



## **Mr and Mrs M.H. Finlay – 1946 (Edition 1)**

Mr and Mrs Matthew H. Finlay, commended by assemblies at Tauranga and Te Puke, went out to Singapore in August 1946 and studied the Malay language. Their first base of operations was at the old Mission House in Neil Road and they renovated the ground floor for meetings holding English services on Sunday and Malay services on Monday. In 1948 with two Chinese Christians they made their first visit to the Riouw Islands spending three days distributing literature and chatting with the islanders. The following year a visa was obtained to visit the Archipelago that had dozens of islands with a population of 300,000 and no Protestant missionary in the whole area. However, another nine months passed before the Dutch government issued a permit to preach there and even then they were not allowed to work amongst the Malays. Nevertheless the door had opened and they had entered and literature had been distributed and a few Chinese Christians contacted. A real move forward was made in 1950 when after further visits with some of the Chinese believers from Singapore, they purchased a 36ft launch, were joined by Mr Bill Stott from Australia and made their first comprehensive tour among the islands contacting people never previously visited. For two years regular visits were made to the islands during which thousands of tracts were distributed and Scriptures sold. At other times maintenance work had to be kept up on the launch and the “sailors” learned quickly about the weather and the seasons. Meanwhile in Singapore work on the Malay language was continued and the Malay speaking assembly continued to grow. A new engine was installed in the launch in 1954 and this facilitated the increased number of visits in the next two years as Mr Finlay and Mr Bill Stott sowed the good seed throughout the Archipelago. At the same time Mr Finlay was working consistently in producing literature in the Malay language and in 1955 the first Emmaus course in Malay was printed and there were encouragements in the Malay speaking assembly. The launch had to be laid up in 1956 when with Mr Stott ill there was no one to help with that work. In the literary field four more Malay tracts were produced in 1957 and for several years they systematically visited the Malay villages with literature. Many Malays attended gospel meetings for the first time in their lives. The Singapore Exhibition in early 1959 attracted 1 ½ million people and Mrs and Mrs Finlay shared in the opportunity of reaching so many people with special literature. Later in that year Mrs Finlay and their daughter N[...] were involved in an accident when the car in which they were travelling was hit by a truck and Mr and Mrs McGuffie from Bethesda Chapel were killed.

During the six-year period from 1958-64 the major activity was Open Air meetings amongst Malay Muslims in night-markets, over 600 meetings being held. One result of this activity was a challenge from the Muslim leaders for public debates. On two occasions in 1960, debates were held before an audience of 200 Muslims, the subjects being “The Deity of Christ” and “The Christian doctrine of the Atonement”. On a later occasion in 1964, when the subject was “The authority of the Bible” over 400 Muslims were present.

Helping in Youth Camps, and Bible Schools, preaching, teaching, translating, writing and broadcasting are just some of the things to which Mr Finlay has given his attention over the years; years in which there has been political change and increasing unrest; years when a certain amount of loss of privilege has hindered the work, for example, the use of Government school buildings for Sunday Schools was prohibited. During this period also, at the request of the British and Foreign Bible Society a new translation of Scripture in the National

language (Malay) was commenced by Mr Finlay and Mr S. Lewis. Luke was translated first and published by the Bible Society in a diglot version of English and Malay in 1970. Work followed on Acts and other portions of Scripture.

In 1964 , the centenary of the commencement of the assembly testimony in Singapore was celebrated. In July 1864 two English businessmen and their wives met to remember the Lord's death – one hundred years later, thirteen assemblies were meeting, using four languages.

When the Finlays returned to Singapore in 1966 the main emphasis was on translation, radio programmes in Malay, and the production of Malay literature. There was a good response to broadcasts (programmes taped in Singapore and broadcast from FEBC in Manila) from all parts of Malaysia and Indonesia. In addition to Malay literature, a set of five books for Muslims were written in English, and this gave them a wide scope – they have been used in at least 25 countries, and permission has been given for their translation into 18 different Muslim languages (Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Urdu, Malayalam etc.).

At the end of 1966 they returned to New Zealand for the family's sake, and Mr Finlay continued his translation work at his home. As colleagues on the field took over the translation project, he continued with the task of reading and checking drafts. Mr Finlay was appointed the Scripture Gift Mission secretary for New Zealand in 1972 and he has continued in Auckland city actively engaged in Christian ministry.

[Source entry includes photos captioned: "Mrs and Mrs M.H. Finlay, 1966", "The "Utusan Sentosa", and "People of Indonesia".]