Tomlin and Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff (see page 96), and travel to Siam (Thailand) and the coast of China.

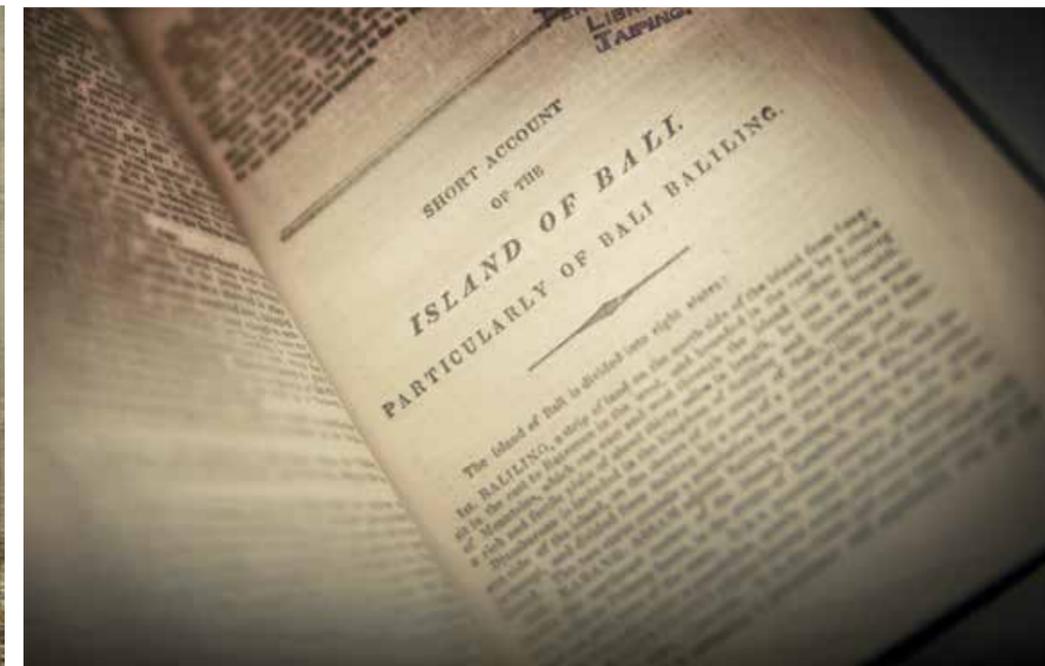
In Singapore, Medhurst boarded a Chinese junk and began a futile search in the Malay Peninsula for his friends. Disappointed, he gave up and sailed alone from Singapore to the island of Borneo, where he visited a number of Chinese settlements and proselytised to the local communities.

A year later, on 14 November 1829, Medhurst made a second sojourn from Batavia – this time in the happy company of Reverend Tomlin – to Surabaya in Java. There, they stayed several days with the Chinese residents as well as distributing Christian tracts and scriptures. The two men then sailed in a small native prow to Bali, studying the northern regions of the island, especially Baliling, the traditional centre of foreign contact and trade in Bali.<sup>1</sup> After nine weeks of travel, Medhurst returned to Batavia on 24 January 1830.



(Above) The Reverend Walter Henry Medhurst (1796–1857) in conversation with Choo Tih-Lang, with a Malay boy in attendance. Printed in oil by G. Baxter and used as the frontispiece in Medhurst's *China: Its State and Prospects* published by John Snow (1838). Choo, a native of China, helped Medhurst to translate and transcribe the scriptures into Chinese. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

(Above right) "Short Account of the Island of Bali. Particularly of Bali Baliling" was reprinted several times: it was first reproduced in the *Singapore Chronicle* from 22 April to 3 June 1830, and later in John Henry Moor's compilation *Notices of the Indian Archipelago, and Adjacent Islands* in 1837. Image source: National Library Board, Singapore.



Fortunately for us, Medhurst meticulously recorded his experiences during his journey to Java and Bali. His travel journal, which was intended primarily to provide knowledge about Bali and its surrounding areas in order to facilitate the spread of the Gospel, was printed in Singapore by the Mission Press in 1830.

The National Library's copy of the journal bears a cover with a caption that states that it was specifically produced "for the use of the 'Singapore Christian Union' for extending the benefits of education and the knowledge of Christianity in Singapore and other parts of the Malayan Archipelago". The union had earlier disbursed 76 dollars and 50 cents to fund the printing of the journal.<sup>2</sup>

Medhurst's work proved to be popular, and on publication, an extract from his book entitled "Short Account of the Island of Bali. Particularly of Bali Baliling", was reprinted several times. It was first reproduced in the *Singapore Chronicle*, the island's first newspaper (see page 114) from 22 April to 3 June 1830, and later in John Henry Moor's compilation *Notices of the Indian Archipelago, and Adjacent Countries* in 1837 (see page 36). The extract was also published overseas – as a separate pamphlet in London in 1831 and reprinted in the July and October 1831 issues of *Transaction of the Missionary Society*.<sup>3</sup>

Despite his relatively short stay in the places he visited, Medhurst was able to accumulate a remarkable amount of information on the geography, agriculture, trade, and the culture and customs of the various places he stopped at, as well as on the pockets of Chinese people working on plantations and mines in the various settlements. Among other things, he noted that one of Baliling's chief imports was opium – of which "20 chests" were shipped out annually from Singapore.<sup>4</sup> In Bali, the opium was imported mainly by Bugis and Chinese merchants.<sup>5</sup> Singapore was then an important pitstop in the regional opium trade: raw opium was imported from British India, and then processed and distributed to local opium shops for sale to Chinese coolies and also re-exported to other parts of Southeast Asia and China.<sup>6</sup>

Medhurst was born in London in 1796 and first trained as a printer.<sup>7</sup> After finding his calling as a missionary, Medhurst joined the London Missionary Society with the intention of working among the Chinese, and was sent to the society's Melaka station in 1816. In 1822, Medhurst relocated to Batavia and remained there for eight years, carrying out missionary work in the region and along the coast of China.

Following the end of the First Opium War (1839–42), Medhurst left for China in 1843 and established the first Protestant

mission in Shanghai. He started a printing press, and engaged in the printing and distribution of religious tracts as well as the translation of the Bible into Chinese. In 1856, Medhurst returned to England due to ill health. He died on 24 January 1857, just two days after arriving home.

♦ Ong Eng Chuan

## Notes

- 1 Medhurst, W. H. (1830). *Journal of a tour along the coast of Java and Bali etc, with a short account of the island of Bali particularly of Bali Baliling* (p. 63). Singapore: Printed at the Mission Press. Microfilm no.: NL 5827
- 2 Singapore Christian Union. (1830). *The first report of the Singapore Christian Union*, 48. Microfilm no.: NL30804
- 3 Byrd, C. K. (1970). *Early printing in the Straits Settlements, 1806–1858* (p. 28). Singapore: National Library. Call no.: RSING 686.2095957 BYR
- 4 Medhurst, 1830, p. 63.
- 5 Nordholt, H. S. (1996). *The spell of power: A history of Balinese politics 1650–1940* (p. 96). Leiden: KITLV Press. Call no.: RSEA 959.802 NOR
- 6 Trocki, C. A. (1987, March). *The rise of Singapore's great opium syndicate, 1840–86*. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 18(1), 60. Call no.: RSING 959.005 JSA
- 7 Wylie, A. (1967). *Memorials of Protestant missionaries to the Chinese: Giving a list of their publications, and obituary notices of the deceased, with copious indexes* (p. 25). Taipei: Ch'eng-Wen Pub. Call no.: RCL05 266.40951 MEM; Bliss, E. M., Jackson, S. M., & Gilmore, G. W. (Eds.). (2002). *The encyclopaedia of missions: Descriptive, historical, biographical, statistical* (Vol. 2, pp. 44–45). London: Ganesha Pub.; Tokyo: Edition Synapse. Call no.: Rq266.003 ENC