

# **Towards a History of Bible Translation among the Dialects and Ethnic Languages of China**

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## **1. Introduction**

Study on the history of Bible translation in China may be divided into three categories according to the language typology in China: classical Chinese and Mandarin Chinese, dialects (or more adequately, *fangyan*), and ethnic minority languages. The history of Bible translation in classical Chinese and Mandarin Chinese has been widely explored.<sup>1)</sup> More recently, our UBS colleague in the Asia-Pacific area, Dr. Suee-yan Yu, has written a very fine study in this area with the title “A Brief History of Bible Translation into Chinese and its Contemporary Implications” and it was published in *Journal of Biblical Text Research*. By contrast, systematic study of the history of Bible translation among the Chinese dialects and minority languages has received very little attention. Scarcity of information is the most practical problem hindering such research. However, the overwhelming dominance of Mandarin Chinese and consequently of the Mandarin Chinese translations (such as the Chinese *Union Version*) is perhaps the ultimate cause leading to the marginalization of these important topics in the history of Bible translation.

As a continuation to Yu’s study, the present paper attempts to provide a preliminary sketch of the history of Bible translation among the dialects and the minority languages in China. The term “China” in this paper is understood in a broad and inclusive sense including both Mainland China (People’s Republic of China) and Taiwan (Republic of China); this does not necessarily imply any

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1) The most comprehensive treatment of the history of Bible translation leading to the making of Chinese *Union Version* is undoubtedly the work of Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*. It is an English translation of the author’s doctorate thesis at Hamburg University.

political stance from the present author concerning the relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan.<sup>2)</sup> However, before we look at the history of Bible translation among the Chinese dialects and minority languages, an overview of the complex linguistic situation in China is necessary, in order to provide a framework for our study.

## 2. The Linguistic Milieu in China

China is known to be a nation with many ethnic and language groups; indeed, linguists and ethnologists often like to compare China with modern Europe in terms of its multi-ethnic and multi-lingual components.<sup>3)</sup> When the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in 1949,<sup>4)</sup> no one really knew how many ethnic groups there were in China. When voters in the elections of 1954 were asked to report their nationality, hundreds of names were submitted. With the help of Soviet ethnographical experts at that time, the Chinese government was gradually able to grasp the full reality of the situation. The fact that China (including Taiwan) consists of 56 ethnic groups (including Han Chinese) was not officially recognized until the early 1980s.<sup>5)</sup> However even this figure reflects only part of the reality; for example, the *Gao-shan* (高山族, meaning "high-mountain") is used as a collective name for the 10 to 14 aboriginal tribes

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2) The aboriginal language group in Taiwan would be an issue there. Bradley in his "China: Language Situation" (in Brown, *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*) counts only 4,000 people for the *Gaoshan* group within PRC, but the official figure from the PRC (including Taiwan) is 400,000.

3) In terms of size, China and Europe are very close (9.596 million sq. km. vs. 10.18 million sq. km.); in terms of languages spoken within the territory, a search in the internet gives very similar figure also (200+ vs. 230).

4) After the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, China entered a new phase of history but at the same time anarchy. The Republic of China was found in 1912, followed by the establishment of two major parties: Kuomintang in the same year (1912) and the Community Party in 1921. Eventually, the latter took power and founded the People's Republic of China in 1949. The Kuomintang led by Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan continuing using the name Republic of China until recently.

5) Most ethnologists would be more ready to acknowledge far more ethnic groups than 56; see Olson, *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of China*. Naturally, political consideration plays a major factor in trying to keep the number of distinct ethnic groups as small as possible in order to avoid over fragmentation of the nation.

in Taiwan. So one still needs to ask how many languages are spoken or used by the 56 official ethnic groups in China? — this question has remained open to speculation until rather recently.

Research on language mapping among the non-Han ethnic groups in China is largely divided into three phases:

1. The pre-modern period: prior to the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949), some scattered and unsystematic research was done during the 1920s
2. The intensive field study period: after the founding of the PRC, the period 1950-1966 saw the emergence of language ethnography studies on both the dialect groups and the minority language groups under the guidance of the Soviet ethnographers. During this period, the introduction of romanization systems was an important aid to (minority) languages that had never been written down. In 1956, the government provided intensive linguistic training to more than 700 people for field research. Many results gathered at that time remain very useful even to the present day. By 1966, as many as 64 minority language groups had been identified.
3. The modern period: after the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), until the present day, the reforming and opening-up policy of the government has revitalized interest in language studies of the nation. Further field studies have been carried out, many of them quite sophisticated. The founding of the journal *Minzu Yuyan* ["people-tribe languages" 《民族语言》] has both set the direction for modern linguistic research and built a platform for scholarly exchange. In addition to more sophisticated field research, one achievement during this period has been to consolidate the results of decades of research in field data, language classification, and enhancement of orthography.

Authored by more than 90 scholars and researchers, the 2,638 pages of *Zhongguo Yuyan* (literally "China-languages" 《中国的语言》) represent the culmination of decades of field studies and research. According to this study, there are currently 129 different languages (excluding dialects) spoken in China, with speakers ranging from several hundred to over one billion per language; however more than half of these languages are on the path of decline, some

headed towards extinction. Each language cited is given a very succinct but adequate description of its linguistic characteristics and demographic distribution (according to the national census of 2000). The 129 languages may be grouped into six major families:

- Sino-Tibetan Family (漢藏語系) - 76 languages (e.g. Mandarin, Tibetan, etc.)
- Altaic-Turkic Family (阿爾泰語系) - 2 languages (e.g. Kazakh, Manchu) *plus* Korean
- Austro-Asiatic Family (南島系) - 16 languages (e.g. aboriginal languages in Taiwan)
- South Asian Family (Indo-Iranian) (南亞語系) - 9 languages (e.g. Va)
- Indo-European Family (印歐語系) - 1 language (Tajik)
- Mixed Language Family (混合語系) - 5 languages (e.g. Wutun in Qinghai, which is regarded as a creole made of a number of languages including Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian and others)

According to this study, with the exception of *Han-yu* (the Han language) spoken by 91.59% of the national population (i.e. 1,159.4 million people) and used as the *lingua franca* by most other ethnic groups speakers, the 128 remaining languages are spoken by the 55 ethnic groups which make up 41% (106.43 million people) of the population.<sup>6)</sup>

To group all the different *dialects* under the *Han-yu*, although politically correct, undermines the important and complex linguistic reality of China. The term “dialect” suggests to most people a form of a language which is essentially intelligible to users of other dialects of the same language. The problem with that definition, when applied to China, is that none of the languages officially called dialects are mutually intelligible with each other. As a matter of fact, Chinese does not have a term equivalent to the word “dialect”. The Chinese term *fang-yan*, which is often rendered as “dialect”, actually means “region-language”, i.e. regionalect. It does not carry any sense of mutual intelligibility which the English term “dialect” usually connotes. In a way, all languages spoken in China are divided into two groups: the official language called

6) See [http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/t20020331\\_15434.htm](http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/t20020331_15434.htm); the figures slightly differ from that which listed in the *Zhongguo Yuyan*.

Mandarin and *fangyan*; in casual usage, this latter term is used to include both the so-called “dialects” and the ethnic minority languages.

Historically the term *mandarin* (in small letters) referred to “government officials, leading politicians or writers.” Then, by extension, it was applied to the language spoken by this elite class (see *Oxford English Dictionary*); in Chinese this is *guan-hua* (官話, meaning “official-speech”). This is almost equivalent to northern *fangyan* especially that of Beijing, primarily because the long period of national unity with the political domination by the North produced a strong bias in favor of the Northern, or “Mandarin” *fangyan*. When the Republic was founded in 1912, this language form was called *guoyu* (also transliterated as *kuoyü*), that is, the “national language” of the country. Today, this same speech form Mandarin is called *putonghua* (common language) in the PRC and *guoyu* in Taiwan, with slight variations in both vocabulary and grammar.<sup>7)</sup> In Singapore and Malaysia, this is often called *huayu*.

At present, the Chinese government counts seven “dialects” spoken in China;<sup>8)</sup> many of their names reflect those used in the old states of imperial China:

- Mandarin / Putonghua (普通話; c. 850 million people) is the official language of the PRC, and is the mother-tongue of most people in the North. The language is also the official language in Taiwan, and is also used widely in

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7) There was a historico-political factor that marks the difference between *putonghua* and *guoyu*. In 1930s, the multi-language situation in China became a major political issue battled between the Kuomintang and the Communist Parties. The Kuomintang advocated the concept of one national language form (i.e. *guoyu*) as the only means to unify the different dialectal groups, while the Communist Parties maintained that, since the “dialects” were so different from each other, using a single Mandarin (Northern) standard for the whole country would doom non-Mandarin speakers to second-class citizenship. As history developed, the Communists’ viewpoint prevailed as the Party took over the power. In 1956, an official document called “Directions with Respect to the Promotion of the Common Language (*Putonghua*)” was published, which spelled out the official language policy of the PRC. While the term “putonghua” in essence is the Mandarin spoken in the northern, the document emphasized that it was not entirely equivalent to the Beijing dialect, but rather something more broadly based, which has absorbed the most “viable and potent” elements from other dialects and speech of the workers and peasants (Ramsey 1987, 13-15).

8) For a different classification, see Charles N. Li and Sandra A. Thompson, “Chinese” in *The World’s Major Languages*, where the authors recognize only five dialect groups: Mandarin, Wu, Min, Yue, and Hakka.

Southeast Asia. Linguists can identify as many as several hundred distinctive Mandarin forms according to the tonal difference.<sup>9)</sup> Some linguists would identify a dialect group distinct from Mandarin, called Jin (晉語), spoken in Shanxi, Shaanxi, Hebei, Henan, and Inner Mongolia.

- Wu (吳 ; c. 90 million) includes many dialect forms, most notably the Shanghai dialect, but also many other varieties in provinces such as Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and eastern Anhui province. The Huizhou dialect (徽州話; southern Anhui) is included here as well, although some linguists would include it in the Gan dialect or even consider it to be a separate dialect branch.

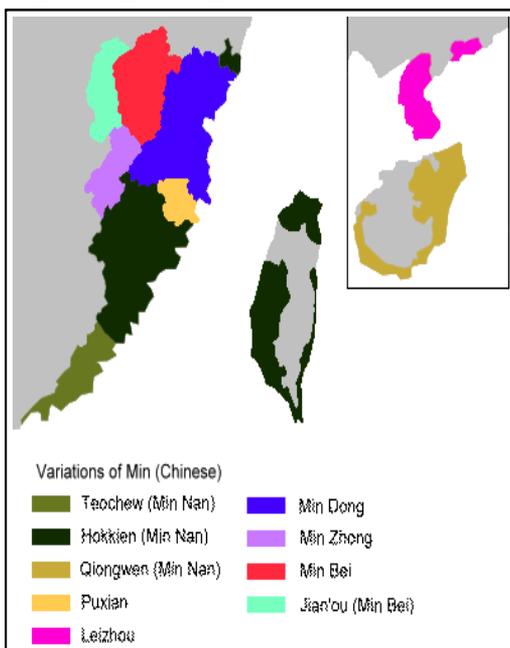


- Yue or Cantonese (粵; c. 80 million) is the major language spoken in southern China, such as Guangdong, Guangxi, Hong Kong, Macau, and parts of Southeast Asia (including East Malaysia). There is another dialect group which has traditionally been classified as a Yue sub-dialect called Pinghua (平話); it is spoken by some 2 million people in parts of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and in Hunan province.
- Min (閩; c. 50 million) is the name given to the Fujian province. The whole region is geographically isolated from the rest of China — except by coastal trade — and this has maintained its linguistic diversity. It includes a variety of spoken forms such as Min Nam (*nam* = south; such as Hokkien / Taiwanese / Amoy and Teochew/Swatow), Min Dong (*dong* = east; such as Fuzhou dialect), Min Bei (*bei* = north); Min Zhong (*zhong* = central), Pu Xian, Qiong

9) See James Campbell, <http://www.glossika.com/en/dict/dialectm.htm> (updated Dec 15 2003); the author reckons 523 dialects in Mandarin.

Wen (or Haianesse). Many of these forms are mutually unintelligible. Min is also the language of many Chinese speakers abroad, such as in Singapore and Bangkok, and especially in Taiwan.

- Xiang (湘; c. 35 million) is the language of Hunan province. But while “Old Xiang” of the mountains and valleys of the south and east is a quite distinct language, “New Xiang” of the north-west and the cities is becoming a mixed language, not too different from neighboring Putonghua dialects.<sup>10)</sup>
- Hakka or Kejia (客家; c. 35 million) is the language of northerners (thus a cultural group of the Han Chinese) who moved south in medieval times, now living throughout south-eastern China in agricultural communities in Yue and Min-speaking areas. The term *hakka* is in fact a Yue term meaning “guest families” (likewise *kejia* is the Putonghua equivalent). Kejia is close to Gan but with phonological and lexical differences. Hakka is also widely used in Taiwan, and in parts of Southeast Asia such as Malaysia and Singapore.
- Gan (贛; 20 million), named after the river Gan flowing through the province of Jiangxi, is the language of the Jiangxi province as well as the northwest of Fujian.

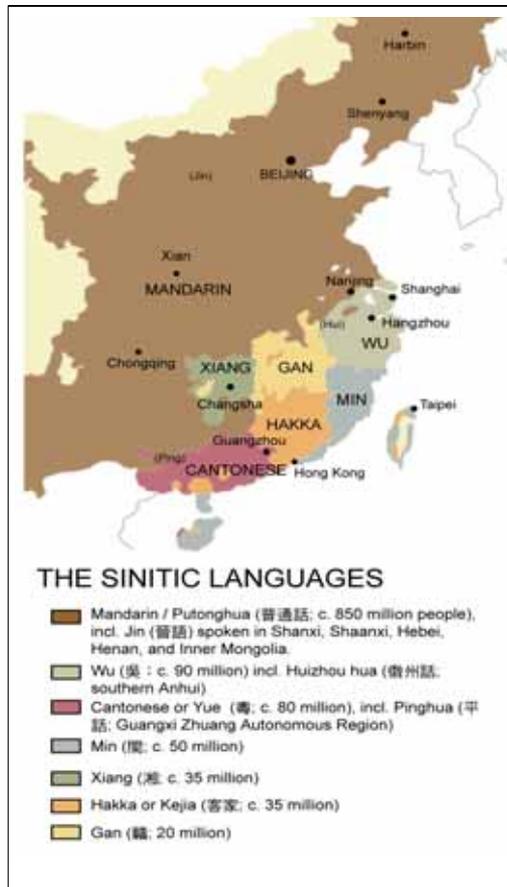


As one can see, each of these *fangyan* represents a group of spoken forms; this means that in reality there are far more *fangyan* than just the seven usually listed.

10) One of the most well-known native speakers of the Xiang language was [Mao Zedong](#), a native of [Xiangtan](#); he was not fluent in Mandarin.

A closer look at the geographical distribution of these *fangyan* would reflect an important aspect of language distribution in China, that is, these *fangyan* are all spoken in southern China. In many ways, the Chinese language, like China itself, is geographically divided between the North and the South. The Northern varieties of the language, usually known as the “Mandarin dialects” are spread across the Yellow Plain and the Loess Plateau (黄土高原). It is also for this reason that Mandarin is also known as *beifanghua* (that is, “northern speech”). This dialect zone extends southward to the Yangtze River, crossing the provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan all the way to the Thai border. As a result of these accretions, the Mandarin area covers more than three-fourths of the country. The Southern varieties of the language (the so-called “non-Mandarin dialects”) are confined to the wedge of land formed in the Southeast by the lower course of the Yangtze River and the South China Sea.

There is also a qualitative difference between the languages spoken in these two areas. The Mandarin area is far more uniform than the non-Mandarin area. Basically all of the dialect forms spoken in the Mandarin area are mutually intelligible, or nearly so. A native of Harbin, in the extreme north-eastern corner of the Mandarin range, would be able to converse with someone from Zhongqing, a city in the Southwest over 1,600 miles away. But for the non-Mandarin area, there is a far greater linguistic diversity in a comparatively smaller area. For example, the Amoy dialect spoken on the southeastern coast



(opposite of Taiwan) is completely unintelligible to someone living a few hundred miles away, say in Guangzhou.

The people who speak these *fangyan* may very well be united by their Han descent and by their shared cultural elements from Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, but they cannot understand one another. The fact that all people in China (including speakers of these dialects and the ethnic groups) use the same written script is by no means a linguistic fact that has developed naturally. Rather, it is the result of a political decision by the government. As we examine the history of Bible translation in these dialects, we see that some of these dialects once had their own written forms. From an ethno-linguistic perspective, these dialect groups are more appropriately considered as members of the different ethnic groups.

## 2.1. Bible Translation into the Chinese Fangyan

According to a recent cataloguing of the *fangyan* translations in China, there was a total of 597 editions published (new translations or reprints) in Mainland China prior to 1950; they were divided among five *fangyan* groups: Wu, Yue, Min, Hakka, and Gan. Taking into account some translation work undertaken in Hong Kong and Taiwan, there have been just over 600 editions published in Chinese *fangyan*.

Orthography has always been a concern in the written representation of the non-Han languages. There are three kinds of representation that have been used in writing the dialects (and ethnic languages): Han characters, roman script, and other scripts (introduced by the missionaries or ethnographers). In present Mainland China, the standard phonetic representation for *putonghua* is a romanization system called *pinyin* (which simply means “spelling”) or more properly called *hanyu pinyin*.<sup>11)</sup> This has been the official spelling system of Mainland China since 1958.<sup>12)</sup> Based primarily on the earlier scheme that was

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11) The phonetic representation used in Taiwan is entirely different from *pinyin*, see the section on “Aboriginal Languages in Taiwan.”

12) Mandarin Chinese has 5 tones: high (1), rising (2), low (3), falling (4), and toneless (5); thus *hanyu pinyin* should be written as *hànyǔ pīnyīn*. In most writings, the tones are not always indicated in the spelling, without which, however, one has to know the word in order to know how to pronounce it properly. In addition to the romanization policy, 1958 saw another major

heavily influenced by Soviet experts (note the use of “x”, “q” and “zh”), the system was revised with notional conventions of the National Language Romanization developed by the famous linguist Chao Yuan-ren and others. It is used in all schools within the country and is the phonetic representation typically used by students of Chinese in overseas. It should be noted that the roman script used in the dialect translations (almost all of these were published prior to 1930s) is not the *hanyu pinyin* system, but more akin to Wade-Giles system.<sup>13)</sup>

Most of the dialect translations made use of either the Han characters or roman script, but using Han characters was inevitably more convenient. The first *fangyan* version of the Bible was the Shanghai dialect of the Gospel of John in Han characters published in 1847 (translated and published by W.H. Medburst), whereas the first roman script version was published in 1852. It was the Ningpo dialect of the Gospel of Luke. Both belong to the Wu dialect. A very few translations made use of phonetic script systems developed by the missionaries. In 1859, a copy of the Gospel of Luke was published in the Shanghai dialect using a phonetic system devised by In T. P. Crawford. In Fuzhou, there were three newly developed phonetic systems used in five publications.

Dialect		Publication		Total	OT and/or NT and revision (indicated by slash)
	H a n char.	Roman script	other	<b>597</b>	
<b>WU</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>157</b>	
Shanghai (上海)	43	15	1	59	NT (R): 1870/1876 OT+NT (R): 1913
S u z h o w (蘇州)	12	1	0	13	NT (H): 1881/1892/1913
N i n g p o	20	33	0	53	NT-note: 1868/1870/1889

reform on the written Han Chinese, namely the reform to simplify more than 36% of the frequently used characters, commonly known as the Simplified script. The traditional full-form characters are still used in Hong Kong and Taiwan and by many overseas Chinese, but simplified characters are used in Singapore and Malaysia, that is, in addition to Mainland China.

13) The Wade-Giles system, developed by two British scholars in the late 19 century, is often used in historical and literary texts about China in English (especially in older ones); this is the earliest that is still in general use.

(寧波)					OT-note: 1901 OT+NT-note: 1923
Hangzhou (杭州)	1	2	0	3	
J i n h u a (金華)	0	1	0	1	
Taizhou (台州)	2	21	0	23	NT (R): 1881/1894 OT (R): 1914
Wenzhou (溫州)	0	5	0	5	NT (R): 1903
<b>MIN</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>235</b>	
F u z h o u (福州)	73	18	5	96	NT (H): 1856/1866/1869/1878 OT (H): 1884 OT+NT (H): 1887/1891/1895/1909 OT+NT: 1890 (NT-rev: 1895/1900)
X i a m e n (廈門)	5	38	0	47	NT (R): 1856; 1873 OT (R): 1902 OT+NT (R): 1921/1927
S h a n t o u (汕頭)	21	37	0	58	NT (H): 1898; NT (R): 1905 OT+NT (H): 1928
X i n g h u a (興化)	11	8	0	19	NT (R): 1901 OT+NT (R): 1912
Chaozhou (潮州)	0	2	0	2	
J i a n y a n g (建陽)	0	2	0	2	
S h a o w u (邵武)	0	1	0	1	
H a i n a n (海南)	0	14	0	14	
<b>GAN</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	
J i a n n i n g (建寧)	1	9	0	10	NT (R): 1896
<b>HAKKA</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>49</b>	
H a k k a (客家)	31	18	0	49	NT (R): 1883; NT (H): 1904
<b>YUE</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>146</b>	
Cantonese	127	15	0	142	NT (R): 1877/1886;

(廣州話)					NT (H): 1894/1959 OT (R): 1894; 1905
Lianzhou (連州)	4	0	0	4	

## 2.2. Highlights of *fangyan* translation works in China

The following highlight is summarized from two sources: Spillett, *Catalogue of Scriptures in the Languages of China and Republic of China* has always been the major source in the study of history of Chinese Bible publication. On the *fangyan* translation, it is now supplemented by You Ru-jie's excellent work: You Ru-jie (游汝杰), 〈《聖經》方言譯本書目考錄〉 (*Shengjing fangyan yiben Shumu kao lu*).<sup>14)</sup>

### *Shanghai dialect (Wu)*

- W. H. Medburst (1796-1857)'s publication in 1847 using Chinese character was perhaps the earliest to appear in this dialect.
- J. Summers published a roman script translation of John in 1853 in London. According to You, a full NT was published by Cleveland Keith in 1872 with a revised edition in 1876. Then American Bible Society commissioned a special committee (including Dr. J.M.W. Farnham) to further revise Keith's translation, published in 1881. However, according to Spillett, the earliest complete New Testament in roman script to appear was Farnham's translation in 1872. In 1897, the British and American missionaries jointly translated and published the full NT; this would be regarded as the first *Union Version*, even prior to the *Union Version* of the Mandarin Chinese (NT) in 1906.
- In 1859, A.B. Cebaniss used a phonetic system developed by P. Crawford to translate or adapt Keith's Gospel of Luke into Shanghai dialect.
- The first OT portion to appear was the Book of Genesis translated by W.J. Boone in 1854, and the first complete OT came in 1908. The first Bible in Shanghai dialect using roman script was published in 1913.

14) These two sources do not always agree to each other, and I regret that I am not able to verify the data in these two sources.

### ***Suzhou (Wu)***

- Spillet reported that all editions were in Han character, but You noticed one translation on Mark published in one 1891 in Roman script
- The first translation of the Four Gospels and Acts appeared in 1879 by J.W. Davis. Another version of the same corpus was translated by G.F. Fitch (American Presbyterian board) and A. P. Parker (Methodist Episcopal Mission) and was published by American Bible Society in 1880; in the following year they completed the NT, which was then revised by a committee organized by the American Presbyterian Church in 1892. It was further revised in 1913 and published in Shanghai
- The first edition of the OT appeared in 1908. It was a collaboration of a number of denominations including the American Presbyterian, Southern Baptist, and Methodist. The translators were Davis, Fitch, Parker, D.N. Lyon, J.H. Hayes, and T.C. Britton.

### ***Ningpo (Wu)***

- Translation work in Ningpo was particularly active. The translation of the NT in roman script began in 1851, and in 1852 the Gospel of Luke was published by W.R. Russell and D. M. McCartee; this was the first roman script Bible ever published. This was followed by other gospels and Acts to Jude; apart from these two translators, some new members joined in including W. A. P. Martin and H. V. Rankin.
- J. Hudson Taylor and F.F. Gough began their own translation work together with study notes in 1861, and published Gospels and Acts in 1865 in London. Gough and Bishop Moule continued the translation work and completed and published the NT in 1865. This was probably the first study Bible (NT) published in China. The same translation was further revised by Taylor himself in accordance with the needs of the Baptist church and was published in 1874 by American Bible Society.
- The translation was further revised by Goddard and J.C. Hoare, and was accepted in a joint consultation meeting held in Ningpo; this was known as a *Union Version* in the Ningpo dialect.
- Translation work in the OT began in 1857. People involved included A. P.

Martin, E. C. Lord, H.V. Rankin, H. Jenkins, and Miss M. Laurice. A separate committee with W. S. Moule and another person was established to prepare study notes. In 1901 the OT with study notes was published. Both study editions of the NT and OT were revised in 1923. This was probably the first Study Bible edition of the full Bible ever published in China.

### ***Wenzhou (Wu)***

- Translation activity in Wenzhou was not particularly active, but it was probably the only *fangyan* translation that was made from the original Greek text; the translator was W. H. Soothill (1861-1935) from the United Methodist Free Church Mission. Translation work began in 1888, and the Gospels and Acts were completed and published in 1894 in London. The entire NT was finished and published in 1903.

### ***Fuzhou (Min)***

- Using the Han characters, William Welton provided the first translation of Matthew based on the *Wenli Chinese Version* (that is the classical Chinese version) in 1852. Welton himself was actually a medical missionary from the Church Missionary Society from 1850-1856. The full NT was published in 1856. This translation was revised by Robert Samuel Maclay, a missionary from the Methodist Episcopal Missions, and published in 1866 and 1869, then revised in 1878. The OT translation was completed in 1884. The full Bible was again revised in 1887 jointly by ABS and BFBS and was published by the Methodist Episcopal publisher in Fuzhou in 1891. It was revised in 1895, and again in 1909.
- The first roman script translation was done by L. Lloyd of the Gospel of John in 1881. But the full Bible was translated by R.W. Stewart in 1890 and published in London. Then in 1895, the NT was revised and published in 1900 with study notes.
- There were also selections (Mark, Luke and Acts) using phonetic script published between 1907 and 1921.

### ***Amoy (Min)***

1. The earliest translation was the Gospel of John in roman script by Elihu Doty in 1852, a Dutch Reformed Church missionary. Doty was in China from 1836-64 and was a key figure in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The NT was published in 1856.
2. Another NT translation also in roman script was published in 1873 in Glasgow by a group of translators: W. Macgregor, W.S. Swanson, and H. Cowie. In that year, a delegation representing the three missionary boards in Amoy (London Missionary Society, British Presbyterian, and American Reformed Dutch Church) decided to translate the OT using the *High Wenli Delegate Version* as the base. Individual books were published in 1880-1884; these translations went through major revisions by a delegation of 20 missionaries and 16 Chinese assistants. In 1902, the OT was published. The full Bible was republished in 1921 and 1927, and later it was checked against the original Hebrew and Greek text by T. Parclay. It was regarded as one of the most important *fangyan* translations in China.

### ***Cantonese (Yue)***

1. The first translation was published by C.F. Preston (of Matthew and John) in 1862, using the Lepsius system. In 1868 preparations were made for a *Union Version* of the Gospels of other NT books: three regional committees were established. The base text was the *Textus Receptus*, and the speech form used in Guangzhou city was used as the standard. Luke and Colossians were first published in 1871, followed by other books. The rendering of the divine name became a problem: BFBS preferred *Shangdi* (or *Shangti*) and ABS preferred *Shen*, and as a result BFBS decided to withdraw from the project. Nevertheless, translation work continued, with George Piercy as the person chiefly responsible. The NT was completed in 1877, but it was never published as a whole, possibly because of much dissatisfaction. As a result, a special committee was set up in between 1879 to 1881 to revise the NT. The entire NT was published in 1886. The translation work on the OT was carried out by various individuals with the help of some church bodies. It was completed and was published in 1894 by ABS.
2. Spillett noted another translation of the complete Bible published by ABS in

1894 in Han character, and another roman script edition published by the Church Missionary Society in 1905/06. The latest edition of the Holy Bible in Chinese characters appeared in 1959.

3. In 1998 the Hong Kong Bible Society published a common language translation in Cantonese using Han characters, including some characters which are only used for Cantonese. Although it was said to be a revision of the previous Cantonese translation, it was in fact a new translation based on *Today's Chinese Version*. The draft was prepared by Mr. David Tsui and reviewed by Mr. S. H. Sung, the present author being the translation consultant for the project. In this revision, we also made use of some Cantonese characters according to the modern standard. This translation is perhaps the only *fangyan* Bible ever used officially as the pulpit Bible by a small denomination (with only two congregations in Hong Kong), namely the Pentecostal Christian Church in Hong Kong. Although the church leader was closely involved in the translation, the church felt that the Cantonese *genre* differs too much from the old Cantonese Bible. As a result, it was further revised and published in 2003 without the support of UBS/HKBS; the revision involved mainly a change of language level and orthography in order to preserve the classical flavor of the old Cantonese Bible.

With a few exceptions, almost all of these translations were produced prior to 1950s; with the increasing dominance of Mandarin Chinese, especially as a result of the implementation of the *Putonghua* policy of 1956, these *fangyan* translations gradually fell into disuse. This is still the situation in Mainland China. However, in Taiwan, *fangyan* translation work is still very much alive, especially in the case of Taiwanese and Hakka. In 1916, we saw the publication of the *Taiwanese/Amoy Roman Script New Testament* (title: 《台語羅馬字聖經》). This was the translation done by the British missionary Rev. Dr. Thomas Barclay. Then at the age of 73 he proceeded to the OT, which he finished in 1930. The full Taiwanese roman Script Bible was published in 1933. It is the only full Bible in roman script, and it is still used by many people. In 1996, the translation was published in Han characters. In the early 1990s, the Bible Society in Taiwan (BST) in joint collaboration with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan launched a full translation project in roman script Taiwanese using the common language approach. The committee consists of Dr. I-Jin Loh

(UBS translation consultant till 1999), Rev. Weng Xiu-gong (翁修恭), Rev. Zhang Zong-long (張宗隆), Rev. Wang Cheng-zhang (王誠章). The NT was published in 2008, and the OT is still in progress.

In addition to Taiwanese, Hakka has seen very active translation work in Taiwan. In 1984, BST launched the translation work in Hakka with a committee consisting of a missionary pastor from Canada (in Chinese, Rev. Mai Yu-dao 麥煜道) and pastors and leaders from the Hakka community. In 1993, a diglot edition with the NT and Psalms, using Han characters and roman script was published. As of now, Proverbs, Ruth, and some OT books have been finished, and the rest are in progress.

### **2.3. Challenges in Fangyan Translation**

With such fragmentary information, it is difficult to draw any conclusive observations. One may notice, however, that many of these *fangyan* translations went through revision far more frequently than most traditional translations (such as Mandarin Chinese) would normally do. For example, the first Fuzhou NT translation in Han characters was first published in 1856; it then went through at least three revisions in 20 years. Similar situations may be found in Shanghai, Ningpo, Xiamen, and others. The quality of the previous work might be the reason for frequent revision, but more likely the problem was the lack of consensus on the *fangyan* genre. Without any literary conventions, the genre of *fangyan* is basically the oral form, which varies from person to person, and from region to region. In 1884, there was a plan for a union version effort on Ningpo *fanyan* by both the American and British missionaries. The plan had to be aborted because the two sides were not able to reach a consensus on the speech forms to be adopted. In 1868, when preparations were made for the first full Cantonese Bible, the committee decided to adopt the speech form used in Guangzhou city — the largest city of the Guangdong province — as the standard. As the more powerful and the majority always win, this decision would seem to be an unavoidable solution to the problem. When the revision of the Cantonese Bible began in Hong Kong, there was also considerable discussion on the genre of the Cantonese *fangyan* to be used. The committee never came up with a precise description of the written form, but it was agreed that the genre

employed should avoid any flavor of vulgarity. My judgment is that it is similar to that of the news-reporting on Hong Kong television channels.

So we might ask whether there is still a need for *fangyan* translation, given the fact that all Chinese, save the illiterate, can read the same script?

Let's take Cantonese as an example. Cantonese is the most common *fangyan* spoken in Hong Kong. Due to the unique political situation of Hong Kong both prior to 1997 (as a British colony) and post 1997 (as a Special Administrative Region of the PRC), Cantonese has enjoyed a publication freedom that is unmatched by any other *fangyan* in China. In addition to popular magazines and newspapers, we also have highly acclaimed literary work such as the famous Guangdong drama. Nonetheless, most people in Hong Kong would still consider Cantonese publication to be a sub-cultural (or even sub-standard) literary activity. People in Hong Kong are accustomed to write in Mandarin according to its proper grammar and diction, but to speak and read in Cantonese.

The most widely used Chinese translation at present is the Chinese *Union Version*. It was published in 1919 (the NT in 1907) when the written form of the Chinese language was changing from the classical style (called *Wenli*) to a more colloquial style, akin to the everyday speech form of the people, that is, Mandarin. In reading this Mandarin Chinese text, Cantonese-speaking people would naturally pronounce each word in Cantonese. This procedure does create the impression that people are reading a Cantonese text, but while the pronunciation is Cantonese, the syntax and vocabulary are all Mandarin. Educated Cantonese speakers are used to this reading convention, but for illiterate or less educated people, it would take some immersion time for them to adjust themselves to this peculiar linguistic hybrid. This situation is by no means unique to Cantonese-speaking people. In Hong Kong there are some Protestant churches whose mission, at least historically, was to minister to certain *fangyan* groups, most notably Hakka (as the Tsun Tsin Mission in HK which was founded by the Basel Mission in the 19th century) and the Swatow (or Chaozhou as it is known in Mandarin). As with the Cantonese, these *fangyan* churches read the Chinese *Union Version* by pronouncing each word in their respective *fangyan*.<sup>15)</sup> To my knowledge, this kind of linguistic hybridization is found in

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15) I was born as a Swatow, as my parents are. When I was young, I was still able to speak Swatow fairly fluently but no longer due to lack of practice; however, hearing is still not a

most if not all of the Christian churches of the *fangyan* districts in Mainland China. In 2007 I had the privilege of teaching at the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (which is a national-level seminary). I taught a two-week intensive course for a group of 38 pastors from all over China. Some of these pastors were from the Swatow-speaking area. They admitted that even though the Scripture is regularly read in Swatow pronunciation, usually only those who are familiar with the story or the content of the text would be able to understand the reading. The linguistic difference between Mandarin and Cantonese is considered small, but for other *fangyan*, such hybridization artificially produces a linguistic form which is quite foreign to their mother-tongue speech form.

It is true that all Han people are united in one written language, but the dominance of Mandarin Chinese is the major culprit which has led to the suppressing of the awareness of the linguistic difference between Mandarin and the individual *fangyan*. The need for *fangyan* translation is still enormous! Having said this, publishing a *fangyan* Bible always has to pay special attention to the problem of how the translation will be written. The lack of a literary convention in the *fangyan* inevitably stigmatizes the written representation of the holy text. As in the case of Cantonese, with the exception of the Guangdong drama which originated in a purely oral presentation, no serious literary work is ever published in Cantonese. Publishing a holy text in Cantonese in a book form is deemed to be inappropriate. In my experience, Cantonese-speaking Christians always find it hilarious or are even offended if the reading is done from a Cantonese Bible, be this the old Cantonese translation or its subsequent revisions. While *fangyan* translation remains vital to the needs of tens of million of mother-tongue *fangyan* speakers, an audio medium is definitely more appropriate than a printed form. After all, people's daily experience of the *fangyan* is almost always in the audio form.

Adding to these formal considerations is the (Bible) publishing policy in Mainland China. At the moment the PRC government has been generously supporting Bible publishing in traditional forms and in Mandarin Chinese. Whether this policy may be extended to *fangyan* translation in audio or printed

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problem for me. I remembered I was once invited to preach to a Swatow Baptist church in Hong Kong. When I heard the moderator reading the Gospel passage in Swatow, I almost cannot follow what the lady was reading about.

form is a question no one can answer.

### 3. Bible Translation into Minority Languages

The Chinese do not have a strong tradition of ethnography. In the imperial period, the authorities considered it necessary to know only enough about the non-Han peoples to keep them under control. As China entered the Republic era, the new leaders began to take more interest in the identity of the peoples under their control. The idea of “The Republic of Five Nationalities” (「五族共和」) was at the heart of the new China. This ethos was reflected in the national flag at that time, which had five stripes representing each ethnic group: Manchus, Hans, Mongols, Huis, and Tibetans (滿, 漢, 蒙, 回, 藏);<sup>16)</sup> the stripes were later replaced by the stars. However, very little was known about the minorities at that time. Large areas of China were ethnographically unmapped and unexplored. Systematic ethnographic surveys did not begin until 1950s.

The term “minority language” is only used in relation to the huge population of the Han language group. In terms of language size, the largest minority language group in China is the Zhuang (壯), which is spoken by over 16 million people residing mainly in the Guaxi Zhuang Autonomous region (廣西壯族自治區) and the Wenshan Zhuang-Miao Autonomous Prefecture (文山壯苗自治州) in Yunnan Province. The smallest size language group, according to the official study provided in *ZhongGuo YuYan*, is a language group called Za (扎) spoken by about 300 Tibetans living in some of the villages in the Tibet Autonomous Region. In spite of its small population size, research shows that the Za-speaking community was the first settlers in this area.

In contrast to *fangyan* translation, the history of Bible translation among the ethnic groups may be traced much further back and translation work has remained very much alive to the present day. Ironically but understandably we have fairly complete information about the earlier years of the history of these

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16) Such ethos lies behind the term *Zhonghua Minzu* (中華民族), literally the “Chinese ethnic groups.” It was first coined in 1899 by the reformist Liang Qi-chao (梁啟超), who defined the term to include the Han, Manchu, Mongolians, Huis, Miaos, and Tibetans (「合漢合滿合蒙合回合苗合藏, 組成一大民族」).

translations, information becomes scarce as we come closer to the present because of the sensitivity of on-going work in Mainland China. Almost all of these translations works are closely associated with United Bible Societies. Details on the works by other translation agencies could not be identified at this stage. There are roughly about 20 language projects operated by Summer Institute of Linguistics or Wycliffe Bible Translators; again, no information is available.

As we attempt to plot this history, our discussion will be divided into three geographical regions: ethnic translation work in the north and north-west (including Mongolia, Xinjing, Tibet, and Manchu), which represented the pioneering work of Bible translation among the ethnic groups in China; translation work in Yunnan, where a lot of translation work is going on at present; and translation work among the aborigines in Taiwan.

Information on the geographical distribution, language typology and the population of each ethnic language are drawn from the *Zhongguo Yuyan* (2007). Unless otherwise cited, the population size cited in the book was taken from the 2000 National Census by the PRC government. The population size may not be the most accurate especially when the aboriginal groups in Taiwan are being concerned with.

### **3.1. North and North-west Mainland China**

Apart from the Bible translation works noted in the famous Nestorian Stele set up in 781 CE, commonly known as “The Stele Commemorating the Propagation of the Luminous Religion from Daqin in the Middle Kingdom” (大秦景教流行中國碑),<sup>17)</sup> Bible translation into minority languages ranks as the second earliest in the history of Bible translation in the land of China, traceable as far back as 13th century.

#### ***Mongolia (蒙古)***

As of 2000, there are 5.8 million Mongolians living in the Inner Mongolia, and approximately another 2 million living in Outer Mongolia. After the fall of

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17) This Stele is kept in “The Stele Museum” in Xian. About six other similar Steles are located in various parts of the world.

the Qing Dynasty in 1911, Outer Mongolia (re)gained its independence, politically and socially heavily influenced by the Former Soviet Union. At that time, Inner Mongolia was reorganized into provinces in China, until 1947 when it became Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of PRC

Mission work among the Mongolians began with the Nestorians as early as the 6th and 7th Century. The liturgical language that the Nestorian used was Syriac. We are not certain whether the Nestorians had translated any portion of the Bible for the Mongolians as they did in Chinese.

**John of Montecorvino.** The earliest ethnic Bible translation work ever documented was by the Italian Franciscan priest John of Montecorvino (c. 1247-1330) during the Mongol dynasty. He was also the first missionary to China proper. Before coming to China, John spent some of his early years among the Armenians and Persians. In 1291, John set out through Persia and India, and on the following year he proceeded with a caravan to China where he was kindly received by Kubilai Khan. His 34 lonely years of mission works in the Chinese capital of the Mongols proved to be very fruitful. He baptized about 6,000 persons,<sup>18)</sup> and was even permitted to build a church in Peking (now usually called, Beijing). Most importantly he had translated the Psalms and the entire New Testament into the native language. In his own word, “I have an adequate knowledge of the Tartar language and script, which is the usual language of the Tartars, and now I have translated into that language and script the whole of the New Testament and the Psalter and have had it written in beautiful characters.” (Dawson 1955, 227)<sup>19)</sup> It is likely that the language referred to was Uighur or Mongol in Uighur characters. Unfortunately, no manuscript of his translation survived.

Uighur is a Mongolian-stock tribe with an orthography originated from Syriac via Sogdians. During the time of Genghis Khan (or spelled as Chinggis Khaan),

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18) Covell (1995, 118-19) however noted that John has converted as many as one hundred thousand people into the Roman church; possibly many of his converts were Europeans, Armenians, or Persians, but a sizeable number could have been Mongols, living and working within China proper. According to the same author, John and the friars who followed him never bothered to learn Chinese!

19) It is worth noting that the 1914 edition of *Catholic Encyclopedia* states that the translation was into Chinese (see <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08474a.htm> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08474a.htm>), but in the second edition, it said that the translation was made in native speech, “probably Uighur or Mongol in Uighur characters.”

this Uighur script became the script of the Mongols. Originally it must have been written from right to left as Syriac (it is likely that this was what John of Montecorvino used), but then it came to be written vertically, from right to left (Garamtseren, pp.1-2). At present this vertical script continues to be used in Inner Mongolia, whereas in Outer Mongolia the Cyrillic script is being used.

**Isaac J. Schmidt (1827).** The first Protestant effort to bring the gospel to the people of Mongolia began with the tragic flight of the Kalmuk (or spelled as Kalmuck) Buddhists to Russia along the lower Volga River, north of the Caspian Sea in 1616. Not before long, they found themselves to be the target of missionary efforts by the Greek Orthodox Church, which sought to suppress their Buddhist faith and convert them to Christianity. These converted Buddhists, numbering about 3,000 by 1737, were allocated a place to live near Stavropol on the Volga River. But the majority of the Kalmuks could not stand the religious pressure being put on them, and as a result as many as 600,000 decided to return to Chinese soil by 1761. During those years, the refugees were pursued by Russian cavalry who slaughtered them without mercy; fewer than half survived the ordeal. Broomhall comments that “it was a modern version of Exodus, save that the Russian Pharaoh did not perish in any Red Sea.” (1934, 126-127). In the midst of this depressing period of history, Bible translation did take place.

In the early days of the Christian settlement, it was reported that there were already a few Scripture portions translated into their language.<sup>20)</sup> Substantial work began with a Moravian Dr. Isaac J. Schmidt (1779-1847). He came to Sarepta in Russia in early 1800s, learning the language, culture, and religion of the Kalmuks. From 1813 to 1826, he worked for Russian Bible Society<sup>21)</sup> as a Treasurer. In 1812, with the help of some Moravian missionaries, Schmidt translated the Gospel of Matthew into the Kalmuk tongue (a western Mongolian dialect). It was not published until 1815 because the initial draft was destroyed during the big fire in Moscow at the time of Napoleon’s attack.

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20) According to Garamtseren (p.2), a Moravian by the name Conrad Neitz had translated some portion of the Moravian harmony of the Gospels and some passages from the Bible in about 1768-69.

21) The Russian Bible Society was founded in 1813 with the sanction of Czar Alexander while the shattered remnants of Napoleon’s Grand Army were engaged in their fatal retreat from Moscow.

Schmidt's Kalmuk translation of Matthew stirred up no small interest among the political and religious leaders of the Buryat Mongols, who were eager to study its content. As a result, Prince Galitzin of the Buryats assigned two Buryat scholars by the names Nomtu and Badma to help translating the Bible; these two Buryats also became Christians in the process. Galitzin even provided 550 pounds to the Russian Bible Society for the translation work. The two nobles arrived at St. Petersburg in 1817 and were received by the Czar. Schmidt would translate into Kalmuk, and the Buryats in turn would translate it into Mongolian. The entire New Testament was completed and was typeset in St. Petersburg in 1827, but only four Gospels and Acts were printed. According to Broomhall (1934, 129), the Russian Holy Synod refused BFBS to the right of publishing the NT as a whole, because they said that they might need the books themselves.

**Stallybrass and Swan's First Mongolian Bible (1846).** The enthusiasm of the Mongolians inspired the London Missionary Society to start their work in Siberia. In 1817 or 1818, the LMS missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Edward Stallybrass arrived in Siberia, settling in Selenginsk, about 160 miles southeast of the city of Irkutsk. For the following 25 years this couple, later joined by Rev. William Swan and aided by the local Buryats, committed themselves to translate the Bible into literary Mongolian, which could be understood by Buryats and Mongols both of Siberia and of Mongolia itself. Here is a glimpse of how they worked:

Each would first translate a book or books using the Hebrew Bible and whatever aids to textual criticism and exegesis were at hand. The rough translation was then gone over in detail with a learned Buryat, generally a lama, though only to ensure linguistic accuracy. A fair copy would then be taken, and would be revised itself during the process of transcription. This revision would then be sent to the other two translators, who would have copies made which they could examine and comment on at leisure. Later revisions were also carried out. Critics and commentators were consulted with reserve, and variant readings were accepted, but the translators preferred to err, if at all, on the side of conservatism. The style adopted was one halfway between that used for letter writing, and the more difficult style of the Buddhist scriptures.<sup>22)</sup>

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22) See C.R. Bawden, *Shamans, Lamas and Evangelicals: The English Missionaries in Siberia*

It is likely that the translation work was finished by 1830, but it is not until 1840 that we see its publication. The long delay was due to the censorship process by Russian Bible Society; Schmidt was the one responsible for this process. The missionary work always had to depend on Russian Bible Society for supplying tract and printed translations, and on this particular project, the Bible Society might not be particularly excited in it because Stallybrass and Swan showed little appreciation on Schmidt's own NT. Finally in 1824, after a lengthy process, the mission station in Selenginsk received their own printing press but had to wait for 10 years before they received authorization to hire a printer.

The New Testament must have taken place sometime in 1826, because the directors of LMS were told that one of Stallybrass's former students from the missionary school at Selenginsk by the name Rintsin and one of the other colleagues Robert Yuille were translating the NT and Psalms from Russian and other Slavonic versions. The New Testament was printed in 1846. This was the first complete Bible in literary Mongolian. But unfortunately there was no Mongolian type available, so the book was first printed with Manchu type,<sup>23)</sup> and only later with true Mongolian type.

**Frans A. Larson (1913).** Bible translation work in Mongolia has always been amazingly active. As Covell (1995, 127) notes, by the end of the 19th century, "the Bible or portions of it has been translated into classical Mongolian, Buryat or northern Mongolian, Kalmuk or western Mongolian, and Khalka or eastern Mongolia."<sup>24)</sup> The question then was how to distribute these Scriptures to the people. This was partly done by Frans A. Larson, a maverick among

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(London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 296-97 (quoted by Garamtseren, 6)

23) According to Broomhall, the difference between the two types is not serious. The Manchu script was modeled on the Mongol, and that in its turn had been borrowed from the Uigurs, who had adopted the old Syriac introduced by the Nestorians. See Broomhall, *The Bible in China*, 130.

24) The translation into *Khalkha* was first made by Bishop Samuel I. J. Schereschewsky and another British missionary Joseph Edkins (1823-1905) with the help of a lama. Only the Gospel of Matthew was published (1873), it was based on the 1846 literary Mongolian translation, with reference to the Mandarin and the Manchu versions. They were followed by David Stenberg from Scandinavian Alliance Mongol Mission who published Mark, Luke, John, and Acts. Sadly Stenberg was murdered during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 together with other missionaries.

missionaries in Mongolia, who spent his early years (1893-1900) as a missionary for the Christian and Missionary Alliance and later took a position with BFBS. Larson traveled back and forth to Mongolia in every direction, distributing the literary Mongolian version and tracts. In addition to his responsibilities of distribution, he together with A. F. Ambland of the Scandinavian Alliance Mongol Mission also took time to revise this translation. What makes their work special is that they were assisted by Ponsok Searim, Commissioner of Customs of the independent state of Outer Mongolia (founded in 1911), who had been released from his official duties in government for the task of Bible translation. This is a unique and unprecedented event, for a Buddhist (or Lamaist) government to release a high official to help in a Christian translation. Their revised editions of the Gospels and Acts were published in Japan and became available in 1913 in Shanghai.

**Inner Mongolia Christian Council.** In the modern period, a great deal of translation work was done in Outer Mongolia.<sup>25)</sup> UBS translation consultant Dr. Suee-yan Yu has noted that there are some NT manuscripts circulating around, but no one is certain who are behind them. It is likely that the people involved are trying to protect the translators. In early 2000s, at the invitation of Inner Mongolia Christian Council, UBS was asked to start a fresh translation. A workshop was held for the team and church leaders in 2005; it was a joint effort by SIL colleague Dr. Chung Je Soon and UBS translation consultants Dr. Suee-yan Yu, Dr. Young-jin Min, and Dr. Moshe Min. The translation team was formed in 2006, and as of now, the team has completed the drafting of the four Gospels, using *Today's Chinese Version* as the model text. Dr. Suee-yan Yu is the translation consultant of the project.

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25) At least a few translation projects are well-noted. In 1953, Stuart Gunzel published a common language translation with a team consisting of three Mongols and some missionaries from Swedish Mongol Mission; the entire project was carried out in Hong Kong. John Gibbens, an Englishman, has published a NT with the joint consultancy of SIL and UBS; Dr. Carl Gross and Dr. Stephen Pattemore were appointed to be the translation consultant on behalf of UBS. The New Testament was completed in 1989 and published in 1990; the Old Testament is still in progress. Another major formal equivalence translation was published in 2000 (NT 1997 and OT 1998) by Mongolian Bible Translation. The translation was modeled after NASB, and at present it was under revision. UBS translation consultants Dr. Young-jin Min and Dr. Moshe Min were appointed to the project.

### *Xinjiang (新疆)*

There are two major languages being concerned with this section, both spoken in the Xinjiang Province in China. The Uighur (維吾爾) is one of the most important languages of the Turkic language family and according to its morphological structure it is an agglutinative language. Uighur has a population of 8.4 million people in the country. There are about a million Uighur mother-tongue speaker living in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (新疆維吾爾自治區). The Kazakh who live in China number roughly 1.25 million, and they reside mostly in Xinjiang, north of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

George Hunter, a missionary of the China Inland Mission, was frequently labeled the apostle of Turkestan. Motivated by the unexpected death of his fiancée before his departure for China, Hunter vowed to carry out a celebrate ministry in the difficult Muslim areas of China such as Ningxia and Liangzhao. Hunter first came to China in 1889. Then after the Boxer uprising, he went to the most difficult place in China, Xinjiang. Covell (1995, 163) rightly called Hunter “a nomad missionary among the nomads.” He traveled tirelessly to learn all he could about everything in the area. Hunter was a capable linguist. With the help of a Turki *mullah* (who was actually not a native Kazakh but lived among the people), Hunter translated the Gospels for the Kazakh people. After the two discussed the meaning of the text and the possible grammatical constructions, the *mullah* would write it out on two or three sheets of wax paper. Using a small mimeograph machine, Hunter printed off several hundred copies and distributed them to the people. Often he combined simple medical work with his distribution of tracts and Scripture portions. BFBS printed much of Hunter’s translation into Kazakh (officially listed as the Altai dialect of Kirghiz Turkish), but to ship the materials to Hunter was always difficult.

In 1914 Hunter was joined by another bachelor, Percy Mather, who had first came to China in the early 1900s and was deeply impressed when he learned about Hunter’s pioneering work in Xinjiang. Like Hunter, Mather was also a linguist. His output in literature during the hard winter months of study and translation was prodigious. He completed a Manchu dictionary, a grammar, and a small book of proverbs. He also finished a small Tartar dictionary and one in Kalmuk or western Mongolian. On top of all this, he still found time to assist

Hunter in completing a dictionary in another Kalmuk dialect. All these works were fundamental to the translation work which took place later.

More substantial translation work was done by Johannes Aveternian. His birth name was Mehmed Shukri, son of a Muslim *mullah* who served near the city of Erzerum in Turkey. Aveternian was converted to Christ through the help of Armenian Christians. Following baptism, he was given his new name, meaning “Son of the gospel,” and he attended a school run by the Swedish Missionary Union (founded in 1878). Upon graduation in 1892 he was appointed as the agent of the BFBS in what was then called Chinese Turkestan. Aveternian translated the entire New Testament into Uighur. But the translation was soon revised by a Swedish missionary L.E. Hogberg and a medical doctor missionary G. Raquette.<sup>26)</sup> The exact date of the publication is not known. This translation was well received only among the common people, but not by the *mullahs*, who were willing to accept Gospel portions only if they were in Arabic. Eventually the National Bible Society of Scotland undertook the project to produce such Scripture portions. Other Swedish missionaries worked on a variety of translation projects: a biblical history, textbooks in science, and the Old Testament.

### ***Tibet* (西藏)**

The great majority of people living in Tibet are the Tibetan people; there are over 5.4 millions Tibetans in the country. Approximately 86% of the population would continue using Tibetan as their mother-tongue. Naturally, Tibetan is under the Tibetan branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family of the Sino-Tibetan language phylum.

The Nestorians were again the pioneering missionaries to the Tibetans, as early as seventh century. They were followed by the Roman Catholics in the seventeenth century; Broomhall (1934, 114) notes that the Portuguese Jesuit Father Antonio de Andrada was the first missionary there (in 1626). However, for the history of Bible translation in Tibetan, we have to come down to the

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26) Raquette himself was also a gifted linguist. He had finished a grammar of Uighur (called Kashgar-Turkish) commenced by Magnus Backlund. It was printed in Germany with funds provided by German churches. It was almost a tradition back then for the Swedish missionaries to use medicine service, education, and literature as their strategies in evangelism (see Covell 1995,171).

### Moravian Missions.

The Moravian church started sending out their missionaries in 1732, at that time to the West Indies. Later the missionaries A. W. Heyde and E. Pagell were assigned to Mongolia. But when they were blocked from going to Mongolia, they settled in 1856 in Kyelang, a Tibetan village in the province of Lahul (later administered by Great Britain). Then, a second station was opened at Kuunawar in 1865 and a third in 1885 in the city of Leh, farther to the north in the province of Ladakh, a native state under the control of the Maharajah of Kashmir. The Moravians placed a strong emphasis on Bible teaching. From the very beginning, after entering Tibet in 1856, the mission gave itself to Bible translation, but it took the work of many people over almost a full century before the Tibetan Bible was completed in 1948.

The one who took the lead in the translation work was a learned missionary-linguist, H.A. Jaeschke. With a multilingual background of seven European languages and good knowledge of Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic, he basically picked up a good knowledge of the Tibetan language during the three months that he stayed with a village family. Then he returned to Kyelang and enlisted the help of some educated lamas. The translation process into any language is hardly smooth, and Jaeschke's path was even more difficult than usual. There were personnel problems (some lamas got into trouble with the local people and had to flee), translation problems (technical terms), and problems concerning the choice of language style (colloquial vernacular or classical Tibetan). In addition to his work on the Bible translation, he also published many Bible stories, a Harmony of the Gospels, hymn books, a catechism, and even school textbooks. More important were his Tibetan grammar, which became a standard authority, and his Tibeto-German and Tibeto-English dictionaries. After twelve strenuous years his health broke down, but he had completed the New Testament, with the exception of Hebrews and Revelation, and had commenced work on the Old Testament. His unfinished task was carried forward on the field by his successor F. A. Redslob, assisted by a converted lama. The New Testament was further revised and published in 1903. The translation of the Old Testament had to go through many hands before being completed: Redslob was followed by a native Tibetan, Jor Puntsogs, and finally by Rev. Yoseb Gergan with Dr. August Hermann Francke<sup>27</sup>) Bishop

Peter, and Mr. David Macdonald of Darjeeling as the revisers. Gergan has spelled out his translation process in great details, cited here (quoted by Bloomhall, p.117):

“Now at the end of this great work, I would like to tell you how I translated in all these years. I keep opened before me the following versions on three small Tibetan tables; the Authorised, Revised, Urdu and Moffatt’s translations, and I put a ruler on each to fix the passages at once. Then I read them all respectively, and write at once when the expression of a sentence or a verse be impressed on my mind. From the beginning our translators have rendered according to the Authorised version, and I have followed in their steps.

Besides the above books, I daily need Young’s *Concordance* to find out the original meaning or pronunciation: for instance in the English Bible, Lord is used for Yahweh, Cyrus for the Hebrew Koresh, Ethiopia for Kush, and so on. In such occasions we choose the Hebrew names rather than the English.

When we meet with different varieties of trees, precious stones, moneys, weights, measures, musical instruments and dress, then sometimes it takes a long time to find out what it really means, and sometimes we cannot find equivalent words in Tibetan. Sometimes the Jews used the same expression as a Tibetan, such as breath for strength, strength for wealth, and sometimes their expressions are quite contrary, as “hand” for “power”, “lamp” for “sun”, “seek” for “worship”.

From the beginning our translators took much care not to translate this Holy Book into a provincial dialect. Most of the priests cannot understand the high classical language, and if it be translated into colloquial it would be more difficult to be understood than the classical. So up to the present all our translators have taken care to render the Holy Bible into a simple semi-classical tongue which can easily be understood by all classes and readers. Without the classical tongue the Bible could not be translated, because in the vulgar dialect it could not be expressed fully from lack of sufficient words.”

In order to distribute the Gospel portions among the local people, they would bind the portions like Tibetan books in loose-leaf covers between red and yellow cover boards wrapped in linen and tied with a string. Scripture was printed on a rough, fibrous paper so that it would look similar to local books. Evangelists

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27) August Hermann Francke shared the same name as his ancestor who had led the pietists at Halle and taught Count Von Zinzendorf. Francke became a well-known authority on Tibetan literature and a specialist on the history and archaeology of western Tibet.

were careful to warn the people that Gospel portions should not be put on an altar and worshipped. A very low literacy rate made it imperative for Christian workers to use care in distributing these booklets.

Broomhall (1934, 120) has also noted an interesting experiment carried out in Western Tibet, that is the adoption of the Tibetan custom of writing inscriptions on the rocks, thus making the mountain crags a wayside pulpit for passing pilgrims. Well-known texts were chiseled or painted on the rocks, even so large a portion as the story of the prodigal son. To distinguish these from Buddhist inscriptions, a cross was painted or cut in one corner, or above it. It was hoped in this way to bring portions of God's Word home to many who may never see the printed page.

As missionary work increased, there were other attempts to do Bible translation. The language level of the scriptures first translated by the Moravians was classical, and more and more missionaries saw the need to produce simple gospel tracts in colloquial eastern Tibetan. Early in 1918 the Tibetan Religious Tract Society established a printing press at Dajianlu. Unfortunately very little is known about the translation work carried on at this time.

### ***Manchu (滿州)***

However ancient as it may appear to be, the Manchu never bothered to develop or preserve their own written language. There were traces of a script devised in the 12th century, but it was not used widely. Shortly after the conquest of China in 1644, they first adopted and adapted the Mongol form of writing, but not before long, they practically gave up using their own language in favor of the speech of the Chinese. This may explain why the language is practically extinct by now. According to the article by Wang Qing-feng (王慶丰) collected in *ZhongGuo YuYan*, which was based on the author's field survey undertaken in 1964, there were about 1,000 Manchu living in the Dawujiazi Manchu Autonomous Township of Aihui County (愛輝縣大五家子滿族自治鄉) in Heilongjiang. According to Wang, people over 40 years old could speak either Manchurian alone or Manchurian and Mandarin Chinese. By now, probably only a handful of people living in China can speak the language adequately.

As early as 1816, the Russian Bible Society had the desire to translate the

Scriptures into Manchu, but the first publication did not appear only 1821. This was the Gospel of John, translated by Dr. Pinkerton. Following this, the translation work was carried out by Stepan Lipofzoff, who had spent fourteen years studying Manchu for the Russian Government. The whole New Testament was completed in 1825, but the Russian Government refused permission for it to be printed. Only a decade later, in 1834, with considerable diplomatic effort on the part of the British Minister at St. Petersburg and the personal endeavor of George Borrow, BFBS succeeded in obtaining permission from the Russian Government to publish it under the censorship of Mr Lipofzoff. The printing task took ten months to complete, and the edition was forwarded to London.

On the Roman Catholic side, the Jesuit missionary Louis de Poirot translated considerable portions of the Bible into Manchu: Genesis to Job, Daniel and Jonah, part of the Apocrypha, Gospel of Matthew and Acts. These were produced as a handwritten interlinear translation with Chinese. These works were never published, but came into the hands of the Russian Holy Synod.

### *Yunnan*

The minority ethnic groups in China spread over approximately 60% of the territory in China, with almost half of them living in Yunnan Province, southwestern China. Thanks to the efforts of foreign missionaries during the 19th and 20th century in Yunnan, there are many Christians among the groups, such as the Lisu, Lahu and Miao. At present, 90% of the Christian population in Yunnan is ethnic minority people.<sup>28)</sup>

Of these minority groups, there are at least eight languages which have Scriptures officially published and printed in their own languages. These are: Jingpo, Lahu, Lisu (East Lisu and West Lisu), Miao, Wa, Dai and Yi (Black and Gan). These Bibles were published by the China Christian Council (CCC) and Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM),<sup>29)</sup> and printed by Amity Printing

28) Some figures for the Bible and hymn publication of some ethnic minority groups would help to picture the vitality of Christianity in the community. As of 1998, Yunnan Chinese Christian Council has published 85,000 copies of the NT and 175,000 copies of hymns for Lisu, 20,000 full Bible and 35,000 hymns for Jingpo, 20,000 full Bible and 25,000 hymns for Lahu, 40,000 NT and 70,000 hymns for Miao, 10,000 NT and 25,000 hymns for Wa, and 2,000 NT for Dai.

29) It may be necessary to give a brief explanation on the Protestant Church organization in China. The term “Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)” represents a movement officially began in the 1954 (August) within the Protestant church to promote the “three-self” principles, namely

Company (APC) located in Nanjing, Jiangsu province.<sup>30)</sup> Yi, Lisu, Lahu, Naxi, Jingpo, Miao, and Dai all belong to the Sino-Tibetan language family; the first four languages may further be classified as the Yi phylum of the Tibeto-Burmese language group, whereas Miao belongs to the Miao-Yao language group. Wa is entirely different, being an Mon-Khmer language of the Austro-Asiatic family. There are also some translation work found among Naxi (納西), Dolong (獨龍), Kado (卡多) of Hani (哈尼).

Under the collaborative effort of UBS and the two Christian bodies in Yunnan (i.e. CCC and TSPM in Yunnan), these languages groups (except Naxi, Dolong, and Kado) are in the process of revising their existing Bibles or completing the remaining portion. There were three landmark workshops leading up to the present development.

- The first translation workshop on Ethnic Minorities in Yunnan: led by UBS translation consultants Dr. I-Jin Loh and Dr. Graham Ogden,<sup>31)</sup> this workshop was held at the Yunnan Bible College in 1992 under the auspices of the two Christian bodies in Yunnan. It was attended by a number of ethnic groups such as Lisu (East and West), Wa, Yi (Black and Gan), Dai, Miao, and many other ethnic groups. The translation workshop provided basic training on the translation principles and practices in translating the Book of Ruth in their

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“self-support, self-government and self-propagation.” The underlying ethos of these principles are, that the Chinese Church is not dependent on or controlled by foreign mission bodies, that it is possible to be both a Christian and a good patriotic citizen, and that Christians should identify themselves with the aspirations of the Chinese people. TSPM exists also as an entity to ensure that the churches are in line with this ethos. China Christian Council was officially founded in 1980. Its role is the umbrella organization for all Protestant Christian churches in China by seeking to unite Chinese Christians around their belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to provide supports (such as theological education and publication of the Bible, hymn books and other religious literature) to the Protestant churches. Because of the close relationship of these two entities, the two names often appear side-by-side (as in this paper); usually the two names are cited as the “two national Christian bodies” (in Chinese: *liang hui*). See a helpful description at <http://www.amitynewsservice.org/page.php?page=1150>.

30) APC have printed over 300,000 copies of the minority language Bibles since it started operations in 1987. Some of these Bibles printed were given out free, while others were “sold” for a nominal cost of one yuan (approx. USD 0.12). Most of these production cost is covered by donations from Christians and United Bible Societies.

31) Dr. I-Jin Loh was the first Chinese translation consultant of UBS; for many years he was the chief coordinator of UBS ministries in Mainland China. Dr. Graham Ogden was for many years missionary in Taiwan and OT professor at the Taiwan Theological Seminary. Dr. Ogden has acquired an exceptional skill in Mandarin Chinese.

respective languages.

- “Workshop on Bible Translation Work in Yunnan Minority Language Communities” (雲南少數民族聖經翻譯工作會議) held in April of 1998 at the Lian Yun Hotel in Yunnan under the auspice of the Religious Affairs Bureau in Yunnan together with the two Christian bodies in Yunnan. The workshop has set the direction for the translation work of the minority ethnic groups as follows:

- Miao, Black Yi, and Wa: translation of the Old Testament and revision of the New Testament
- West Lisu: revision of the full Bible, and Study Bible edition and other Bible-related reference books
- East Lisu: translation of the full Bible
- Jingpo: revision of the Jingpo Bible, and translation of Bible reference material
- Dai: revision of the New Testament

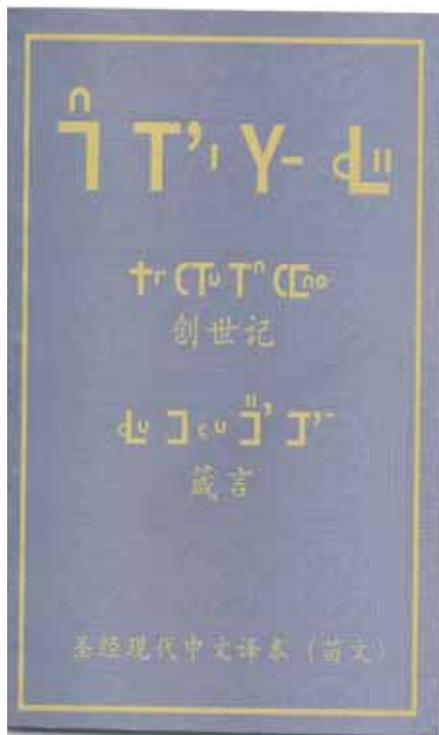
In addition to the translation project and publication of Bible engagement materials, Yunnan CCC also planned to publish literacy materials for the general community and materials to enrich their social life such as medical knowledge.

- More recently, on a smaller scale but equally important for the preparation of translation work in Yunnan was the workshop held by Dr. Suee-yan Yu in Wuding in October 2001. The workshop was attended by the translation teams of Black Yi, Gan Yi, East Lisu, and Miao. Since the only translation that the translators were aware of was the 1919-edition of the Chinese *Union Version*. This was naturally the base translation they would use in their drafting. Following the footpath of the first workshop held in 1992, Yu re-introduced to them again the principle of the meaning-based approach (or functional-dynamic approach) and encouraged them to consult the *Today's Chinese Version* (1995)<sup>32</sup>. However it is only in the course of consultant-checking that they gradually came to realize the importance of translating the meaning of the text, rather than tying themselves to the formal features of the 1919 Chinese edition.

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32) It was in fact a *Revised Today's Chinese Version* (the original edition was published in 1979). However, since the original edition was never published in Mainland China, to avoid confusion, the term “revised” was not specified in all TCV editions published in China.

Orthography is again a challenging prerequisite to the Bible translation work. Very few minority languages are like the Naxi who have always been using their traditional writing system. Most of the languages have their writing systems devised by the missionaries. Romanization with some modification was the natural choice (e.g. the Fraser script used in West Lisu, see below). There is a kind of special writing system used by a number of minority languages that deserve some attention. It was developed by the great hero Samuel Pollard (1864-1915; 柏格理), a Methodist British missionary. At the age of 22, he set his foot on China. He



founded a missionary station in Shi Men Kan (石門坎)<sup>33</sup> in the wild and remote mountains between Guizhou and Yunnan Provinces in 1904. The most lasting contribution of Pollard to the Miao and other minority language communities was the phonetic system that he had devised with the help of Yang Ya-ge (楊雅各), Zhang Yue-han (張約翰; his name was probably Zhang Wu [張武]) and a Han Chinese pastor by the name Rev. Li Si-ti-fan (李司提反; his name was probably Li Guo-zhen [李國鎮]) in 1904-1905. The script was comprised of some roman letters together with some other symbols. There are various kinds of speculation as to the origin of these symbols, such as borrowing from Pitman shorthand or from Greek letters; however, most people believe that these other symbols were borrowed from the embroidery signs from the traditional Miao

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33) Shi Men Kan (石門坎) is a very small village in the North-west of Guizhou, but in the first half of the 20th, it was probably the most well-developed “city” of the Miao community, largely due to the evangelistic work by western missionaries. In addition to churches, there were hospitals, leprosy clinic, orphanage, and schools. See <http://www.chiyou.name/page/zl/tpz/smk/index.htm> (Chinese; the English site unfortunately does not correspond to the content in the Chinese site)

clothing. No matter what the origin was, Pollard system is widely used, not only in Miao, but also in the East Lisu and (Black) Yi. The number of vowels and consonants varies according to the language applied to; the position to the vowel relative to the consonant is to indicate the tone: above for high. (The picture shown is the cover of the trial edition of the Book of Genesis and Book of Proverbs of the Big Flowery Miao)

From the 1950s onwards, new Romanization system (i.e. *pinyin*) was advocated by the PRC government.<sup>34)</sup> Many minority languages with no written record would not be concerned with the kind of writing system being introduced. But for those language groups, especially with strong Christian community and especially Bible publication, switching to a new writing system would imply an abandonment of a crucial part of their Christian tradition. In spite of the pressures given by the government to shift to this new writing system, the churches continued to use their old writing system. Since the 1980s, some groups have gone back to their pre-1950 scripts, especially Arabic in Xinjiang and Christian romanizations and Pollard script in the southwest (Lisu, Miao, etc.). Conversely, the Yao pinyin-based script of the 1950s became the basis of a unified Yao orthography also used by Yao outside China.

### ***Miao* (苗)**

Miao (also known as Hmong outside China) is one of the largest ethnic groups in China, with a population of over 8.94 million living in provinces such as Guizhou, Hunan, Yunnan, Sichuan, Guangxi, Hube, and Guangdong, and approximately 2 millions living outside China (usually called Hmong) scattering in Vietnam (North), Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and in the North America and Europe. According to *Zhongguo Yuyan*, Miao has three main dialects named according to the areas spoken: Xiangxi (湘西, western Hunan), Qiandong (黔東, eastern Guizhou), and Chuanqiandian (川黔滇, Sichuan-Guizhou-Yunnan). Each of these dialect group has many sub-dialects; for example, the Chuanqiandian includes at least 19 sub-dialects. There were records from historical document showing that Miao had some written system, similar to the ideograph or hieroglyph. Even if such writing did exist at one time, it is clear that it has not

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34) When Russian linguists were active in China, some Cyrillic letters were used; but after 1958 most were removed.

been widely used.

The Miao dialects (or sub-dialects) that had worked on Bible translation are Big Flowery, White, and Blue; these names might have come from their cultural characteristics (such as clothes or hairstyles). With the exception of the White and Blue Hmong (most are outside China) which are quite close to each other, the speakers of the other dialects would not be able to understand each other. At the moment, the Big Flowery Miao in China are using the Pollard script whereas the White and Blue Miao (Hmong) use roman script.

Work among the southwest minorities began among the Miao in the Anshun (安順) area of Guizhou as early as in 1877. The movement spread from there to Zhaotong (昭通) and the nearby villages of Gebo, Hezhang (赫章), Zhenxiang, and Bijie (畢節) in the Wu-Miao mountain area near the Guizhou-Yunnan border. From there it jumped to Sapushan and Salowu (撒老烏) in the Wuding area of Yunnan. Towards the end of 1800 (perhaps 1896), Samuel Clarke settled himself in Panghai, after making contact with a Big Flowery Miao believer in Guiyang who had arrived from Panghai. The Boxer Rebellion of 1900 disrupted the missionary work all over China. Its disastrous results were foreshadowed in 1899 when William Fleming of the CIM and Pan Xiushan, the first Miao convert, were murdered in Chong'anjiang (重安江). Apparently, Pan was suspected of importing arms to support another Miao uprising. Subsequently, mission work in South-east Guizhou continued at a slow pace.

J.R. Adam, a CIM missionary from the Free Church of Scotland, was a key figure in the early Protestant work among the Miao. Adam started the first chapel and a small boy-school for the Flowery Miao in 1899, but his work attracted Chinese as well as their minority neighbors. Within a short period of time, hundreds of people from the villages of the Flowery Miao became Christians and got baptized. Together with his colleagues, they started new churches, and mobilized them to reach into the many villages where the Christian message had not reached. By 1907, there were approximately 1200 converts. At the same year, Adam completed a translation of Mark as well as a hymnal and a catechism in Flowery Miao. Adam died on 11 August 1915, killed by lightning as he stood by the door of his house.

There came Samuel Pollard. He began translating the New Testament and many hymns using the script that he had devised. He finished the first draft of

the New Testament by himself, which was revised by William H. Hudspeth (王樹德) and by Arthur Nicholls of the CIM. The New Testament was finished in 1917 (or 1919). This edition, using matrices of the Miao script that had been prepared in Tokyo, sold 8,500 copies. When these matrices were destroyed by the earthquake of 1923, the next edition (1931), also revised by Hudspeth and Nicholls, was done by lithography with 12,000 copies being printed. New Testaments for groups in the Black and River Miao areas were published in 1936 and 1939, respectively.

Pollard, Hudspeth and Nicholls died within a period of sixteen months (from August 1915 to December 1916). While taking care of patients with typhoid fever in the Miao county, he himself caught the fever and eventually died on 16 September 1915. However, their work among the Miao continued under their capable successors and the Miao leaders whom they have trained. In 1932, the CIM estimated that the Miao church in the Wuding area numbered about 2,000 with several thousand more in the wider Christian community. Today, approximately 50% of the Big Flowery Miao professes to be Christians.

Translation work of the Old Testament began in 1992, after the translation workshop held in Kunming. The Miao translation committee was formed: Rev. Long Yue-han (龍約翰) the chairman, Rev. Long Kai-hua (龍開華) the vice-chairman, Mr. Wang Zhong-lin (王忠林) the secretary, Rev. Wang Zi-wen (王子文) the coordinator, with six members including Mr. Long Wen-zhong (龍文忠), and Mr. Wang Zhao-liang (王兆良). Each person was assigned to prepare the draft of certain book(s), then in August 1994, they all spent 20 days meeting at the Mai Di Chong Church at Fumin County (富民縣麥地沖教會) for an intensive checking session. Because of the shortage of funding, in the following three years, the progress of translation work relied on the work that the members did in their spare time.

The “Consultation on Bible Translation Work in Yunnan Minority Language Communities” (雲南少數民族聖經翻譯工作會議) in April of 1998 gave a green light to the translation work among the ethnic groups. A month later, on May 24-25, the Miao translation committee met at the Da Ping Tai Church of the Chang Kou County at Xi Shan in Kunming (西山區廠口鄉大平台教會), discussing the necessary preparations to reorganize the translation work. In order to speed up the work, as many as 18 people were invited to participate in the

translation work. The entire team continued meeting at this church from 1998 till early 2001 when they finished the drafting of the Old Testament. In all these years, the team had poured out all their energy into the work, but they also fully realized their insufficiency. In April 2001, the team wrote to the two Christian bodies in Yunnan for assistance. With the arrangement of the two Christian bodies in Yunnan, the CCC and TSPM in Wuding (武定縣基督教兩會) agreed to allow the Miao translation committee to work in their office. At this time, the number of participants reduced to seven: Rev. Wang Zi-wen (王子文), Mr. Wang Zhong-lin (王忠林), Mr. Long Wen-zhong (龍文忠), Mr. Wang Ming-guang (王明光), Mr. Zhang, Shao-ming (張紹明), Mr. Zhang Wen-hua (張文華), and Wu Zhi-cai (吳志才). Later, the number was further reduced to five with the departure of Mr. Wang Zhong-lin and Mr. Long Wen-zhong.

At the same time, two Christian bodies in Yunnan made formal request to CCC and TSPM for technical assistance on the translation matters. It was at the request of the churches in China that Dr. Suee-yan Yu was appointed as the translation consultant to the project. Yu began working with the team since 2001. The translation is a common-language translation, based on the *Today's Chinese Version* (1995) with references to the Chinese *Union Version* (1919). At present the full Bible was completed, together with the revised NT. Final typesetting and checking work have been completed. It is a regret that since the Pollard script (technically called Lipo3) is not fully supported by the Paratext,<sup>35)</sup> many checking had to be done manually. The full Bible will soon be printed with the permission granted by the Religious Affairs Bureau in Yunnan.

In addition to the translation work in Yunnan (China), there were also Miao's translation projects undertaken in Thailand and USA in roman scripts. They were all published in White and Blue Hmong. In 2004, Thailand Bible Society published a formal translation for both White and Blue Hmong. Overseas Mission Fellowship (OMF) was the organization first associated with the translation work; UBS translation consultant such as Dr. Stephen Re Kio, Dr. Gam Sham Shae and Dr. Joseph Hong were invited to assist the work. ???

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35) Paratext is a Bible translation management program developed by UBS. It has gone through many revisions, the forthcoming one being Paratext 7. Apart from equipping with capacities similar to many Bible software, the most unique contribution of PT is to enable many different levels of checking to a translation project, which would otherwise almost impossible with human hands.

Then there was a translation project undertaken on the other side of the world. The work started in the 1950s when a group of Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) missionaries who used to work with the Miao in China were forced to leave the country to Thailand due to the change of the political situation in China. This group of missionaries was assigned to work with the Hmong in Northern Thailand in the province of Chiang Mai, Petchabun, Tak and Mek Hung Sone. As the number of Hmong Christians increased, this group of missionaries began translating portions of the Bible into Hmong by using Thai script. Later, they adopted an orthography developed by Christian and Missionary Alliance missionaries Mr. Linwood Barney and Dr. William Smalley (Smalley was also a UBS translation consultant) who also worked among Hmongs in Laos. Those who were involved the translations were: first, Otto and Andri Scheuzger, Don Rulison and Ernest Heimbach, then, Barbara Good and Barbara Hey, and Dorie Whitelock, and Wayne Persons; the local Hmong pastors who were involved were: Nhia Neng Her, Yong Xeng Yang and Xeng Xiong. The New Testament had been completed in February 1975, and was sent to Hong Kong for printing on the Valentine's Day. The OMF missionaries had begun the OT, but did not complete. The work was taken up by the Hmong District of the C&MA based in Denver in 1978, and request was made to the United Bible Societies for consultation help. Dr. Stephen Hre Kio, Dr. Daud Soesilo, Dr. Gerald Kendrick, and Dr. Phil Towner were involved in the different stage of the project. It was published in 2000, both in the Blue Hmong and White Hmong.

This translation was widely used and appreciated by Hmong Christians living in Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, and North America. However, the Hmong district also felt that there is a need for revision because of the language style and translation of certain terms; there are also dialectic differences that need to be adjusted. Request was made to UBS for a revision in 2007; at present, a team consisting of three members is working on the revision, including: Dr. Nhalong Yang who represents the Hmong district in US and is the principle reviser of the project, then Rev. Laneng Chompukili representing the Hmong Christians in Thailand and Rev. Neng Chue Moua representing the Hmong Christians in Laos. The present author was appointed as the translation consultant of the revision project. It is planned that the entire revision work should be completed in 2013.

## **Yi (彝)**

Yi people are mostly distributed over the provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guangxi, with a total population of 7.76 million people. Approximately 60% of the Yi population live in various parts of Yunnan but concentrating in the Chuxiong Yi People Autonomous Prefecture (楚雄彝族自治州), and Honghe Yi People Autonomous Prefecture (紅河彝族自治州). Outside China, Yi live in Burma, Thailand and Vietnam. There are six major dialect groups in the Yi language: Northern, Western, Central, Southeastern, Southern, and Eastern, which can be further divided into 26 sub-dialects. Most speakers of each of the six dialects can understand each other, but not with speakers from other dialects. It is reported that the percentage of cognates among the dialects is only 40-50%. The local people would have a different name of calling the different dialects. Linguists have discovered that Yi has a very complex honorific system; it has over 20 different ways of addressing oneself and others.

Presently, there are as many as 60,000 Yi Christians in Yunnan Province, especially in Luquan County (祿勸縣) where there are about 420 Christian churches with the Christian population reaching 30,000. By the mid-1980s, the number of Black Yi Christians in the Salowu (撒老烏) area had increased to at least five thousand, and their church building, seating 2,000, is one of the largest Protestant churches building in Yunnan Province. Near Luquan County is the Wuding County where there are also 8,000 Yi Christians living there. In the neighboring province of Sichuan, however, most Yi in the Daliangshan Mountains remain unevangelized.

It is likely that different Yi groups may have used different writing systems, such as in the 19th century, a Roman Catholic missionary by the name Paul Felix AngeleVial (鄧明德) created a written system for the Yi living in Shilin Yi People Autonomous County (石林彝族自治縣). This priest has published some literacy work and catechism material together with a French-Yi Dictionary. However the most common writing system used by Black Yi<sup>36)</sup> (esp. in the

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36) Covell (p. 206) noted that in Sichuan, there was a rigid distinction between the aristocratic Blacks and the servile Whites, who had been enslaved by them over the years. In Yunnan these distinctions were being erased, and all of one group of Yi were referred to as Black Yi. The

Luquan County area) was devised by an Australian CIM missionary Gladstone Porteous in 1917. The script resembles the Pollard script with some modification. His team (together with his colleagues) also set up primary schools and engaged in medical work. Porteous also had started translating the Bible, and in 1923, he completed the Gospel of Luke, and in 1939 the Book of Acts.

The local Black Yi people started picking up the baton in 1941. It was a self-organized group with five members involved: an Australian by the Chinese name Rev. Zhang Er-chang (張爾昌), the chairman of the church Mr. Zhang Zhi-cheng (張志誠), Yang Zhan-xian (楊占先), Yang Sheng-lin (楊升林), and Li Fa-xian (李發獻). The work took place at the headquarter of the Black Yi Church in Salaowu (撒老烏黑彝族教會總堂). The first draft took five years to finish, it was then followed by the reviewing work undertaken by Rev. Zhang Er-chang and Mr. Li Fa-xian. In 1946, Mrs. Zhang and the son-in-law Mr. Bei Wei-li (貝惟禮) took the manuscript to the Bible House in Shanghai for typesetting and printing. Because of the war, the churches could not get it before 1949. It was reprinted again by the Amity Press in Nanjing in 1988.

The Old Testament translation work began in 2001 December. A committee of 10 members consisting of pastors, elders, deacons, and seminarians was formed, with Dr. Suee-yun Yu being the translation consultant. The translation work came to a halt for one and a half years because of the change in policy in the two national Christian bodies. The work was resumed in October 2004, operated under the auspice of the Religious Affairs Bureau in Yunnan; the number of committee was reduced to six. As of now, the drafting of the entire OT was finished; consultant-checking was completed on the following books: Genesis, Psalms, the Twelve Prophets, Daniel, Isaiah (a total of 17 books). Trial editions of Genesis, Psalms and the Twelve Prophets have been published. The committee planned to check the draft of the remaining 22 books for the third time before being checked by the consultant. They aimed at finishing the OT in no more than five years, and spending another five years to revise the New Testament published in 1948, which would likely be a new translation.

For many years, the Black Yi's New Testament were also used by the Gan (= Dry) Yi and Bai (=White) Yi Christians, nonetheless the dialects are still very distinctive. As of now, the drafting of the OT for the Gan Yi was finished, and

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Gan Yi belongs to another group.

beginning in July 2007, consultant checking under Dr. Suee-yan Yu began. Translation work of the Bai Yi also began recently under the supervision of Yu.

### ***East Lisu (東傣傣)***

With a population of 630,000 people, the Lisu in China make their home mainly in Yunnan: Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture (怒江傣傣族自治州), Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture (德宏傣族景頗族自治州), Dali (大理), Chuxiong (楚雄), Nujiang (怒江), Baoshan area (保山), Lancangjiang (瀾滄江) and others; some live in Sichuan. The Lisu in Yunnan province can be divided into two groups – the Eastern Lisu and the Western Lisu. The two branches are different from each other in language and living customs. Significant numbers of Lisu have migrated southward out of China during the last century. Today, Lisu are also found in Myanmar and in North Thailand and India. It was recorded that in the early days of the Lisu history, there was a script created by a Lisu farmer by the name Wang Ren-po (汪忍波) but never gained popularity. In the present time, there are two scripts used by the Lisu people: one based on the Pollard used by East Lisu in Wuding and Luquan County (祿勸縣), the other is the modified roman script (with some extra letters) used by West Lisu in the Nujiang County (怒江).

The Lisu people have the highest ratio of Christian believers among all the ethnic minorities. The entire group has been changed by Christianity, ever since missionaries first visited them in the early twentieth century. Indeed, this has been considered a true miracle in the history of Chinese missions.

There are approximately 90,000 E. Lisu who live in the scattered communities across three counties in northern Yunnan and southern Sichuan provinces, primarily along the upper Yangtze River watershed. The majority of the Lisu living in Wuding and Yuanmou (元謀) counties were originally from Panzhihua (攀枝花) in Sichuan who relocated themselves all the way down to the outskirts of Kunming city in Yunnan. The coming of Christianity to the East Lisu people might be traced back to Arthur Nicholls, an Australian missionary-doctor, who traveled to the area in 1906 to share the gospel with these people and many were converted to the Christian faith.

Bible translation for the East Lisu began with the British missionary Rev. Alexander Metcalf (王懷仁) in the Taigu of Wuding County (武定縣滔谷). The

Gospel of Matthew was likely a joint effort with Nicholls, published in 1912, then Luke in 1917, Acts in 1928, and John in 1936. The New Testament was published in 1951. 200 copies of the translation were printed in Hong Kong by “China Bible House.” Unfortunately, apart from a few copies which were hand-carried back to Metcalf and the community, the entire lot was lost in the shipping. For this reason, this translation was only heard of but never had the chance of serving the community. The story and history of this Metcalf’s NT (1951) is a sad story. Nothing is more tragic than for a godly man to spend decades of his life in a community, learning the language, translating the Bible, got it printed, but all copies were lost. It is as if everything is erased and forgotten, except in God’s diary. A copy of this original edition is now housed at the small museum of the Yunnan CCC office, which is located at the Trinity Church in Kunming. This particular copy did not come to light until 1999.

More recently translation work began at 1992. It began with a teacher called Mr. Yang Han-quan (楊漢全). Yang was a primary school teacher for over 30 years. Because he was a proclaimed Christian, he was never hired as a teacher according to the government ranking. The day has come when he was given the last chance to get into the government employment. His superior asked him, “So do you want to continue to be a Christian or to be permanent teacher?” Without a word, Yang walked out of the office. Since then, he never entered the classroom again.<sup>37)</sup> But instead of losing a teaching position, Yang became a Bible translator. Together with 9 other elderly men, Yang started the working of translating the Bible into East Lisu language. Each was assigned some book(s) for drafting at their own pace. Without any knowledge of Metcalf’s New Testament, the team drafted their New Testament from the Chinese *Union Version* in five quiet but laboring years. They did so voluntarily without any support, until in 1998 when their work was formally incorporated into the ministries of two Christian bodies in Yunnan. Then the team spent another five years for the Old Testament — it was an impressive speed with full dedication! By 2001, the full Bible was drafted. By now, many of them have passed away, while some remain very active including Mr. Yang Xin Guo (楊??國) and Mr.

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37) I met Yang in 2006 January; he was a quiet humble elderly man. When a local pastor told me the story, he simply sat there quietly, then he added with a soft but solemn voice, “that is what being a Christian should be!”

Bi Hong-zhen (畢洪珍), who later became the chairman and the coordinator of the East Lisu reviewing committee. Other members of the reviewing committee are: Mr Pu Bui-zhen (普會珍), Mr. Yan Wei-hong (晏衛紅) and Mr. Yang Hai-en (揚海恩).

The reviewing committee often would go through the text four, five or six times before meeting with the translation consultant. Dr. Suee-yan Yu began working on the project in 2003; in 2004, the present author started picking up the consultant-checking work. The team was always encouraged to compare their draft with the *Today's Chinese Version*, making sure that the meaning translated is as clear as it should be. Resistance was strong in the beginning, but gradually they started appreciating the merit of TCV. The consultant-checking work of NT was completed in the July of 2007, but it was not given permission for printing until December of 2008. It is expected that 10,000 copies be printed very soon. Consultant checking for the Old Testament commenced at the December 2007. As of now, Genesis and Psalms were finished; it is hoped that the entire OT could be finished by 2013.

### ***West Lisu (西傣傑)***

The majority of the Lisu people are the West Lisu, living largely in the Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province.

There are two scripts in use and the Chinese Department of Minorities publishes literature in both. The oldest and most widely used one is the Fraser script developed about 1920 by J.O. Fraser of the China Inland Mission and the evangelist by the name Ba Taw. The writing system which has 50 symbols in total is a combination of both roman script together with some inverted roman capital letters. The second script was developed by the Chinese government and is based on pinyin.

In 1913, Christianity reached the Lisu people in the area of the Nujiang River, when Rev. Bathow, a missionary of the China Inland Mission, climbed the mountain of Gaoli Gongshan (situated in the west bank of Nujiang) from Myanmar. The most influential missionary is British James O. Fraser (1885-1937) of CIM who went to Yunnan Province in 1908. After mastering the difficult Lisu language, he developed the Fraser Script in 1915. Subsequently, Fraser translated the Scriptures into the tribal dialect that is currently the

Western Lisu language used in the Nujiang region of the province. For the first few years, Fraser's mission work was not effective. However, he committed himself to the Lisu ministry and went to North America to urge missionaries to participate in developing the work among the Lisu. When he died from a brain tumor at the age of 52, Christianity had become the main religion of the Lisu living in the Nujiang area.

From the 1920s to the time around the Liberation (1949), under the influence of James Fraser, more missionaries committed themselves to the Lisu ministry. Missionaries of the China Inland Mission, Mr and Mrs A.B. Cooke and John and Isobel Kuhn came respectively in 1929 and 1930. They resided in the mountain region with the Lisu lived and actively interacted with them, spreading the Gospel to them. They established schools and hospitals and translated the Bible for the people. When the missionaries left China in 1950s, there were already more than 300 churches in Nujiang Prefecture and Christian believers amounted to 50,000.

The first publication of the West Lisu Bible was published in 1921, the Gospel of Mark by James Fraser, and Luke in 1930 by C .G. Gowman. The New Testament was completed in 1938; a local Lisu by the Christian name Moses was also involved in the work. About a decade later, OMF missionaries A.C.W. Crane and C. Peterson revised the New Testament and translated the Psalms; they were published in 1950. The whole Bible was published in 1968 by Bible Society of Burma (now called, Bible Society of Myanmar).

In 2001, with the support of two Christian bodies in Yunnan, a committee of 12 people chosen from different counties was set up to review the West Lisu Bible. In 2008, the China Christian Council had published 50,000 copies of the full Bible. More recently, the Committee started working on a study Bible edition of the West-Lisu.<sup>38)</sup>

### ***Dai (傣文)***

There are 1.15 million of Dai living in China, mostly in the South and South-west border areas such as Xi Shuang Ban Na Dai Autonomous Prefecture

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38) Crossing the border to Myanmar, almost a similar project (study Bible) is currently undertaken by Bible Society of Myanmar for the West Lisu in Myanmar. Dr. Daniel See is the appointed translation consultant.

(西雙版納傣族自治州) and Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture (德宏傣族自治州), but the Dai people also live together with other minority groups in some 30 counties. Most of the Dai people who live in their own Autonomous Prefectures speak only Dai, and do not know Mandarin Chinese.

The two main Dai dialect groups living in Yunnan are those in Xi Shuang Ban Na (西雙版納) and Dehong (德宏) areas. There was a written script already used by the Buddhist monk in that area (they probably were the originator of the script). There is another group of Dai living in the central part of Yunnan such as Yuan Jiang (元江) and Xin Ping (新平), called Hua Yao Dai (花腰傣). The dialect spoken there belongs to the same group as in Xi Shuang Ban Na, but the two speech forms are still quite different. What is special about the Hua Yao Dai is that a substantial portion of the population is Christian, and there were two groups of missionaries who had tried to devise roman script writing systems for the group.

Around 1920, an American Presbyterian missionary came to Xi Shuang Ban Na from Laos. In disguise of medical service, he set up the first missionary station at Jing Hong. He was joined by another team of missionaries from Laos; they used the provision of medical service as a springboard to Yuan Jiang and Xin Ping, furthering the Gospel work. For practical purposes, they introduced the Laos script, and devised a written system for the Dai people with the Laos letters. In addition to a number of literacy work that they had done, they also translated the Bible. In 1922, they completed and published the Gospel of Matthew. For some reason the missionary work there was abandoned, so was the translation work there.

Another writing system was devised by the German CIM missionaries. About 1927, the German couple with the Chinese name Bei Li Sha. (貝理泰) came to China working about the Hua Yao Dai people in Mo Sha of Xin Ping County (新平縣莫沙). With the help of some local intellectuals, they used the Han script to devise a set of phonetic writing system for the Dai people, called Xinping Dai (新平傣文). In 1940, the Dai Christians used this writing system to translate the Gospel of Luke and some hymns.

More recent Bible translation work about the Dai began in 2004. A church elder by the name Yan Wen (岩溫) with the help of Yan Kam and Wang Zhuang started the translation of the Old Testament using the base text from the Thai

Bible and Chinese *Union Version*. In December of 2008, Dr. Suee-yan Yu paid his first visit to the project. After checking the Book of Jeremiah, he discovered that the draft was far from satisfactory; this is because elder Yan is not very familiar with the content of the Bible.

### ***Wa (佤)***

The majority of the Wa (sometimes spelled as “Va”) population live in Myanmar, where about 700,000 are found in the Wa Autonomous State in the northeast of the country. Another estimated 10,000 Wa are also found in Thailand. The Wa population in China is estimated to be just under 400,000, living; the majority are located among the autonomous counties in Cangyuan (滄源), Ximeng (四盟), Lancang (瀾滄), and Gengma (耿馬), some are in Shuangjiang (雙江) and Zhenkang (鎮康) counties. Being an Mon-Khmer language of the Austro-Asiatic family, there are three main dialects of the Wa language, namely: Bu Rao (布饒), Lawa (阿佤), and Wa (佤). The differences among them are said to be minimal. In 1957, specialists from the government had devised a writing system for the Bu Rao dialect. Despite the effort, few Wa had ever learned to read or write.

At the turn of the 20th century Christianity spread among the Wa living at the Myanmar-Yunnan border area. It is possible that the first convert was found on the Myanmar side in 1907<sup>39)</sup> when some American Baptist missionaries started to work among the Wa people. Since then, there has been tremendous growth in Christianity. By 1948, there were 22,369 baptized Wa Christians in China, and today, there is an estimated 75,000 Wa Christians in China.<sup>40)</sup> The Wa churches in Myanmar are even stronger. Baptist is the most predominate denomination among the Wa people. There are more than 224 Wa Baptist churches and a Christian population of about 100,000 in Myanmar. Christianity continues to grow significantly in the past few years. As it has always been the case, the Wa churches in Myanmar and in China are closely related, so is also the history of Bible translation of the Wa language.

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39) Record shows that Ta Ai Rone was baptized in 1907; however, there was also record showing that the first convert was on the China side, in Lanchang of Yunnan, baptized in 1907.

40) Two new Wa Methodist Churches with about 900 members were established recently. There are also Wa believers belong to the Roman Catholic Church.

The Young family from America, William Young (永偉理) and his son Vincent Young (永文生), who came to evangelize the Lahu people also came to the Wa community. Vincent Young, born in Kengtun, Burma, spoke the Shan, Lahu, and Wa languages. In 1912, he devised a roman script writing system for the Wa people and started translating the Bible. The Wa language Bible was completed in 1938 by Rev. Vincent Young, his wife G. Vera Young with the assistant of Rev. Yaw Su Chin, Sai Pluik and Sara Ngao Meung. It was first published by BFBS, and was enthusiastically welcomed by Wa readers both in Myanmar and in China. In 1986, it was first printed in China but the quality was very poor; many mistakes were found. With the support of the two national Christian bodies in China, 10,000 copies of the Wa New Testament were reprinted in 2004, and in 2006, 20,000 copies of hymns were printed.

The Bible would never be complete without the Old Testament. To finish this task is difficult without a united heart. The translation of Psalms and Proverbs was carried out in the 1980s by four Wa Church Leaders, including Rev. Yawshu Chin, who was one of the translators of the New Testament. For the remaining part of the Old Testament, it was continued by a local layman, a principle of a State High School Sai Khwat in October, 1990 and completed in three years (!) in 1993. The checking and revision of the translation was done by a group of seven Wa church leaders that started the work in 1994 and completed it in 1998. The completed draft of the Wa Bible translation was printed with the initiative of the Wa Baptist Convention and distributed among the Wa people as “a trial edition”. It was distributed not only in Myanmar, but also in Thailand and secretly into China. The quality unfortunately was very poor: spelling mistakes and mis-translations are everywhere. While the NT was based on KJV, the OT was done with reference to a number of translations with KJV being the dominating reference Bible.

Then there was a major splitting within the Wa Christian community in Myanmar. A small group of Wa people under the leadership of Rev. Joseph Tian (田約瑟) took the Bible into their own hand and published his own revision; the revision was actually carried out by Rev. Solomon Tian who at one stage was employed by WBC.<sup>41)</sup> It was published and printed by the Wa Christian

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41) There was a dispute as to who owned the copyright of the Old Testament. Naturally, since it is the Wa Baptist Convention who published the full Bible (in 1998), WBC should be the

Fellowship in Thailand in 2007 with funding from a Chinese missionary medical doctor in Taiwan. The scope of the revision was actually very minimal. No reference was made to the original text or any English translation. On the other hand, in 2007, Wa Baptist Convention approached UBS to help them revise the work.

Since 2001, the Wa Church in Yunnan has also indicated the need to complete their Wa Bible by translating the Old Testament and revising the New Testament. A translation committee led by Rev. Tian Da (田大牧師) was established, the other members are: Rev. Tian Ai-ping (田愛平, son of Rev. Tian Da), Bao Guang-qiang (鮑光強), Bao Ming-shen (鮑明生), Tian Xin-Rong (田興榮), Tian Ming-xin (田明新), and Tian Guang-hui (田光輝). In 2003, UBS translation consultant Dr. Suee-yan Yu and the present author provided a mini-workshop for them. Checking session unfortunately could not be continued due to the interference of China Christian Council. Only in 2006 were we able to resume the consultant-checking work, undertaken by the present author. During these years, they worked on their own, and had translated some historical books already from the Chinese *Union Version*.

At the moment, the present author is appointed to be the translation consultant of both the revision work in China and the one in Myanmar. Since the Wa language spoken by both groups in the two countries is essentially the same, all efforts are now made in order not to duplicate the revision work. The book of Genesis has been consultant-checked, but the team is now revising up to the Book of Deuteronomy.

### ***Jingpo* (景頗)**

The Jingpo people live among the China-Myanmar border. Those in China side reside in the mountainous region of Luxi (潞西), Ruili (瑞麗), Longchuan (隴川), Yingjiang (盈江), and Lianghe (梁河) counties in Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture (德宏傣族景頗族自治州) in the western part of Yunnan. A small number of Jingpo live Nujiang (怒江) and Lincang (臨滄). In Yunnan, there are about 132,000 people. On the Myanmar side, they mainly live in the Kachin (克欽) state in the northern Myanmar, and the language is also

called Kachin. There are at least two dialects that may be identified in Yunnan, but in Myanmar, Jingpo is closely associated with Zaiwa (載瓦), Leqi (勒期), and Pola (波拉).

Already in 1857, missionaries from the West came to the Jingpo people residing in the Keqin State of Myanmar. When the country was under the British rule starting in 1885, missionary work became even more vibrant. In 1876, American missionary Josiah N. Cushing (庫森) came to live among the Jingpo people and learned the language. He compiled a simple glossary of 1000 Jingpo words using the Burmese letter; naturally, because Jingpo has a lot of sound not found in Burmese, his system of transcription was hardly used. In 1880, the American missionary O. Hanson (歐漢孫) came to the Bamo (八莫) area. He used roman script to compile a glossary of over 10,000 words. Hanson's romanization system has gained considerable popularity in the Jingpo society. Many hymns and Bible literacy materials were composed in this system, and in 1892, a four-volume set of literacy materials were published using this system. Since 1895, the written system was adopted and used in school, and an English-Jingpo dictionary was also published. The Jingpo church was held in high respect in the local community because they were the first group to become literate, and many people joined the church. In 1996, the Myanmar church held a special celebration at Man-de-le (曼德勒), "Commemorating the Centennial of the arrival of Christianity and the Centennial of invention of the Keqin orthography. By 1941, there were about 47,000 Jingpo in Myanmar who were baptized. In the same year, the Jingpo in China numbered 415. By 2000, the total number of Christians among the five Jingpo groups in China range from 7,000 to 8,000.

Because the Zaiwa dialect is very different from the Jingpo and other dialects, Hanson's Romanization system did not benefit them. The Zaiwa's orthography system was devised by a French missionary by the last name William around 1889. Subsequently he published some literacy material in the United States. Then in 1927, some local Burmese also used this system to publish literacy material for the Zaiwa people.

According to *The Book of a Thousand Tongue*, the whole Bible in Jingpo was published in 1927, but very little is known about the process and the translator. What we are certain is: when the Jingpo churches were founded in Yunnan, they

also were using the Bible and hymns published by the Jingpo and Zaiwa in Myanmar, together with literacy materials and dictionary. Recently some Jingpo people in Yunnan are working towards a revision.

### *Lahu (拉祜)*

Although the history of Bible translation between Lahu and Wa closely relate to each other and the two groups of people have constant contact, the two languages are quite different in terms of classification. Lahu belongs to the Yi language branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family, whereas Wa belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family.

The population of the Lahu people scatters widely, but mostly within the Yunnan province, alongside the Wa people. There are 417,000 people living in China, roughly half of these live in Lancang Lahu Autonomous County in Simao.

The Lahu, just like the Wa, live in the border of China (Yunnan) and Myanmar. There are two major dialects in Lahu speaking in Yunnan: Lahu Na (拉祜納) and Lahu Xi (拉祜西). The differences between the two dialects are minor, only in vocabulary and pronunciation. Speakers of the Lahu Na (拉祜西) is the majority. The present writing system was likely invented by a Baptist missionary at Jing Dong (景東) in Myanmar, with the help of a Lahu teacher, Ai Pun.<sup>42)</sup> While American missionaries William Young (永偉理) and his son Vincent Young (永文生) came to Yunnan to work among the Lahu, they at the same time introduced this writing system. They published literacy works of Lahu for the Lahu-speaking church people. In 1924, they have translated the Gospel of Mark and published it in Myanmar. After his family returned to America in 1953 and he in 1954, Vincent continued to have a literature ministry to the Lahu. According to Covell (1995, 235), Young completed his translation of the Lahu Bible in 1959 in southern California. He had it published privately in Taiwan with the money furnished by one of his sons and a medical missionary in Thailand by the name Dr. Richard Buker. These Bibles were shipped to Kengtung for distribution in Burma and China. A stiff, formal, word-for-word translation, it was never used widely and needed extensive

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42) Later, some Catholic priests also use roman script to devise a writing system, which was basically similar to the previous one.

revision.

In 2008, with the permission of Religious Affairs Bureau in Yunnan, the two Christian bodies in Yunnan reprinted 20,000 the Lahu Bible.

***Others: Naxi (納西), Dolong (獨龍), and Kado (卡多)***

The Naxi (納西) people mainly live in the Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County of Yunnan Province, but also in areas such as Weixi (維西), Zhongdian (中甸) which is famous for its brand name “Shangrila,” Zhulang (寧蒗), and Yongxing (永勝). In Sichuan, there is also a small population of Naxi living in Yanyuan (鹽源) and Muli (木里), and also the Mangkang county (芒康) in Tibet. The population of the Naxi is relatively small, only 250,000 people. The traditional belief of Naxi people is the Dong Ba religion (東巴教). Accordingly, the high priest of Dong Ba religion in the ancient time has created the hieroglyph script. In 1909, Pentecostal missionaries came to Lijiang and helped the local people to create a written system using mainly the roman script. In 1932, they even translated the Gospel of Mark. Unfortunately very little is known about the translation.

The name of the ethnic group Dolong (獨龍) associated closely with a river also called Dolong Jiang (獨龍江). Prior to 1950, Dolong River is also called Qiu Jiang (俅江), thus the community was at one time also called Qiu. In 1915, a missionary from Myanmar called Di-qi-ji (白吉斗 . 蒂其吉) devised a roman script writing system for the Dolong. Around 1935, an American missionary by the name J. Russell Morse (摩爾斯) and his son who has been working at the Dian Cang Christian Church (滇藏基督教會) of Gong Shan (貢山) used this writing system to translate the Bible and publish other literatures for the Dolong group in the Gong Shan area. Since the population of the Dolong has always been small, and the writing system does not precisely reflect the phonetic feature of the language, the script was never very popular. In 2006, the vice-chairman of the two Christian bodies in Yunnan Mr. Jiang Zu-lin discovered that a Christian family at the Dolong Jiang village of the Gong Shan County in Nujiang (怒江州貢山縣獨龍江鄉) had a copy of the Dolong New Testament with Psalms using this script. He used some daily supplies together with other Bible to exchange for this particular edition. It was a hard-bound edition. According to the original owner of the Bible, it was brought to them from Myanmar.

Another ethnic group which recorded Bible translation work is Kado (卡多). It is a subgroup of Hani, living Mo Jiang (墨江), Zhen Yuan (鎮沅), Jiang Cheng (江城), Jing Dong (景東), and Pu Er (普洱). In the Xi Shuang Ban Na (西雙版納) area, the Kado people are also called Ai Ni (愛尼), and the Christian population is increasing. Very little was known of the history of their script, however, the Gospel of Matthew was published in 1922. Recently, there are news that some Kado people from Thailand are working on a translation in Kado language in Jing Hong (景洪) of Yunnan.

More recently Bible translation became more active. Beginning in 2002, Mi Piao (咪飄), a Christian lady with only two years of college study, took up the mission of translating the Bible into New Testament. She used the *Kado Bible* published in Thailand, and the *Today's Chinese Version* as her reference. Then in 2005, two Kado joined her work: A-Er (a young man with only Grade 9 standard) and A-Duo (a seminarian graduate from a Bible school in Payop, Thailand). As of now, 16 books of the NT have been translated; many of them have been checked by an American missionary by the name Paul who is also fluent in Kado, and A-Ka, a Bible school principle who also knows NT Greek. An audio CD was published consisting of Romans, First Corinthian and Ephesus (500 in total); the text was read by Mi Piao and A-Er. Dr. Suee-yan Yu had the opportunity to check some of the books, and found that the quality was quite good.

### 3.2. Taiwan

The Mainland China government generally refers to the ethnic minority groups in Taiwan as *gaoshan* (as in the publication of *Zhongguo Yuyan*), whereas the people themselves usually prefer to be called 原住民 (*yuan zhu min*) meaning “the original inhabitants” in the island. No matter what term is used, any reference to language, culture, society, or religion must be specific as to which of these 10 aboriginal groups is being referred to. The Taiwanese aborigines belong to the Austro-Asiatic (or Austronesian) stock, with linguistic and genetic ties to other groups of the family such as the people of the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Oceania (especially the Polynesians). In fact, many historical linguists consider Taiwan to be the original homeland of

the Austro-Asiatic language family.

The history of Christianity in Taiwan began during the short period of Dutch rule (1624-1661). The missionaries who accompanied the merchants and diplomats concentrated their efforts on the tribes in the mountains. They surely incarnated themselves into the native cultures, and a few of them even took tribal girls as wives. During this time, it was recorded that the Gospel of Matthew was translated into one of the tribal languages. The success of the Christian evangelism among the aborigines was cut short by the arrival of the Chinese general Zheng Cheng-gong (also known as Koxinga) who invaded Taiwan in 1661 by fleeing from the new Ming Dynasty rulers in China. He killed the Dutch people, and basically eradicated the Christianity that they had introduced. Modern missionaries therefore opened what was essentially a new page when they began work in Taiwan late in the 19th century.

The need for Bible translation for the aborigines did not appeal to the early missionaries, who relied mainly on oral proclamation of the gospel; in those days, many people would read the Bible either in Chinese or Japanese. Not long after the Second World War, Bible translation work among the Taiwan aborigines began, and by 1953, all of the major aboriginal languages had their own translation work going on. As in the *fangyan* translations, orthography is once again a difficult problem for all of the aboriginal language translation work.

There are two kinds of phonetic representation of Mandarin Chinese used in Taiwan. One is the Wade-Giles system used for street signs, maps, books, newspapers, and name cards. This system is not the same as the *pinyin* system developed in Mainland China. Thus, for example, the largest city in the south of Taiwan is called “Kaohsiung”, but according to the *pinyin* system, it would be spelled as “Gaoxiung.” To counteract the *pinyin* used in Mainland China, the Kuomintang government in Taiwan devised its own system called the “Mandarin Phonetic System,” in Chinese *zhu yin* (注音). It is also known as “Bo-Po-Mo-Fo” based on the sounds of the first 4 character symbols of the system (ㄅ, ㄆ, ㄇ, ㄈ). The symbols look like parts of Chinese characters and have a similar appearance to Japanese writing. The government actively promotes this system as a teaching aid for school-children. From the synopsis given below,<sup>43)</sup> one can see that most aboriginal language translations

in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s used this unwieldy orthography, but gradually moved over to the roman script.<sup>44)</sup> All the translation projects mentioned here are under the auspices of the Bible Society of Taiwan and the United Bible Societies, with collaboration with the local church, mainly the Taiwan Presbyterian church, although some work might have started independently. Apart from Truku (Sediq) and Atayal, which belong to the Atayalic Formosan branch, the other languages are all part of the Formosa Paiwan language branch in the Austro-Asiatic (also known as Malayo-Polynesian) language phylum. Many of these are agglutinative languages. The population figures for each aboriginal group are based on the *Zhongguo Yuyan* (2007).

### ***Bunnun* (布農)**

The Bunun people with a population of 39,656 (according the 1994 statistics) are mainly located in the south-central mountain area of Taiwan. There are five Bunun dialects, with the major one being the southern Bunun.

The translation work in Bunnun was probably the first translation in an aboriginal language undertaken in Taiwan. After the Second World War, the Taiwan Presbyterian church sent a Taiwanese pastor Rev. Hu Wen-chi (also known as O. Bun-Ti; 胡文池) to do evangelistic work among the Bunnun. In 1947, Hu came to Guan Shan and worked closely with a local Christian medical doctor Dr. Huang Ming-tian (黃名添), using one of the rooms in his clinic as a Gospel station. In order to encourage his patients to attend the worship service, Huang would offer the patients half-price for the medical fee together with a free lunch with rice. Full of enthusiasm, he even offered a young man a full salary to teach Rev. Hu the Bunnun language (the young man had been a policemen, but resigned at the invitation of Huang), and to accompany Hu in his evangelistic work in the mountains. In 1949, Hu started a Bible training program, to teach

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43) I would like to express my gratitude to Bible Society in Taiwan for providing much useful background information and updates for these translation projects.

44) The use of roman script is undoubtedly more intuitive to learn, but in reality the transition is simply unnecessary because practically everyone in Taiwan (including the aborigines) would know the *zhuyin* symbols. It is inevitable for one to think that such transition was at least partly motivated by the political stance of the leadership of BST and her major supporting church, the Taiwan Presbyterian Church. While the Church must be acknowledged of their active missionary work and enthusiasm in Bible translation among the aborigines throughout all these years, it is notoriously of its anti-Kuomintang (or pro-independent) position.

young Bunnun to do evangelism , and at the same time he prepared teaching materials (such as the story of the flood) in Bunnun to teach local children.

With the help of another local evangelist Zhang Yu-fa (張玉發), the Gospel of Matthew was translated and published in 1951 by the Hong Kong Bible Society. Subsequent publications follow: Gospel of Luke (Hong Kong Bible Society and Bible Society in Taiwan, 1955), Acts (HKBS, 1959), 1-2 Timothy (HKBS and BST, 1962). These are all published in *zhuyin* script. It is not certain when the New Testament was first published, but in 1983, BST reprinted the NT in a diglot edition with the roman script of the Bunnun text and the Mandarin Chinese. Such a publication would be very useful for the young people.

In the spring of 1987, in collaboration with the Taiwan Presbyterian Bunnun church, BST began the work of translating the Old Testament and revising the NT. The committee consisted of Rev. Li Ming-ren (李明仁), Rev. Wu Zhui (伍錐), and Rev. Chen De-lai (沈德來), the reviewing committee being Rev. Zhang Yu-fa (張玉發), Rev. Huang Shun (黃順), Rev. Zhou Tian-hua (周天化), Rev. Yan You-li (顏有利), Rev. Tian Rong-gui (田榮貴), Rev. Yu Zai-wang (余再旺), Rev. Si Ming-shan (司明山). The translation consultant was Dr. Graham Ogden. The books of Jonah and Micah were published in 1993, using roman script. The full Bible (together with the revised NT) was published in 2000.

### ***Paiwan*** (排灣)

The Paiwan people, with a population of about 50,000, are mainly located in the Taiwu Mountain range in the far south of Taiwan. There are two major dialect groups, namely the southeast Paiwan and the northwest Paiwan, but their differences are very small.

By 1951, the Christian population of the Paiwan people had increased considerably. The Paiwan church felt that instead of focusing on evangelism, they should concentrate on the training of the believers. An English Presbyterian Rev. John Whitehorn was sent to help with the translation of the Bible and hymns. After learning the Paiwan language through a local villager by the name Gilgilaw, he began his translation work in 1952. He was also assisted by Mr Ye Cheng-bian (葉盛編, also known as Pari) who spent five months of intensive study at a school near Hualin.

Sponsored by BFBS, the Book of Acts was published in 1961 and again 1964; the orthography was based on *zhuyin* script with some modification in order to accommodate certain Paiwan sounds not found in the system. Subsequent publications followed: the Gospel of John in *zhuyin* (1965), Romans and Ephesians in *zhuyin* (1967), a special diglot selection on “the Sermon on the Mount” with the Paiwan text in *zhuyin* and Mandarin Chinese (1969). The New Testament was published in 1973, also in a diglot edition.

In 1984, in collaboration with the Taiwan Presbyterian Paiwan church, BST undertook the mission of translating the Old Testament and revising the NT. Rev. Xu Song was employed by BST as the translator. The reviewing committee consisted of: Rev. Lin Quan-mao (林泉茂), Rev. Wen Xin-lin (溫信臨), Rev. Chen Chong-long (陳崇隆), Rev. Lin Jian-er (林建二), Rev. Ceng Long-cheng (曾隆盛), Rev. Liu Zhao-chuan (劉朝川), Rev. Kong Shun-xing (孔順興), Rev. Mao Dong-nan (毛東南), Rev. Xie Qin-yu (謝欽玉), Rev. Lai Quang-xiong (賴光雄), Rev. He Ming-dao (何明道), Rev. Li Ding-xiong (李定雄), Rev. Gao Chun-gui (高春貴). UBS translation consultant Dr. I-Jin Loh provided training and consultant support; Dr. Loh was later succeeded by Dr. Graham Ogden. The full Bible (with the revised NT) in roman script was published by BST in 1993.

### ***Truku (Sediq; 太魯閣)***

The Truku (also called Sediq, 賽德克) people, with a population size of 14,000, are mainly located in various villages of Nantou County and Hualien County. Three dialect forms have been identified.

For the first time in the history of BST, a Consultation for the Bible translation work in Taiwan was held on July 29 1953. Among the attendants were Rev. Lai Bing-tong (賴炳炯) of BST, Rev. Ralph Covell (Chinese name: 柯饒富), Rev. John Whitehorn (Chinese name: 懷約翰), Rev. Edvard Torjesen (Chinese name: 葉德華), Rev. Hu Wen-chi and Rev. Luo Xian-chun (駱先春).

In the following year, Rev. Ralph Covell, then a missionary of the Conservative Baptist church in America, was invited by Rev. Sun Ya-ge (孫雅各) of the Taiwan Presbyterian Sediq Church to assist the Bible translation work in the Truku language. Rev. Covell first spent time in Bu Li (埔里) to learn Truku. He also devised the alphabet system of the Truku language (with more than 20 letters) based on the *zhuyin*. In 1955, he organized a Bible translation

committee: Rev. Li Shou-xin (李守信) being the translator, and members of the reviewing committee were: Rev. Ye Bao-jin (葉保進), Rev. Lin Guang (林廣), and Mr. Gao Tian-wang (高添旺). Covell was responsible for checking the draft against the original text; at the same time, he also translated many hymns into the Truku language.

In 1957, HKBS published the Truku Book of Acts in *zhuyin* script, then First Corinthians in Roman script in 1960. The entire New Testament in *zhuyin* script was published in 1963 jointly by HKBS and BST; 45,000 copies were printed.

In 1981, BST in collaboration with the Truku Church embarked on the translation of a shorter Old Testament and revision of the NT. The chief translators were Rev. Tian Xin-de (田信德) and Rev. Wu Wen-hua (吳文華). The review committee consisted of Rev. Ye Bao-jin and Rev. Covell, Rev. Wu Jin-cheng (吳金成), Rev. Xu Tong-yi (許通益), and Rev. Li Shou-ren (李守仁). Dr. I-Jin Loh of UBS was the translation consultant, until he was succeeded by Dr. Graham Ogden in 1984. In 1985, a diglot edition of the Book of Amos was published with the Truku text in roman script and *Today's Chinese Version*. The OT selections together with the revised NT was published as a diglot edition in 1988.

Then in 1995 October, BST and Truku church signed a memorandum to finish translating the remaining books of OT in three years; the translators at this time were Rev. Ye Bao-jin, Rev. Tian Xin-de, and Rev. Jin Qing-shan (金清山). However, it actually took more than twice the time originally planned. The whole Bible was published in 2005 in roman script.

### *Amis (阿美)*

The Amis people, with a population of about 80,000, are mainly located in the eastern part of Hualien county and the northeastern part of Taitung county, both in the Rift valley area in the eastern area of Taiwan. The dialect differences in this language are mainly phonological.

Bible translation work into the Amis language began in early 1950s when Rev. Luo Xian-chun (駱先春), a local Taiwanese pastor, started his missionary work among the Amis. But as he concentrated more on the translation of hymns, the baton of Bible translation was passed to Rev. Edvard Torjesen. Torjesen came to Taitung and lived in a small village; he first learned Amis from the two

local pastors Rev. Yan Ming-fu (also known as Towana; Chinese name: 顏明福) and Rev. Li Mao-de (also known as Tamih; Chinese name: 林茂德). By the time he started the translation work, he could speak Amis fluently.

In 1957 Torjesen together with Rev. Yan (Towana) finished and published the Book of James using *zhuyin* script, then the Gospel of Mark in the following year. Subsequent publications followed: a diglot edition of Acts and Galatians with Amis in roman script and the Chinese text (1963), and the Gospel of John (1965). Most of these publications were printed with funding supplied by BFBS. There were many people who were involved in the translation project, such as Rev. Song Zheng-qing (also known as 'Afo 'Apak, Chinese name: 宋正清) Rev. Zhang Tian-cheng (also known as Samuhwan, Chinese name: 張天成), and Rev. Zhang Zheng-yi (also known as 'Ofad, Chinese name: 張正義).

In 1965, Torjesen resigned from the translation project because of his many other duties. The translation work was taken up by Miss Virginia A. Fey (Chinese name: 方敏) who learned Amis from some local Amis girls and attended a Bible translation training program in Thailand. Possibly because Fey was a lady, all of those who had originally been involved in the translation work resigned; their positions were later taken by Rev. Yan Wu-de (also known as Sontok, Chinese name: 顏武德), Rev. Lin Mao-de (also known as Tamih, Chinese name: 林茂德), and Rev. Ceng Zhi-liang (also known as Mayaw Ripon, Chinese name: 曾枝量). In spite of the drastic change in personnel, translation work did not stop. In 1966, the Book of Romans was published, and it was followed by the Gospel of Matthew (1970) and Psalms (1979). The entire New Testament was published in 1971, after being consultant-checked first by Dr. I-Jin Loh and then by Dr. Graham Ogden. A shorter Old Testament with the New Testament was also published in 1989.

In 1991, BST invited Rev. Yan Wu-de and Rev. Lin Mao-de to devote their time once again to complete the unfinished portion of the Old Testament, together with a group of 11 reviewers: Rev. Sheng-an (林生安), Rev. Zhang Yi-nuo (張以諾), Rev. Wu Cheng-gong (吳成功), Rev. Lu Zhang-cai (呂張才), Rev. Zhang Tian-cheng (張天成), Rev. Ceng Wen-liang (曾文亮), Rev. Cheng Yue-han (陳約翰), Rev. Yan Yue-han (顏約翰), Rev. Lin Chun-zhi (林春治), Rev. Lu Jin-fu (呂金福), and Rev. Hong Yu-mei (洪玉妹). The work was blessed with the computer support by Rev. Paul McLean (Chinese name:

麥焯道), which certainly expedited the entire process. The full Bible was published in 1997, being the first full Bible published in one of the aboriginal languages of Taiwan.

### ***Yami (雅美)***

The Yami people, with a population of only 4,000, are found mainly on Lan Yu (蘭嶼; also known as Orchid Island), 45 miles southeast of Taiwan Island proper. The Yami people have six tribes, but the language was used mainly in the two tribes, the other four tribes mainly use Mandarin.

In the autumn of 1953, Rev. Luo Xian-chun (駱先春) went to Lan Yu to work as a missionary. At that time, as there was no Bible in the local language, Luo translated John 3:16 into Japanese, and then through the local people into Yami (also known as Seysyo No Tao). This was the first time in the history of the Yami language that God's word was heard.

In 1955, a Canadian missionary Miss Grace Irene Weklin (Chinese name: 衛克琳教士) went to Lan Yu to assist in the work of Bible translation into Yami. In 1965, they began the translation of the Gospel of Mark but this was not published until 1970. In 1980, BST published a diglot edition on the Gospel of Mark, Acts and James with Yami in *zhuyin* script and Chinese. That same year, Miss Weklin retired and returned to Canada.

In 1985, the executive secretary of the Taiwan Bible Society, Rev. Tsai Jen-li (蔡仁理), arranged with the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Taiwan Presbyterian Church to form a translation committee, the members of which included: Ms Wei An-hua (Chinese name: 魏安華), Canadian missionary Miss Rosemary Thomason (Chinese name: 湯思玫), American missionary Miss Ginny Larson (Chinese name: 羅雅菁), Rev. Wang Rong-ji (王榮基) and Rev. Zhang Hai-yu (張海嶼). In the following year, BST hired two Yami ministers (with the surnames Wang and Zhang) to take up the translation work. The two ministers first used roman script to translate a book, then Miss Larson and Miss Thomason would check if the translation was in accordance with good translation principles and if the content matched the original text and verified the appropriateness of the vocabulary. After making all the changes with a computer, they would then read it to members of the review committee before making additional changes. Dr. Graham Ogden was the translation consultant for

this project.

After nine long years, the first Yami New Testament in roman script was published by the BST in 1994.

### *Atayal* (泰雅爾)

The Atayal people, with a population of 40,000, are located mainly in the northern mountainous area of Taiwan and the mountainous areas of Taipei, Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Taichung, and Ilan counties. Two dialects have been identified.

After the end of World War II, Rev. Sun Ya-ge (孫雅各) of the Taiwan Presbyterian Sediq Church invited Rev. Claire McGill (Chinese name: 穆克理) of the Canadian Presbyterian Church to Taiwan to take up the translation work on the Tayal Bible (泰雅爾語聖經). McGill graduated from Westminster Theological Seminary in 1952, and he came to Taiwan in the following year. He first learned Mandarin in Taipei, then went to Sonun-Buta in Yi Lan (宜蘭大同鄉長老處) to learn Tayal. At the same time, he teamed up with Rev. Chen Zhong-hui (陳忠輝), the two of them serving as itinerant preachers. During this time McGill tried to learn the Tayal dialects used in different places. In 1956, he began to write elementary teaching material for the Tayal language. At first he used roman script, but he changed to *zhuyin* when the Kuomintang insisted that *zhuyin* should be used in teaching. Because the existing *zhuyin* system did not have enough symbols to represent the Tayal sound system, he had to modify it by expanding the number of symbols.

In 1956, Rev. Claire McGill gathered a number of Tayal pastors including Rev. Chen Zhong-hui (陳忠輝), Rev. Lin Ming-fu (林明福), Rev. Gao Jin-rong (高金榮), and Rev. Chen Guang-song (陳光松) to begin the translation of the New Testament. In 1964, the Gospel of Mark in *zhuyin* script was published, and Acts and First Corinthians in 1970. The New Testament was published in diglot edition with Tayal in *zhuyin* and the Chinese text in 1974.

In 1989, the Taiwan Presbyterian Tayal Church contacted the Bible Society for a number of translation plans: first, the translation of Shorter Old Testament, then the changing of the *zhuyin* script to roman script, and finally, translating both the Old and New Testaments into a more colloquial form of Tayal. The translator chosen was Rev. Lin Chun-hui (林春輝牧師). The review committee

consisted of Rev. Lin Ming-fu (林明福), Rev. Gao Jin-rong (高金榮), Rev. Li Fu-quan (李福全), Rev. Chen Guang-song (陳光松), Rev. Lin Cheng (林誠), and a few others. Dr. Graham Ogden was the translation consultant. In 1993, Amos, Jonah and Micah were translated and published as a combined edition, but the Shorter Old Testament with New Testament was not published till 2003.

### ***Rukai* (魯凱)**

The Rukai people, with a population of 6,000 people, are located mainly south of Mt. Ali and north of Tawu mountain in Taiwan. The language area includes Maolin Township in Kaoshiung [Kaohsiung?] County, and Wutai Township in Pingtung County. Six dialect forms have been identified.

In order to preserve their language, as early as 1958 the Rukai church had published a number of Bible story books using the *zhuyin* script. Then, in 1987, the Rukai church has requested BST to begin joint work on the translation of the Bible. In order to unify the orthography used in the aboriginal languages, BST requested the Rukai church to adopt the roman script. In the following year, a translation committee was set up, consisting of Rev. Chen Song-de (陳松得), Rev. Lai A-zhong (賴阿忠), Rev. Wang Zhao-xian (王朝賢), Rev. Zhong Si-jin (鍾思錦), Rev. Wang Ming-zhong (王明忠), Rev. Hong Tian-de (洪天德), and Rev. Lu Tian-wu (盧天武). Apart from Rev. Lu, who was responsible for keying in the hand-written text, the translation work was divided among the members to prepare the draft. In 1989, Dr. Graham Ogden, who began as the translation consultant for the project, provided training to the translators. He was succeeded by Dr. Simon Wong from 1994 to 1996. Considerable delay was caused by the loss of a manuscript and by the change of committee personnel. The entire New Testament was finally published in 2001.

## **4. Challenges in Minorities translation**

Compare with the *fanyan* translation work, Bible translation among the ethnic minorities is very much alive. For example, the translation work in Mongolia is exceptionally active; there seems to be not enough translation projects for the less than 8 millions people there. For the past 50 years, there are almost 10

translation projects on the Mongolian language, whether taken place in Inner Mongolia or Outer Mongolia.

The mountainous geographical location of Yunnan has always been a major obstacle for the ethnic minority groups to get into contact with the Han culture and language; the majority of the elderly generation has never set their foot in Kunming in their lifetime. According to the data provided by Mr. Zhu-ling Jiang vice-chairman of the Yunnan China Christian Council who has devoted much of his time in the Bible translation work in Yunnan since early 1990s, over 70% cannot understand or read Mandarin Chinese. Even the minority groups such as Miao, Yi, and Lisu living only 300 kilometers away Kunming, would still prefer to use their mother-tongue in their daily communication. Although these nearby people are likely to understand Mandarin Chinese, their comprehension skill is often not adequate.<sup>45)</sup> A mother-tongue translation of the Bible for these ethnic groups does not only give them a sense of self-identify, but being able to interact with the Word of God in their heart language, it enables them to interact with the Han Christians on Christian dialogue.

In surveying the history of the Bible translation works in Yunnan, we are marveled by the self-motivation of the ethnic groups towards Bible translation work. All the translation projects were self-initiated. The ethnic community organized their own translation team and started the translation work with no external support; it was only after many years or even over a decade before UBS translation consultants started involving in their work. The self-motivation is a good indication that for these people, Christianity is no longer a foreign religion.

The history of ethnic minority churches shared much of the ups and downs of the Han churches due to the political situation. While most ethnic churches were found in the mid-19th century, the World Wars which was followed by the political turmoil in China, especially the so-called “dark age” during the decade long of Cultural Revolution (1968-1979) has made major setback to the stability of the church. The setback was not due to the number of Christian population, but the spiritual growth. Without a Bible that can speak their language and with no adequate Bible teaching, compounded with the low educational level, all

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45) In my working experience with the East Lisu group, there are cases when the team did not render the text correctly; it was because of their misunderstanding of the Chinese expression in the Chinese Bibles.

these factors make the ethnic minority churches very vulnerable to cults, or un-orthodox teaching as a result of *over*-cultural adaptation of certain aspect of the Christian message.

Lei Hongan reported an example found in the early Lahu Christian community: “They will cook some good food as a sacrifice to Jesus Christ, and when the food is ready, they will say, ‘Come, Yesu, Lord, come and help yourself; this is made especially for you to thank you for protecting us.’<sup>46</sup>) When the message is over-accommodated, it may become garbled, as reported by Yang Liuxiang in *The Christians in Cangyuan*:

Jesus Christ was a man whose mother was a widow. Before he was born some fortune-tellers told his mother that she was going to have a son who would be strong enough to conquer the whole world. When the chief heard that, he was so angry that he decided to kill Jesus’ mother. With the help of the villagers, Jesus’ mother escaped to a horse stable, where Jesus was born in a horse manger. His mother took him home, and he jumped down from his mother’s arms. No sooner had he stepped on the floor than there appeared a golden chair for him to sit in. When he grew up, the chief sent three hundred people to kill him. They caught him, killed him, and buried him with a big stone pressed on his body. But three months later the stone broke up, and all these bad people were killed by the fragments of stone. After Jesus Christ was resurrected, he told all the people of the world that he was going to Heaven, but he would not stay there long, just three days (in fact three thousand years). During the three days of his absence, there was to be a great disorder in which more sinners would appear in this world. Jesus told the people not to worry, but to do good things to help poor people and trust God to protect them. Then he said they would have a happy and peaceful life. Three days later, when Jesus was to return to earth, there was going to be a fierce earthquake in which the bad men would be killed, but God would protect the good people so long as they stayed in the church. Even if they died, death for them only meant that they would be transferred to a better place called Heaven, where there was no worry, no hatred, no poverty, no starvation, but peace and perfection. In order to go to Heaven, people

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46) Lei Hongan, *Traditional Religious Beliefs of the Minority Nationalities* (Kunming: Yunnan Ethnic Research Institute, 1984), 82, cited by Covell (1995, 234).

were to do good things and go to church. If they did not do as Jesus said, they would be sent to hell where they would suffer for many generations.”<sup>47)</sup>

Here is a lively example illustrating the birth of a modern apocryphal story. While the political climate of the Mainland China is progressively becoming more opened up, the Bible translation works among the ethnic groups are still affected by the policy of the two national Christian bodies, namely China Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement. The history of UBS involvement among the ethnic minorities in Yunnan might be traced back to early 1990s, but more substantial work began in the middle of 2001, pioneered by our colleague Dr. Suee-yan Yu under the coordination of China Partnership. As the work began to pick up its momentum, in the middle of 2003 when the leaders of the two national Christian bodies at that time were invited to UBS headquarter in Reading (U.K.), they blatantly expressed to the UBS leaders their disapproval to UBS involvement to the translation work among the minorities in Yunnan. As the coordinator of China Partnership Mr. Wee-seng Kua who was also present in the meeting recalled, “it was like a bomb blast to our work in Yunnan.” From middle of 2003 to end of 2004, UBS pulled out from Yunnan, and all those who were involved in the translation works in the Yunnan province were left to their own.

While funding and support ceased, the works did not — thanks to the constant encouragement of Mr. Zulin Jiang to the translators. Mr. Pi the team leader of the East Lisu revision project recalled that in those days, Jiang often visited the translators of the different projects, encouraged them and occasionally provided them some funding. In a couple times, Pi indicated to Jiang that the members might need to stop the work and return back to the field, but Jiang often urged them with tears in eyes that they had to persevere because the Bible is essential to the growth of their church. In spite of the negative attitude that the leaders of the national Christian bodies have expressed themselves, Bible translation works in Yunnan have received exceptional support from some local Communist officials, notably Mr. Aiguo Wang, the deputy of Yunnan Religious Bureau at

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47) Lei Hongan, *Traditional Religious Beliefs of the Minority Nationalities* 72, cited by Covell (1995, 235).

that time. Wang enthusiastically encouraged UBS to continue the translation work in Yunnan, and was willing to subsume the work under his responsibility. Since the beginning of 2005, UBS translation consultants resumed their work in Yunnan under the auspice of Yunnan Religious Bureau.

Translations of the Bible into vernacular languages are usually undertaken initially not from any motive of nationalism, but purely for religious purpose. However, the existence of a translation which is seen as a visible symbol of their religious consciousness contributes directly to the development of an ethnic culture, and sometimes *re*-culturation. In the report “Christianity among the minorities in Yunnan Province” co-authored by Wang together with two professors from National Ethnic University (Zhong Yang Min Zu Da Xue) in Beijing, the authors studied the evangelism, social development, and institutionalization of Christianity among the six major ethnic groups in southern and western parts of Yunnan Province, and concluded that these factors have had a very constructive effect on the daily life, the cultural activities, the social structure and even the inter-tribal relationships of the people. It further shows that Bible translation written in the vernacular language has effectively localized Christianity in the community; Christian faith is no longer a foreign religion to them but their ethnic religion (You *et al* 2004, 19).

<Keywords>

Bible Translation, Chinese Fangyan, Mongolian Bible, Taiwan Bible, Fangyan Translation, Minority Languages.

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<Abstract>

## 중국 지방어 및 소수 민족 언어 성경 번역사

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(세계성서공회연합회 아시아 태평양지역 번역 컨설턴트)

이 소논문은 대만을 포함한 중국의 방언과 소수 민족 언어의 성서 번역사를 제 공하려는 시도이다. 현대 중국에는 56개의 소수 민족 그룹이 사용하는 129개의 언어가 있다. 그리고 북경 관화 아래 또 다른 6개의 주요 황안(또는 방언)을 찾아 볼 수 있다. 이 주요한 황안 중에 (상하이어, 수조우어 등과 같은) 우어(Wu), (시 아멘어/대만어, 차조우어 등과 같은) 민어(Min), 간어, 하까어, (광둥어라 불리기도 하는) 유에어(Yue)에서 번역본들이 발견된다.

소수 민족 언어 성경 번역의 역사는 세 부분으로 나뉘 수 있다. 중국에서 소수 민족 그룹 가운데에서 성서 번역의 선구자적 작업을 대표했던 (몽고, 신징, 티벳, 만추를 포함하는) 중국의 북쪽과 북서쪽 열한 개 언어 프로젝트가 문서화 되고 있는 유난, 그리고 일곱 개 언어 프로젝트가 포함된 대만이 그것이다.