THE PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES AS BIBLE TRANSLATORS:
MISSION AND RIVALRY IN CHINA, 1807-1839

by

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ABSTRACT

The first generation of Protestant missionaries sent to the China mission, such as Robert Morrison and William Milne, were mostly translators, committing most of their time and energy to language studies, Scripture translation, writing grammar books and compiling dictionaries, as well as printing and distributing bibles and other Christian materials. With little instruction, limited resources, and formidable tasks ahead, these individuals worked under very challenging and at times dangerous conditions, always seeking financial support and recognition from their societies, their denominations and other patrons. These missionaries were much more than literary and linguistic academics – they operated as facilitators of the whole translational process, from research to distribution; they were mission agents in China, representing the interests and visions of their societies and patrons back home.

Using rare Chinese Bible manuscripts, including one that has never been examined before, plus a large number of personal correspondence, journals and committee reports, this study seeks to understand the first generation of Protestant missionaries in their own mission settings, to examine the social fabrics within which they operated as “translators”, and to determine what factors and priorities dictated their translation decisions and mission strategies. Although Morrison is often credited with being the first translator of the New Testament into Chinese, the truth of the matter is far more complex. The following study is designed to illustrate both the complexity of the historical process underlying the Protestant translations of the Bible, as well as the complexities attendant upon notions of translation and authorship. Recognizing how these translators interacted with one another and how they made use of their sources, and appreciating their continued struggle for support, recognition and patronage is the key to understanding their translation approaches and decision-making.
PREFACE

This dissertation is an original and independent work by the author, Clement Tong.

A version of material from chapters 3 and 4 was presented in a paper titled “A Comparison between the Morrison Bible and the Chinese Union Version according to Yan Fu's translation principles of ‘Faithfulness, Accuracy, and Elegance’” at the 2012 Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Chicago, and a paper titled “The Roman Connection – The Latin Vulgate Influence on the Chinese Bible” at the 2015 Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Atlanta.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. INTRODUCTION .............................................................................. 1

1.1 Translation Traditions in China ....................................... 13
1.2 Recent Trends in Biblical Translation Studies ..................... 23
1.3 The Complex World of Bible Translators ............................. 29
1.4 Methodology ........................................................................... 33

2. SERAMPORE AND THE BAPTIST CHINA MISSION ............................. 40

2.1 The Armenian Translator .................................................... 42
2.2 Textual Analysis of Lassar’s Matthew of 1807 ....................... 49
  2.2.1 The Use of Buddhist Terminology .................................. 50
  2.2.2 A Quest for the Source Texts ....................................... 57
  2.2.3 Phonetic Characters and Southern Chinese Characteristics .... 67

3. THE BEGINNING OF THE MISSION IN CHINA .................................. 85

3.1 The Years of Preparation .................................................. 85
3.2 The Manuscript ...................................................................... 89
3.3 Robert Morrison’s Arrival in Canton................................. 96
3.4 The Acts of the Apostles of 1810....................................... 100
3.5 Morrison’s use of the Basset Manuscript – Luke of 1811........ 105
3.6 Morrison’s use of the Basset Manuscript – other books......... 124

4. PARTNERSHIP AND RIVALRY - THE COMPLEX WORLD OF THE FIRST
PROTESTANT TRANSLATORS.................................................. 151

4.1 The Clear Goal.................................................................... 155
4.2 The Promoter .................................................................... 161
4.3 The Competitor .................................................................. 179

5. THE POWER OF PATRONAGE AND FAME ......................... 202

5.1 Initial Reception of the First Chinese Bibles ...................... 203
5.2 The baptizō (βαπτίζω) Controversy................................. 208
5.3 Fame and Legacy............................................................... 222
  5.3.1 Literal Style of Basset, Morrison, and Marshman ........ 224
  5.3.2 Legacy Threatened..................................................... 232
  5.3.3 Improved Approach, Better Results......................... 240

CONCLUSION ........................................................................ 244

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................... 253

APPENDIX

Influence of the First Bible Translations on Later Versions.......... 278
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Use of Buddhist terminology in Lassar and Marshman ............... 54
Table 2.2 Translation of “Jehovah” in the early Chinese Bibles .................. 65
Table 2.3 Comparison of Chinese translated names in four versions .......... 77
Table 3.1 Comparison of Acts 1:1-15 in two versions ............................. 108
Table 3.2 Comparison of Acts 1:1-15 in two versions .............................. 110
Table 3.3 The morphology of Basset’s Harmony of Gospels ...................... 116
Table 3.4 Comparison of Luke 1:1-15 in two versions ............................. 120
Table 3.5 Comparison of John 1:1-13 in two versions ............................ 124
Table 3.6 Morrison’s NT translation progress by the years ...................... 128
Table 3.7 Comparison of Luke 12:16-21 in two versions ......................... 130
Table 3.8 Comparison of Luke 24:3-9 in two versions ............................ 130
Table 3.9 Comparison of John 10:7-15 in two versions ......................... 133
Table 3.10 Comparison of John 21:17-22 in two versions ....................... 134
Table 3.11 Comparison of Matthew 13:1-8 in two versions ..................... 137
Table 3.12 Comparison of Romans 1:1-7 in two versions ....................... 140
Table 3.13 Comparison of Romans 13:1-7 in two versions ....................... 143
Table 4.1 The BFBS’s support for the Serampore China Mission and Robert Morrison over the years .................................................. 164
Table 4.2 A comparison of place and people names translated in four Chinese versions ............................................................................. 187
Table 4.3 Marshman’s analysis of Morrison’s reliance on the Basset Manuscript ....................................................................................... 195
Table A.1 A comparison of place and people names translated in six Chinese versions ............................................................................. 281
LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1 Johannes Lassar’s Matthew (1807) ................................................. 81
Fig. 2.2 Johannes Lassar’s Matthew (1807) ................................................. 82
Fig. 2.3 Marshman and Lassar’s Mark (1811) ............................................. 83
Fig. 2.4 Marshman and Lassar’s John (1813) .............................................. 84
Fig. 3.1 Robert Morrison’s “Chinese” Lord’s Prayer (1802) ......................... 146
Fig. 3.2 Jean Basset’s John (Biblioteca Casanantense, ~1700) ................. 147
Fig. 3.3 Jean Basset’s Harmony of Gospels (British Library, ~1700) ....... 148
Fig. 3.4 Jean Basset’s Harmony of Gospels (HKU, ~1700) ..................... 149
Fig. 3.5 Robert Morrison’s John (1813) .................................................... 150
Fig. 4.1 Robert Morrison’s Letter to LMS on 21 Jun 1809 ....................... 198
Fig. 4.2 Joshua Marshman’s Letter to LMS on 13 Dec 1816 ................. 199
Fig. 4.3 Marshman and Lassar’s Genesis (1822) ..................................... 200
Fig. 4.4 Robert Morrison’s Genesis (1823) .............................................. 201
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Lastly, I thank the Almighty for His guidance and His keeping. Quoting from Philippians 1:6b:

ο ἐναρξάμενος ἐν ὑμῖν ἐργον ἐπιτελέσει ἄχρι ημέρας Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ·

(“The (One) who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears. – The Message)
DEDICATION

To my wife, Helen, and my children, Ethan and Cadence, who have endured long hours of my absence and working behind the computer, and supported me throughout this long journey.

To the late Professor Dietmar Neufeld, a remarkable scholar, a kind mentor, and a true friend.
1. INTRODUCTION

To few men falls the undivided honour of being the first in any great undertaking. This truth finds ample illustration in the realms of science, of discovery, of religion, and of politics. And to two men falls the distinction of having produced the earliest translations of the Bible into Chinese. One labored in India and the other in Canton.¹

The history of the first Protestant translations of the Bible into Chinese has always been a tale of courage and perseverance, of tremendous successes and achievements under the toughest of conditions and the pressure of time. There is the well-told story of Robert Morrison, Scottish minister and the first Protestant missionary to ever set foot on the soil of China, arriving in Canton by himself in 1807.² Within just seven years he had translated the entire New Testament into Chinese, with only the help of just a few native teachers, a handful of books, and a copy of a Chinese translation of the New Testament


obtained from the British Museum. Morrison’s work in China was so well known and held in such high esteem, that from 1812 to 1824, the British Foreign and Bible Society provided a generous grant of £7,000 to support the translation, printing, and distribution of his translations. Morrison received great personal honors too, was awarded a Doctor of Divinity by the University of Glasgow in 1817, and later received by King George IV and made a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1824. During this period of time Morrison went on to publish a Chinese grammar book in English, a number of other publications, as well as a massive multi-volume Chinese-to-English dictionary – the first of its kind ever completed. It is because of his pioneer status and achievements in translation and

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4 Figure obtained by George Kam Wah Mak, “‘Laissez-faire’ or Active Intervention? The Nature of the British and Foreign Bible Society’s Patronage of the Translation of the Chinese Union Versions”, Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, Series 3, 20, 2 (2010) 169-170 n.12. It is based on the calculation done by Su Ching 蘇精, using the figures listed in the British Foreign and Bible Society (BFBS) annual reports, in Zhongguo Kaimen! Ma Lixun Ji Xianguan Renwu Yenjiu 《中國,開門!馬禮遜及相關人物研究》 (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, 2005) 280. Jost Oliver Zetzsche suggests that the BFBS contributions finally amounted to £7,439, though he did not explain how the amount was reached. Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China: The History of the Union Version or the Culmination of Protestant Missionary Bible Translation in China (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1999), 44 n.103.


6 Morrison’s dictionary is made up of 3 parts – the first, titled Zidian 《字典》 (A Dictionary of the Chinese Language – Part I), is arranged by the 214 Chinese radicals, published in 1815; part II is titled Wuche Yunfu 《五車韵府》 (A Dictionary of the Chinese Language – Part II) and has two volumes, with the first volume being a dictionary arranged in the order of the number of syllables, and volume 2 being a synopsis of different forms of Chinese characters, published in 1822; part III only has the English title A Dictionary of the Chinese Language – Part III, and is a dictionary arranged by the English alphabet, starting with “Abandon” and ending with “Zodiac”, published in 1823. The entire project took 15 years of Morrison’s time in China. See Xian Wu and Liren Zheng, “Robert Morrison and the First Chinese-English Dictionary”, Journal of East Asian Libraries, no.147 (2009) 6.
language studies that Morrison has been widely deemed the “Father of the Protestant Mission in China”, even though he was only responsible for a small number of native converts during his years of service in China. When he died, one editorial lamented: “Morrison, the translator of the Scriptures into Chinese – Morrison, the compiler of the Chinese Dictionary, rendering the acquisition of that difficult language comparatively easy – Morrison, the holy and the wise, is dead!”

During the period when Morrison was working on his biblical translations, a group of Baptist missionaries were also working on their own version of the Chinese Scriptures in the Dutch port of Serampore, Bengal. This team of Baptist translators, often referred to as the Serampore “gentlemen”, were headed by Joshua Marshman and Johannes Lassar, and managed to translate and print the first complete Chinese Bible one

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7 The phrase “father of the Chinese mission” was used by author John Morrison (not Robert Morrison’s son) in John Morrison, The fathers and founders of the London Missionary Society: a jubilee memorial including a sketch of the origin and progress of the institution (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1844) xxxi, however it is unlikely that he had coined the phrase. When the editors of the Christian Examiner sent a letter of condolences to John Robert Morrison (Robert Morrison’s son) ten years earlier on 17 August 1834 after his father’s death, they started the letter by saying “My dear Sir – How shall I tell you that our beloved father – that the father of the Chinese Mission – Dr. Morrison, is no more!” The Christian Examiner and Church of Ireland Magazine for 1835 conducted by Members of the Established Church, New Series vol. IV (Dublin: William Curry, Jun. and Company, 1835) 215.

8 “Few missionaries have encountered the difficulties with which he had to contend, or have needed the self-denial by which he overcame all obstacles. He saw little direct result in the conversion of the Chinese, but he prepared the path for others.” James Sibree, Register of LMS Missionaries, 1763-1923, (London: LMS, 1923) entry 106; Richard Cook, “Overcoming Missions Guilt: Robert Morrison, Liang Fa, and the Opium Wars”, Richard Cook and David Pao (eds.) After Imperialism: Christian Identity in China and the Global Evangelical Movement (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2012) 39.

9 The Christian Examiner and Church of Ireland Magazine for 1835, 214.

10 The origin of this mode of address is unclear, yet it is likely that by the time the British and Foreign Bible Society was established in 1804, it was already customary to address the Baptist missionaries in Serampore the “gentlemen in India”, so much so that the word “gentlemen” came up three times in a single paragraph found in one of the earliest records of the Society, when it discusses the need to “open a correspondence with gentlemen in India, informing them of the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society”, John Owen, The History of the Origin and First Ten Years of the British and Foreign Society. (London: Tilling and Hughes, 1816) 98-99.
year ahead of Morrison and his coworker William Milne, in 1822. We are told that the two groups labored devotedly but mostly independently, and by a great coincidence they managed to finish their Chinese Bibles almost at the same time.\(^\text{11}\) This Baptist version of the Chinese translation, often referred to as the “Marshman/Lassar Bible” or simply the “Marshman Bible”, would however receive a lot less attention in the following years. In many accounts regarding the first Protestant Chinese Bible, the Marshman/Lassar version usually receives no more than a passing mention, even though the tone is usually a polite one.\(^\text{12}\) The situation is consistent with the modern Chinese sources, which tend to give very limited coverage to and downplay the significance of the Marshman/Lassar version, especially when comparing it to Morrison’s.\(^\text{13}\) For example, Tang Qing writes in his history of the Chinese Christian churches that:\(^\text{14}\)

As for the Chinese bible translated by Indian missionary Joshua Marshman, although it was published in India in 1822 and was presented to the British and Foreign Bible Society a year ahead of Morrison’s, his manuscripts were only completed in 1822, while

\(^\text{11}\) *The Quarterly Review*, vol. 180 (London: John Murray, 1895) 309.

\(^\text{12}\) For example in one issue of *The Quarterly Review* the works and contributions of Robert Morrison were greatly esteemed in two full pages, but the mention of Marshman and Lassar was limited to just one short sentence. *The Quarterly Review*, vol. 180, 309-10.

\(^\text{13}\) The whole episode of the Serampore Chinese mission was ignored in works such as Lin Chi-Ping 林治平 (ed.), *Jidujiao Ruhua Baiqishinian Jinianji 《基督教入華百七十年紀念集》* (A Memorial Volume celebrating the 170th anniversary of Christianity entering China) (Taiwan: Cosmic Care, 1984), 6-11. An exception is Raymond Chiu Wai Boon, *Yijing Suyuan – Xiandai Wuda Zhongwen Shengjing Fanyi Shi 《譯經溯源—現代五大中文聖經翻譯史》* (*Tracing Bible Translation: A History of the Translation of Five Modern Chinese Versions of the Bible*) (Hong Kong: China Graduate School of Theology, 1993) 17-18, even though the section on Marshman/Lassar is still very brief. It has been considerably expanded in another volume by the same author: *Jiazong Chongxun – Yijing Xianfeng Liezhuan 《佳蹤重尋：譯經先鋒列傳》* (*A Beautiful Legacy: The Pioneers of Chinese Bible Translation*) (Singapore: Singapore Bible College, 2007) 40-57.

\(^\text{14}\) Christopher Tang 湯清, *Zhongguo Jiaohui Baibian Shi 《中國教會百年史》* (A hundred-year history of the Chinese Church) (Hong Kong, 1990) 94.
Morrison’s were ready as early as 1819. Also, Morrison’s translation was more superior.

To Tang, both the time of completion and the quality of the translation are to justify why Morrison’s version should receive better recognition. However, neither of the references Tang provides really support his claim that the Marshman/Lassar version was a far inferior copy.\(^\text{15}\) On the other hand, if we truly consider the first team to complete the translation of the entire Chinese Bible, the honor must go to the Serampore Baptists, although Morrison was the first to complete the translation of the New Testament portion. If we think about the very first Protestant attempt of translating one biblical book, Morrison was in fact a few years behind his Baptist counterpart too – it was Johannes Lassar, who had translated the Gospel of Matthew in 1807 in Serampore. The team of Marshman and Lassar ended up finishing 3 books before Morrison completed just his first book, the Gospel of Luke, in 1811.\(^\text{16}\) When it comes to the Protestant writings on the Chinese language and grammar, Morrison is very well-known and highly regarded for his massive \textit{A Grammar of the Chinese Language}, but again it was Joshua Marshman who completed a grammar first, publishing his \textit{Clavis Sinica} in 1814, a year before Morrison

\(^{15}\) Two primary sources that Tang uses to support his conclusion come from Marshall Broomhall and Alexander Wylie. Wylie’s comments were much more flattering than critical, saying “By (Lassar’s and Marshman’s) joint labours, and competent native Chinese assistance, the whole Bible was brought to a conclusion in 1820, and printed at Serampore, by 1822. This, which was the first known entire printed version of the Scriptures in Chinese, was a remarkable monument of perseverance and untiring zeal, and must rank as not the least inconspicuous among the multifarious labours of the devoted and self-denying Marshman; sixteen years having been spent in its production. The version as might be expected is rude, and to a degree unidiomatic, as most first versions in the oriental languages necessarily are.” Alexander Wylie, “The Bible in China (1868)”, in \textit{Chinese Researches} (Shanghai, 1897), 97-98.

\(^{16}\) Morrison in fact published a translation of the Acts of the Apostles in 1810, but it was just a transcribed copy of the Acts he had obtained from the British Museum – a work done by Jesuit priest Jean Basset more than a century before. See Chapter 3 for details.
published the first part of his dictionary. This work of Marshman’s was actually the one that William Milne, future mission and translation partner of Morrison, used for improving his Chinese, when he was en route to China in 1812. So Marshman’s *Clavis Sinica* has to be considered a useful work for foreign learners of Chinese in the early years of the Protestant China Mission. As a whole, the time of completion should add merits to the works of Marshman and Lassar when compared to Morrison’s, not diminish it.

Another commonly cited reason for the overshadowing of the achievements of the Serampore team has been the high quality of Morrison’s translations, especially when compared to that of Marshman and Lassar. Far removed in the late 19th century, a reviewer complained that the Marshman/Lassar version suffered from “the defect of excessive literalness, a restricted range of diction, limited knowledge of the grammatical principle of Chinese, and the poverty of the Chinese tongue of that time to represent Christian ideas”, while the Morrison/Milne version was superior because of the “larger command of the services of Native scholars.” However, there were some who held very different views, mainly from the Baptist side, and others who found Morrison’s copy

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18 “After the publication of the two translations, most believe that Morrison’s translation is more fluent, and Marshman’s suffers from “a lack of vocabulary and a tendency to be too literary, only going for textual accuracy.” Raymond Chiu Wai Boon, *Yijing Sayuan – Xiandai Wuda Zhongwen Shengjing Fanyi Shi* (*Tracing Bible Translation: A History of the Translation of Five Modern Chinese Versions of the Bible*), 18, quoting from Xu Mu Shi, “A Brief History of the Translation of the Chinese Bible”, *Jingfeng* 《景風》, 69 (1982), 36n4. The impression seems to echo that of John Wherry (see later).


20 Such as George Winfred Hervey: “Dr. Marshman was known and respected as a Chinese scholar before Dr. Morrison had acquired any reputation in that regard. As early as 1816, Dr. Owen, the Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, reminded the latter of the importance of employing
not much more superior after all.\textsuperscript{21} Not all critics of Morrison’s work came from the Baptist circle either, as W. A. P. Martin, Presbyterian missionary and translator, would quite harshly describe the Morrison translation as “rude in style and untrue to the sacred text, the work of a worthy man, but little acquainted with the original tongues.”\textsuperscript{22} Perhaps the strongest evidence that the Morrison version was still very much a work in progress comes from Morrison’s own actions: even before the Morrison/Milne Bible was ready for the press, he was already contemplating a revision of what he had done.\textsuperscript{23} And within a mere decade after the publication of this Bible, Morrison himself twice decided to revise the works in 1827 and 1832, and he would remain the strongest advocate for a new and more substantially revised version throughout the 1830s.\textsuperscript{24} The situation was not lost on his sectarian critics either. George Winfred Hervey, a Baptist author who wrote a few decades after the death of Morrison, would portray a much more cynical picture of Morrison’s “achievement” in a speedy completion of the Chinese Bible: \textsuperscript{25}

\begin{quote}
It is curious to observe how the Christian public have been deceived by the ignorance in which they have been kept concerning the difference
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{21} John Wherry mentions that the Marshman’s version suffered from being “crude” in style, with too much “literalism” and having a “narrowness of range” in vocabulary. But he also marvels at how much “good current Chinese” it has, and most importantly remarks that in comparison with Marshman’s, Morrison’s “does not reveal a great superiority.” “Historical Summary of the Different Versions of the Scriptures”, Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China held at Shanghai, May 7-20, 1890 (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1890) 48, 50.

\textsuperscript{22} Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 44.

\textsuperscript{23} Morrison’s letter to LMS on 11 Oct 1821 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 2).

\textsuperscript{24} Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 44.

\textsuperscript{25} George Winfred Hervey, The Story of Baptist Missions in Foreign Lands, 501.
between making a hurried end of a manuscript of the Bible, which afterwards required years of toil in revision before it was tolerably fit for the press (although this never was in any sense fit), and the printing of such manuscript.

Further criticism of Morrison’s Bible was its translation approach, which according to modern translation theories, would be considered a highly literal and “foreignized” attempt.\(^\text{26}\) The translation was so full of foreign terms unknown to the Chinese, that many native speakers found the reading very awkward. A Baptist report allegedly quoted a number of higher-profile native users of the Bible, complaining that the work was “unintelligible to a Chinese”, even to the point of being “distasteful to the Chinese”\(^\text{27}\). Equally telling is the statement of John Wherry, when he gave his overall assessment of the various early versions of the Chinese Bible at the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China in 1890. Even though he had his criticisms for the Marshman/Lassar Bible, he still marveled “how much of the actual contents of the book is good current Chinese, and what a large proportion of it appears, \textit{ipsissimis verbis}, in subsequent translations”. More importantly for this study is that when he compared

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{26} Lawrence Venuti, \textit{The Translator’s Invisibility: A history of translation}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 14-16.

\textsuperscript{27} “\textit{Leang Afāh (Liang A-fa)}, a Chinese evangelist, says, it is ‘far from being idiomatic—the translator has sometimes used too many characters, and the sense is obscure from its inverted and unusual phrases.’ This Chinese scholar attempted to correct some of these faults. \textit{Lew Tse Chuen}, a Chinese literary graduate and Christian convert, says, ‘it has a number of redundancies and tautologies which render the meaning obscure—this unfinished style renders it distasteful to the Chinese.’ This scholar also tried to correct these faults, but was unsuccessful. He thinks the best way would be to make a paraphrase in an easy style, which, when understood, would facilitate the comprehension of the version itself. \textit{Choo Tih Lang}, a Chinese transcriber, says, 'It is exceedingly verbose, containing much foreign phraseology, unintelligible to a Chinese.’” Edward Bean Underhill, \textit{The Baptist Record and Biblical Repository}, vol. 2 (London: Aylott and Jones, 1845) 327.
\end{footnotesize}
Morrison’s to Marshman’s, he found that it “does not reveal a great superiority, though it was more generally adopted and more widely circulated.”

If Morrison did not seem to have a significant edge over the Serampore team when it came to being the very first, or being much better in terms of the quality of his translation, how did he come to be so revered and respected, and regularly identified as the undisputed father of the China Mission? If it is true that the Serampore gentlemen were as active and productive as Morrison in the earliest stage of Protestant translation of the Bible into Chinese, what factors eventually led to Morrison’s works being a lot more widely accepted and recognized, while the efforts of Marshman and Lassar are barely mentioned and were readily ignored by the latter generations? As the reputation of Morrison and his bible translation grew in the decades following its publication, the hard work of Marshman and Lassar was quickly forgotten, so that by 1876, just 50 years after its publication, Alexander Wylie was already calling a copy of it “a rarity”.

About a decade later at the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China, John Wherry would recall the difficulty of securing just one copy of the Marshman Bible, and

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29 Lassar, especially, is almost forgotten nowadays. Researchers of the work of these earliest Protestant translators are mindful of a translation of Matthew completed in 1807, but no research has been done in examining the content of this first translated book of the Bible by a Protestant translator, and Lassar certainly hasn’t been regarded as a founder or pioneer of any sort, unlike the greatly esteemed Dr. Robert Morrison. As far as this author is aware, this research is the first-ever English work that tries to examine the text and translation merits of Lassar’s 1807 Matthew, which has languished in a library in England for more than 200 years.

he was only able to find one through a personal friend, who happened to be examining a personal collection of Elijah Coleman Bridgman.31

The problem lies in our inadequate understanding of the role of the Protestant Chinese translators in the early 19th century, and in relying too much on the textual and linguistic issues in focus - what is often missing in the narrative of the first Chinese Bibles is an appreciation of the much bigger picture of religious and social networks within which these missionaries operated. Early Protestant translators like Morrison and Marshman were never just translators and language workers - they were also missionaries who belonged to different mission societies (in their case the London Mission Society and the Baptist Mission Society respectively); members of different Protestant denominations (Morrison a Presbyterian and Marshman a Baptist); subjects under different jurisdictions (Morrison a foreign worker residing in Canton, and Marshman a member of the Serampore Mission under the jurisdictional protection of first the Dutch government and then the British Indian government); recipients of grants and assistance from various patrons of Bible translations, such as the British Foreign and Bible Society and the American Bible Society; and Morrison was also an employee of the East India Company. As a part of this complicated network of people and organizations, the early Protestant translators would rely on far more than just language skills to complete their translations. Also important were their abilities to navigate through this complex array of

31 “It is now antiquated, and has long since ceased to be printed. Copies are found in museums, collections of old Bibles, and in the older mission libraries of China; but few of the present generation of missionaries have had the opportunity of seeing, much less of critically examining, a copy.” John Wherry, Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China held at Shanghai, May 7-20, 1890, 48. Elijah Bridgman was, of course, a learned Chinese translator himself, and a pioneering American missionary in China, see Eliza J. Gillet Bridgman, The Life and Labors of Elijah Coleman Bridgman – The Pioneer of American Missions in China (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1864) 132-133.
social structures, as well as being effective in their other social roles. As a result, social factors such as patronage and support, society and individual rivalries, government policies, reputation and fame, all played a role in determining how a translator must operate in order to become effective, and in affecting the reception and evaluation of his/her works and achievements.

The current work will seek to examine three areas that have not received adequate treatment by researchers: 1) To better understand the complicated bible translation process and stages of Robert Morrison from a historical and socio-cultural critical perspective, and examine critically the translation decisions he made as a response to the social and religious contexts he found himself engaged in. It is hoped that the “hagiographical” elements of the story of Robert Morrison can largely be avoided, and a clearer picture of the first Protestant missionary in China can emerge, providing us with a more intimate portrayal of Morrison as a relentless learner, writer, promoter, and competitor, as he moved through his multiple roles as a translator, a missionary, a printer, as well as an educator. 2) The Chinese Bible translation tradition of the Serampore Baptists has simply not received any in-depth treatment. Misinformation about their works continues to get circulated, and even a number of accounts have the Baptists’

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32 Christopher Daily believes that the two-volume memoirs of Robert Morrison produced by his widow Eliza, reads like a hagiography that seeks to glorify his labours and missions and to protect his reputation. Though he agrees that Eliza never set out to produce an objective biographical account, her Memoirs “served as the foundation for a series of hagiographical studies … (that) also idolized Morrison’s life and mission. Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013) 1.

33 For instance, there has been a story that Lassar had completed both Genesis and Matthew by 1804, but no evidence has ever been found to support the claim (Zhao Xiao Yang 趙曉陽, “Erma Shengjing Yiben Yu Bairisheng Shengjing Yiben Guanxi Kaobian” 二馬聖經譯本與白日升聖經譯本關係考辨 (An investigation of the relationship between Jean Basset’s translation and the translations of Robert Morrison and Joshua Marshman), Jindaishi Yanjiu 《近代史研究》 4 (2009) 41). This study argues
translations mentioned, yet only to serve as an introduction or a reference to the mention of Morrison’s works.\textsuperscript{34} This study finds the Serampore tradition valuable in providing a window into one of the earliest Protestant approaches to Chinese Bible translation, one that was apparently free from the influence of the earlier Catholic versions.\textsuperscript{35} A better understanding of the translation activities in Serampore is essential for a critical evaluation of the bigger contextual picture that was affecting the early Protestant translators. 3) The analysis of why Robert Morrison’s Bible enjoyed far greater recognition and circulation than the Marshman/Lassar version has been insufficient, often too presumptuous. By exploring the notions of patronage, rivalry and denominational politics, this study argues that the vastly different historical trajectories of the two earliest Chinese Bibles were a result of the complexities associated with the various expectations bestowed upon the early Protestant translators, among which linguistic merits were just a small part.

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\textsuperscript{34} One can argue that even with Morrison, there are many aspects of him that have not been thoroughly studied - “Morrison is not the only important missionary whose work remains unexploited by contemporary sinologists. William Milne (1785-1822), Morrison’s first LMS colleague in East Asia, also fares poorly in contemporary sinological discourse.” Christopher Daily, \textit{Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China}, 1.

\textsuperscript{35} Given that Lassar grew up in Macao (see Chapter 2), it is reasonable to suspect that his translation might be influenced to some extent by the Catholic tradition, after all some of the Chinese religious terms used by the Catholics (e.g. “Jesus”, “Peter”, “John”) had been quite consistent for two centuries, since the time of Matteo Ricci and Emmanuel Diaz. This author has compared 40 common terms from the New Testament that had appeared in the early Catholic writings, and found that although most of them underwent little change since the earliest days of the Jesuit mission in China, only one of them were used by Lassar in his translation (the only exception was “God”, which Lassar also used \textit{Tianzhu 天主}). It shows that either Lassar was not very familiar with the Catholic terminology, or tried not to use it in his translation (forthcoming article by this author: “The Roman Connection – Catholic Influence on the Chinese Bible”).
1.1 TRANSLATION TRADITIONS IN CHINA

In *Translating Others*, Theo Hermans summarizes how the Western study of translation is limited by its particular concepts of language and culture, and an association with canonical texts, giving rise to its “preoccupation with identity and preservation, its pervasive metaphors of transport and transference and its assumption of discrete, bounded entities, whether linguistic, social, political, historical or disciplinary”.  

Concerned that such a narrow focus is inadequate for dealing with the complexities and inequities of our postmodern, postcolonial, and globalizing world, scholars have worked to expand translation studies to the global scale, using non-Western models to develop theories and methodologies. More and more, researchers are making conscious efforts to embrace the translation traditions of non-Western cultures.

Two of these traditions that have drawn considerable scholarly attention in the recent years are those of the Chinese and of the Arab world. In order to better understand the translation history in China, most scholars follow what Eva Hung and David Pollard identify as the four major “waves” of translation activities in China – 1) The translation of Buddhist sutras from Sanskrit to Chinese, which can be further divided into three

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37 Jeremy Munday recounts the fact that there had been a “very strong tendency” for scholars of translation studies to focus on the western European writings in the past, while many similar studies on non-western cultures are simply not unavailable in English. Yet, the situation has begun to change since the outset of the 21st century, with an “ever-growing list of publications addressing the wider geographical framework”, *Introducing Translation Studies – Theories and Applications*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2012) 29.

phases, spreading over a period of almost ten centuries (from 148 – 1100 CE); 2) The translation of Western works, mostly scientific and technological in topic, by the Jesuits into Chinese from around mid-16th century to late-17th century; 3) The translation of Western and Japanese works by Chinese intellectuals and reformists like Lin Shu, Yan Fu, and Lu Xun at the end of the 19th century; 4) The politically oriented translation of Soviet literature into Chinese, and later the translation of Chinese works (such as Mao’s) into other languages during the mid-20th century.  

A major problem of this understanding of the Chinese translation history is a tendency to ignore the vigorous translation activities and ambitious approaches carried out by the early Protestant, starting with Robert Morrison and the Serampore Baptists translators in around 1810-11, to the early 20th century. John K Fairbank has remarked that, “In China’s nineteenth-century relations with the West, Protestant missionaries are still the least studied but most significant actors in the scene.” Although Hung and

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39 An example of the influence of Hung’s and Pollard’s categorization can be seen in a recent article by Luo Xuanmin and Lei Hong, who concur that “it is generally accepted that there were four major, successive stages of translation activity in China”, even though Luo does not specially quote Hung and Pollard and defines the final phase slightly differently, “Translation Theory and Practice in China”, Perspectives: Studies in Translatology, 12:1 (2010) 20-23. In a similar but more subtle way, when Leo Chan argues that traditionally “Chinese translation theorists are prone to vague, impressionistic assertions concerning translations”, he traces the same first three stages of historical Chinese translation development (“That is the case with the early Buddhist translator-theorists working in the second to the tenth centuries, with the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Christian converts who translated religious and scientific writings from the West, and even with the early twentieth-century theorist Yan Fu (1854-1921)”), and totally skips the period of the Protestant missionary translation activities. (“The traditional approach: Impressionistic theories”, in Leo Tak-Hung Chan, “The traditional approach: Impressionistic theories” in Twentieth-Century Chinese Translation Theory – Modes, Issues, and Debates (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004), 3). Wang Keifei and Fan Shouyi also adopt an almost identical division method, “Translation in China: A motivating force”, Meta 44(1), 1999, 7-26.

Pollard have managed to mention in one paragraph the active engagement of Protestant mission bodies in translating technical and scientific works during the 19th century, they quickly dismiss their importance by commenting that the Chinese linguist Ma Jianzhong found these works mostly “unreadable or unintelligible”.41 Similarly, in Eva Hung’s discussion of various cultural “borderlands” throughout the history of translation in China, despite her identification of the 19th-century Shanghai as one of the three most important borderlands for translators and their activities, she readily limits her discussion of the Western missionaries – by trying to focus on the work and contribution of their Chinese counterparts. Though Hung is not incorrect in attributing Shanghai’s success to “the simultaneous existence of two cultural and administrative systems (that) was complemented by the tradition of Chinese as well as Western learning”, and that her work does respond to the problematic trend of Western missionaries in China keeping silent or quiet about the help and contribution of their Chinese helpers,42 her emphasis means that the important role played by the Protestant missionary translators is readily sidelined.43


43 A good example can be seen when Hung first mentions Walter Henry Medhurst; her focus quickly turns to the great number of Chinese assistants being able to work with the Western missionaries, without going into any details about the actual translational activities of these foreign translators: “The first establishment for translation work in Shanghai, the London Mission Society Press, was founded by Walter Henry Medhurst (1796–1857) in 1844. While the conception and the structure of the Press were European, its personnel included a significant number of Chinese assistants who worked with the missionaries. They were the first generation of 19th-century Chinese to come into direct contact with
Not only are the missionary translators readi\textsuperscript{44}ly ignored by modern researchers, even when they are acknowledged, the focus is usually on their contributions in classical literature, scientific and technological translation, while their efforts in translating religious and literary materials hardly break a ripple in the discussion. For example, even though Wang Kefei and Fan Shouyi modify Hung’s and Pollard’s “four waves” categorization and date the beginning of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} wave earlier to the 1840s, their emphasis is on the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842 and the subsequent transferal of Western scientific knowledge, while ignoring the body of religious translation carried out by the first generation of Protestant missionary translators.\textsuperscript{45} A slightly more inclusive treatment is provided by Xiong Yuezhi, which includes some information regarding the early translation and publication activities spearheaded by the missionaries, and additional names such as William Milne, Karl Gützlaff, and Walter Medhurst. Unfortunately Xiong’s emphasis is on Chinese familiarity with the West, so his focus is on the spread of western learning at that time, so once again the translation of religious materials is ignored, and matters regarding translation methods and approaches are also

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\textsuperscript{44}This study will refer to the Protestant missionary translators as simply “missionary translators” at times, even though the Jesuits were also missionaries in their own right. “Jesuit” or “Jesuits” will always be used when referring to the latter group.

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Among the modern authors, only Li Xia extends the third stage of translation development (which he also names “Western Learning”) to cover the entire period 1811-1911, and adds in a few lines discussing Robert Morrison, the London Missionary Society, as well as the translation activities that took place from 1811-1842. Still, the coverage is far from extensive, and the emphasis is also on the transferal of Western knowledge of science and technology, and on Chinese translators like Yan Fu and Lin Shu. In comparison to the Jesuits’ experience in China two centuries earlier, Li finds the impact of the Christian missionaries “negligible”. Worth mentioning is the more recent work by John T. P. Lai. By examining the translation of Christian tracts from English to Chinese since the Second Opium War, Lai’s work has contributed a lot in our understanding of strategies used by the Protestant missionaries in indigenizing Christianity in the Chinese cultural contexts. The study is a welcoming addition to the topic of the activities and significance of 19th century Protestant missionary translators, yet John Fairbank’s remark noted earlier still stands, as much more works need to be done in order to understand this whole period better, especially when it comes to the first half of the 19th century.

So why should this episode of translation activities in the history of China be so important as to merit much attention? And what is the problem of focusing on just the

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46 “(The missionaries) set up printing presses and published books and journals. By 1842 these titles numbered 138, out of which thirty-two were dedicated to the introduction of world history, geography, politics, economics, etc. They published the two earliest Chinese periodicals, which purveyed a lot of information about Western social systems, customs and practices.” Xiong Yuezhi, “Degrees of Familiarity with the West in Late Qing Society” in David Pollard (ed.) Translation and Creation (Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing, 1998) 27.

47 Li Xia, “Cultural and Historical Perspectives on Translation in China” in Luo Xuanmin and He Yuanjian (eds.), Translating China, 21, 27.

second half of the period from 1811-1911, when the opening of trading ports in China truly led to the proliferation of Western materials being translated into Chinese? After all, as Li Xia states, the translation done by the missionaries in the early half of the 19th century was mostly just religious texts and occasionally some Chinese classics. 49 What can an in-depth study of the translation works of the early Protestant missionaries offer us, aside from a deeper understanding of the exchange of religious ideas? There are two major reasons why the missionaries and their translation practices are not just religiously important, but offer a brilliant case study for some of our more recent translation theories and discussions: 1) First of all, over a period of roughly 100 years (1810-1919), 50 a few generations of missionaries 51 had individually or collaboratively translated and published no less than 20 major versions of the Christian Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) and/or the New Testament. These frequent and repeated efforts to come up with a desirable Chinese

49 Li Xia, “Cultural and Historical Perspectives on Translation in China” in Luo Xuanmin and He Yuanjian (eds.), Translating China, 27.

50 The period extends from Joshua Marshman (with the help of Lassar) completing his first two New Testament books (Matthew and Mark) in 1810, to the completion of the Wenli edition of the Union Version in 1919. Marshman’s first translations would undergo tremendous editing later, but still predated Morrison’s first completed translation, the Acts of the Apostles, by a year. On the other hand, although scanty Bible translation activities did continue after the completion of the Union Version, the frequency and urgency were dwarfed in comparison to the time before the conclusion of the 30-year long Union Version projects - “After the publication of the Union Version, Chinese Bible translation activities moved from busy to quiet. From 1919 to 1968, no new versions of the entire New and Old Testaments had been published.” Chong, Yau-yuk 莊柔玉, Jidujiao Shengjing Zhongwen Yiben Quanwei Xianxiang Yanjiu 《基督教聖經中文譯本權威現象研究》(A Study of the Phenomenon of Authoritativeness in the Chinese Translations of the Protestant Bible) (Hong Kong: International Bible Society, 2000) 15.

51 Roughly speaking, we can have Robert Morrison, Joshua Marshman, William Milne and Joannes Lassar for the 1st generation; Walter Henry Medhurst, Karl Friedrich Gützlaff, Elijah Coleman Bridgeman, Josiah Goddard for the 2nd; for the 3rd generation we have William Chalmers Burns, Samuel Schereschewsky, Griffith John and Ernst Faber; and finally for the 4th generation: Calvin Mateer, John Wherry, John Chalmers, G.E. Moule and Chauncey Goodrich. Jost Oliver Zetzsche also refers to the same first two generations of Protestant missionaries, but prefers grouping the latter two together, because later Bible translations were mostly collaborative efforts carried out by a committee. See Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 5-11.
translation of the Christian Bible were exceptional and highly motivated, especially when we consider that even though Matteo Ricci and the Jesuits had arrived in China by the end of 16th century and many were highly capable linguists and translators, only two translations of the Bible were attempted by Jean Basset (just after 1770) and Louis de Poirot (in around 1880), both incomplete. A full Chinese translation of the Catholic Bible would not be available until 1968.\textsuperscript{52} In contrast, the tremendous energy and effort the Protestant missionary translators put into the Bible translation projects were still very substantial. The century-long project of repeated attempts to translate the same collection of books witnessed the use of a number of different translation approaches, including domesticated, foreignized, vernacular, and dialectical, providing us with an excellent case study for examining how translation practices were constantly affected and driven by different theological, ecclesiastical, political, social and cultural factors. This period of early Bible translation attempts by the Christian missionaries provides us with an excellent case study of the social and cultural impact of bible translations in China.

2) Secondly, the missionaries operated at a time when China was finally interacting with the West, whether willingly or unwilling, and not only in terms of technology and religious thought, but also in foreign thinking and literature. Throughout its long history China had been humbled by foreign invaders a number of times, with “barbarians” conquering parts (e.g. during the Wu Hu Period, the period of the five Hu tribes) or even the whole of the “Middle Kingdom” (e.g. during the Yuan and Qing

\textsuperscript{52} In 1968, the first complete Catholic Translation of the Chinese Bible was published in Hong Kong. See Arnulf Camps, “Father Gabrielle M. Allegra, O.F.M. (1907-1976) and the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum and the First Complete Chinese Catholic Translation of the Bible” in Irene Eber, Szekar Wan, and Knut Wale (eds.), \textit{Bible in Modern China} (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta, 1999) 55-76.
dynasties). But despite the military setbacks, the Chinese had never felt culturally inferior to these foreign nomadic tribes; on the contrary, the Hu and Manchu invaders would often find themselves fascinated by the cultural sophistication of their Han subjects, and most of them eventually ended up becoming Sinicized.53 One such climax came when Emperor Wen Di of Northern Wei started banning the wearing of his own Xianbei traditional clothes and the use of the northern non-Han languages in court, even changing his own royal family surname from Toba to Yuan! The era of translation and transmission of Buddhist literature (associated with the first wave mentioned earlier) coincided with this Wu Hu Period,54 and this type of Sinophilic attitude had a big impact on the translation approaches and theories of the time. For example Daoan (314-385 C.E.), one of the most important early Chinese translation theorists who was working at the court of one of the Hu kingdoms (Qianqin), famously articulated the 5 shiben (loss of the original) and 3 buyi (difficulties) in translating Buddhist texts.55 A closer examination

53 Eva Hung, “Cultural borderlands in China’s translation history”, in Eva Hung (ed.), Translation and Cultural Change, 48. The most remarkable example was with Emperor Wen Di of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534 C.E.), who descended from a line of Xianbei (one of the five Hu tribes) nomads, the Toba, inhabiting what is now northern China and Inner Mongolia. After pushing into China and uniting the northern territories, the Xianbei conquerers, were so impressed by the Han culture, that they began to undergo a gradual process of Sinicizing by adopting Han clothing, language, and customs. See Suzanne Valenstein, Cultural Convergence in the Northern Qi Period: A Flamboyant Chinese Ceramic Container (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007), 75.

54 Hung and Pollard further divide the first “wave” into three stages: 1) From Eastern Han to the Three Kingdoms period (148-265 CE) – mostly word-for-word translation with an emphasis on adhering closely to the source texts. 2) From Jin to the Northern and Southern Dynasties (265-589 CE) - a shift to a more yi(yi) (paraphrase) method of translation, and the translations were more polished (pioneered by Kumarajiva). 3) Sui to Northern Song (589-1100 CE) – dominated by Yuan Zang, who emphasized paying greater attention to the style of the source texts, reframing and applying literary polish on plain and simple texts, and setting down rules for transliteration. Hung and Pollard, “Chinese Tradition”, Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies, 368.

55 The five losses are: 1) The word order of Sanskrit is different, and when translating into Chinese the word order has to be reversed. Hence the first loss (of word order); 2) The emphasis of the sutras is to express the meaning, so the writing style is plain and direct, while the Chinese style of writing
into his translation theories will reveal that three of the five shiben had to do with transforming the original Sanskrit texts into something more elegant and acceptable to their Chinese audience, revealing a case of an asymmetrical power pair – one between the hegemonic Chinese target culture, and the Sanskrit source culture.

Similarly, when the Jesuits began to arrive China from Europe during the Ming Dynasty, what they faced was a nation proud of their culture and learning, and confident in their wealth and might. Originally the Jesuits shaved their heads and appeared as Buddhist monks, but after Matteo Ricci had became head of the China mission in 1597 and began to gain a reputation among Chinese intellectuals as a scholar with great knowledge, he was soon advised (by his learned Chinese friends) that Buddhism was no longer held in high esteem in China, and the lifestyle and ignorance of the monks were widely despised by the Confucian literati. From then on the Jesuits would appear as Confucian scholars and worked solely among the educated Chinese, adopting what is later called the “Ricci Method”, a “cultural accommodation” approach with regard to this powerful upper class of Chinese. His Treatise on Relationships was written with the specific aim to impress the Confucian scholars with his comprehension and admiration of

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emphasizes elegance. Hence a translation that emphasizes style and aims to please the Chinese audience will suffer the second source of loss (of writing style); 3) The sutras are very detailed, and not shy about using exclamations and repeating their teachings, even 3 or 4 times. The Chinese texts usually cut them down, causing the third loss (of repetitive wording); 4) The original sutras include commentaries, and removing 1000 or 500 (words?) will make little difference (to the original meaning?) – hence the fourth loss (impllying that the commentaries are deleted) (of commentaries); 5) After discussing a subject, the sutras would often discuss it again using another approach. By streamlining the argument, the Chinese texts suffer the fifth loss (of repetitive arguments). The 3 difficulties are: 1) To make the ancient texts appealing to the “modern” readers (a time concern). 2) The profound knowledge of the saintly teachings cannot be easily expressed and passed onto the commoners. (a readership concern). 3) Sutras are an accumulation of saintly knowledge over a thousand years, and cannot easily be translated by the commoner translator (a translation concern). A summary of these concepts is also provided in Jeremy Munday, Introducing Translation Studies – Theories and Applications, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2012) 32.
the concept of the five human relationships (*wulun*), held highly in Confucius’ thoughts, and it helped him win many friends in Nanjing and convinced the Chinese intellectuals that not all Europeans were “barbarians” after all. Ricci’s translation approach would follow a similar “accommodating” tactic (or using Schleiermacher’s terminology, a Confucian-style “domesticated” approach) – to introduce Western and Christian concepts using terms that were familiar, or at least not unsophisticated or offensive to the ears of the Confucian literati. These domesticated Chinese terms gave Catholicism a ring of familiarity to the educated Chinese audience, but also carried with them pre-existing imagery and ideas embedded in the Chinese classical works. Hence not long after Ricci’s death there was a huge debate among the second-generation of Jesuit translators regarding the “question of terms”, with critics of Ricci questioning his decisions in sanctioning such “loaded” Chinese translation terminology. Although some modern authors argue that Ricci had adapted the Chinese Confucian terms with a hidden agenda.

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57 The debate was so fierce that it even led to a fatality – Nicolas Trigault (金尼閣, author of *Xiru Ermu Zi* 西儒耳目資 ("An Aid to the Eyes and Ears of the Western Literati")) committed suicide in 1628 as he suffered from a depression triggered by his guilt over failing to defend the use of *Shangdi* among the Jesuits. See Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East – The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) 87.

58 A familiar debate would erupt among missionary translators in the mid-19th century over the translation of the term “God”, with the British missionaries preferred “Shangdi” (the Ricci approach), while the American missionaries preferring “Shen” – a less culturally loaded term. The dispute would lead to the breakup of the two groups of translators during the making of the *Delegates Version*, and was only partially resolved by a compromise they reached during the completion of the *Union Version*. The Term Question is a major topic that warrants a completely separate study, but for a brief account of the controversy from the time of Ricci to that of the Protestant missionary translators, see Sung-Deuk Oak, “Competing Chinese Names for God: The Chinese Term Question and Its Influence upon Korea”, *Journal of Korean Religions*, 3(2), 2012, 89-115.
to reinterpret them and to transform the Chinese culture,\textsuperscript{59} it is obvious that no matter what his ultimate intentions were, his approach was dictated by the presence of a strong Confucian intellectual culture, which was less than willing or ready to embrace other cultures that were foreign, and presumably inferior, if not far inferior to them.

Hence, the Protestant missionaries were the first major group of translators of foreign texts in China who got to operate during a time when Chinese esteem was beginning to take a serious beating, and when Chinese intellectuals were having real doubts not just about the country’s military and technological might, but also their cultural superiority over foreigners. For the first time in the history of major translational activities in China, the asymmetrical relationship of cultural dominance (even if just a conceptual one held by the Chinese intellectuals) had been balanced out, if not reversed.

With such polity reality in China, the impact of the early Protestant translators on the social structure, languages, and cultural fabric of China should be a very interesting field.

1.2 RECENT TRENDS IN BIBLE TRANSLATION STUDIES

“(Translation) is never innocent. There is always a context in which the translation takes place, always a history from which a text emerges and into which a text is transposed,” wrote Susan Bassnet and André Lefevere.\textsuperscript{60} Ever since poststructuralist criticisms were applied to translation studies in the late 1980s, the focus on translation


\textsuperscript{60} André Lefevere and Susan Bassnet, “Proust’s Grandmother and the Thousand the One Nights”, in Bassnett, Susan and Lefevere, André, \textit{Translation, History and Culture} (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990) 11.
theories has greatly expanded from being the mere transferal of words and sentences in the syntactic and semantic sense, to the effect of cultural communication, interaction, and manipulation. This broadened understanding of translation and its role in shaping cultures was initially summarized up in the 1985 anthology *The Manipulation of Literature*. The writers argue against the traditional perception of viewing translation as secondary (“second-hand”) or even inferior (“second-rate”), but opts to regard translation as a member within a “polysystem” of literature, always struggling for domination, characterized by a continual state of flux and shifts:

In a given literature, translations may at certain times constitute a separate subsystem, with its own characteristics and models, or be more or less fully integrated into the indigenous system, they may form part of the system’s prestigious centre or remain a peripheral phenomenon; they may be used as ‘primary’ polemical weapons to challenge the dominant poetics, or they may shore up and reinforce the prevailing conventions. From the point of view of the target literature, all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose.

The articles demonstrate that translations, far from being secondary and derivative, were often one of the primary literary tools used by social institutions such as governments, schools, and religious bodies, to manipulate a target society, in order to construct a certain kind of desirable culture. It is upon this subversive understanding of the authoritative relationship between source and target literature that Susan Bassnet and

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61 The book features a number of prominent translation theorists including Theo Hermans, André Lefevere, Susan Bassnet, and Maria Tymoczko.

André Lefevere proposed the need to understand translation as a form of “rewriting”, rather than a strict representation of the original materials, with the traditional attachment to “faithfulness” critically reexamined. To these authors, “the target text functions in the target culture the way the source text functioned in the source culture”. Hence, culture has succeeded over word or sentence, and become the “operational unit” of translation. In other words, with the old system of evaluating translations as “good” and “bad”, “faithful” and “unfaithful” going out of favor, the emphasis has shifted to the functional effectiveness of a translation in its targeted context, as compared to that of the source text in its original context. Hence, bilingualism is not the only thing that is required of a translator, but more importantly, biculturalism.

This expanded view of understanding and studying translation practices gave rise to what we now call the “Cultural Turn” in the 1990s, with scholars no longer able to view translations as a pure aesthetic act, but something deeply embedded in their own cultural and political systems. During the early phase of this turn, with researchers seeking to further understand the relationship between translations and the power to

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63 Susan Bassnet and André Lefevere, “Preface” in Susan Bassnet and André Lefevere (eds.) *Translation, History and Culture*, ix. Or in Sujit Mukherjee’s term, a form of “new writing”, as his refers to the English translation of various types of Indian literature, “Translation as new writing”, in *Translation as Discovery and Other Essays on Indian Literature in English Translation* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1994) 77-85.


65 Lefevere and Bassnett are the first to use the term (“Proust’s Grandmother and the Thousand the One Nights”, 4.), but they credit the coinage of it to Mary Snell-Hornby (“Linguistic Transcoding or Cultural Transferal? A Critique of Translation Theory in Germany”, in Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Translation, History and Culture*, 79-86). Researchers usually trace the beginning of the “culture turn” to Lefevere’s and Bassnett’s anthology, hence the beginning of the 1990s, even though Snell-Hornby herself regards the “turn” as having its origin in the 1980s (“The culture turns of the 1980s”, in Mary Snell-Hornby (ed.) *The Turns of Translation Studies* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2006) 47).
shape culture and society, a number of them turned to postcolonial theory and saw translation as a major activity in establishing and maintaining colonial rule.66 The recurring theme is that although translation enables exchanges and interaction between cultures, the process is never a “fair” or neutral one; instead, translation had become one of the primary ways Western colonial countries and cultures used to subject non-western cultures and “others” to the realm of the “Third World”. By making another culture comprehensible, the process of translation entailed varying degrees of “violence” – whether by a process of familiarizing foreign concepts into one’s own culturally familiar or accepted forms and concepts, or through selecting what materials were “representable” of the other culture and should be translated.67 Researchers of Latin American colonial history have long articulated this partnership between translation and colonial control, arguing that the Spaniards had used translation as a way of “reducing the native language and culture to accessible objects for and subjects of divine and imperial intervention”.68

66 R. S. Sugirtharajah explains postcolonial criticism, in a nutshell, as a theory with several functions: “(a) it examines and explains especially social, cultural, and political conditions such as nationality, ethnicity, race, and gender both before and after colonialism; (b) it interrogates the often one-sided history of nations, cultures, and peoples; and (c) it engages in a critical revision of how the ‘other’ is represented.” Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 12-13. To Homi Bhabha, one of the earliest advocates of postcolonial criticism, the aim of postcolonialism is to “intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic ‘normality’ to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, history of nations, races, communities, peoples. They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent movements within the ‘rationalizations’ of modernity”, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994) 171. For John McLeod, it is simply an exploration of the “inseparable relationship between history and culture in the primary context of colonialism and its consequences”, in “Introduction,” in John McLeod (ed.) The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies (London: Routledge, 2007) 8.


Eric Cheyfitz even declares that translation was “the central act of European colonization and imperialism in America”.\textsuperscript{69} To these postcolonial critics, translation had been a manipulating process used to establish and maintain the control of colonial powers over others.\textsuperscript{70}

The “Cultural Turn” has had a considerable impact on the studies of biblical translation too. Glenn Kerr argues that since the 1990s, the focus of biblical translation has been as much on social and cultural issues as on linguistic features, and there has been a general realization that any bible translation involves three cultures – the ancient biblical culture, the modern target culture, as well as the mediating culture of the translators.\textsuperscript{71} Stanley Porter also believes that for New Testament scholars this cultural appreciation in biblical translation will have far more important consequences than other recent issues, such as gender-specific language and the supposed anti-Semitism in translation.\textsuperscript{72} As with the general field in translation studies, postcolonial criticisms have also emerged as an important tool in biblical translation studies. Sugirtharajah argues in \textit{Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation} that translation has traditionally been a tool of colonization aimed at converting the natives to British ways of thoughts and religious beliefs. He notes that “since the invader and the invaded spoke different

\textsuperscript{69} Eric Cheyfitz, \textit{The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from the Tempest to Tarzan} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 104.

\textsuperscript{70} Scholars are also increasingly raising questions about the ability of postcolonial criticism to understand a complex society. For example, Ieva Zauberaga, who uses the example of Latvian literature being translated into English and read all over the world, argues that English can equally be used as a tool of cross-cultural communication, rather than just a unidirectional tool of power. “Rethinking power relations in translation”, \textit{Across Languages and Cultures} 1:1 (2000) 49-59.


languages and practiced different religions, translation played a crucial role in enabling the colonizers in conquering and converting the other”, and the description of the dire situations under which the translators went about their work became something like a “virtual hagiography”. 73 This postcolonial argument has continued to lend an important perspective to studying biblical translation, with Jason Coker proclaiming that a form of “Christian imperialism” has been the “norm” of translation activities of the English Bible into other languages. 74

The explicit missionary activity within translating the Bible into non-Western languages has gone hand-in-hand with Western imperialism for centuries and, in many cases, continues to do so … The Bible, once produced, is used to authorize and legitimize the missionary and the missionary’s culture. In this way, Bible translations have been use to authorize Western societies’ domination/conversion of non-Western cultures.

Not all will agree with Coker’s rather radical assessment, but this postcolonial approach remains a useful and powerful tool in critiquing biblical translation nonetheless, with Raj Nadella also recently arguing that South Indian missionary translators followed a colonial model of biblical translation during, and even after, the colonial era. 75 When it comes to Chinese bible translators of the early 19th century, names like Karl Gützlafl and Elijah

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73 R.S. Sugirtharajah, Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 156
74 Jason Coker, “Translation from this place”, in Scott Elliot and Roland Boer (eds.) Ideology, Culture, and Translation (Atlanta: SBL, 2012) 27.
Bridgman still stir a lot of questions and controversies about their involvement in the bigger scheme of Western colonialism and imperialism.\textsuperscript{76}

1.3 THE COMPLEX WORLD OF BIBLE TRANSLATORS

Some scholars have since struck back against this trend of viewing bible translators as little more than pawns serving the interests of colonial powers. L. Sanneh tries to make a distinction between Christianity and institutional Christendom, and argues that although cultural imperialism has happened in the name of Christianity, “Christianity is separate from the power interests of the ideological state, whether imperial or secular”, and it is “not intrinsically a religion of cultural uniformity”.\textsuperscript{77} For example in Vietnam, missionary translators struggled when translating for minority groups, not because the translators tried to initiate uniformity, but the minority readers themselves felt suspicious towards a new minority language translation when it did not match a translation of another major language group.\textsuperscript{78} In fact, against the ongoing modern trend of minority languages extinction, Brunn argues that “perhaps no one is making a greater contribution on a worldwide scale toward preserving these vulnerable languages than Bible

\textsuperscript{76} Jessie Gregory Lutz argues that Gützlaff was such a complicated person, that he was certainly not just a participant in Western imperial expansion, as postcolonial critic would have branded him. \textit{Opening China: Karl F.A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852} (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008) 313-319.

\textsuperscript{77} L. Sanneh, \textit{Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West}. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 85; 130.

translators”.

The evidence is strong that the bible translation activities of missionaries helped many marginal cultures survive the worldwide trend of disappearing languages, as a result of the global culture, such as in the case of Hawaiian culture. Sanneh further argues that Christianity, through its translators, has been “behind the creation of more dictionaries and grammars of the world’s languages than any other force in history”, which is consistent with what we have seen in the case of the first Protestant Chinese translators.

In order to understand the context in which the first Protestant translators of the Chinese Bible operated, postcolonial criticisms can offer some helpful perspectives, but there are also many other factors that had an important impact on the missionaries. One is the bible society, which could exert great financial and ideological control on the translators that it chose to support or not. A theory that is helpful to explore such a relationship is the theory of patronage, first suggested by André Lefevere. In the larger context of a Cultural Turn, a “patron” of translation activities is defined as “something like the powers (persons, institutions) that can either further or hinder the reading, writing


81 L. Sanneh, Whose Religion is Christianity?, 293-294.

82 It is certainly true with the early Protestant Chinese translators, with Robert Morrison, Joshua Marshman, Walter Medhurst, and William Milne all producing substantial Chinese dictionaries and grammar works; see also ibid., 69.
and rewriting of literature”. More interested in promoting or defending its own ideology, the patrons are usually “more interested in the ideology of literature than in its poetics”, and would allow the “professionals” (such as the translators) to make decisions about the poetics, as long as the ideological front is secured. Lefevre argues that a patron can be the rich and power (e.g. Medici), a royalty (e.g. Louis XIV), a political party, a group of persons, or a religious body, etc. The real world situation is almost certainly more complicated, with a translator (or a group of translators) often having to deal with the requests and priorities of multiple patrons. Alan Cadwallader for example has looked at the process of the completion of the Revised Version, and accurately demonstrated how the interests of a sovereign nation, the Established Church and the various Christian denominations had impinged on the activities and decisions of the translators throughout. Lefevre identifies three ways a patron can exert his influence on the translators: by ideological control, economic provision, and the granting of social status. There is some debate on whether hindering of translation activity (instead of promoting)

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83 André Lefevere, Translation, Rewriting and Manipulation of Literary Fame (London: Routledge, 1992) 15.

84 “The patron ‘delegates authority’ to the professional where poetics is concerned.” Ibid.

85 An interesting parallel can be drawn to a recent work by Alan Cadwallader, who writes about the fierce politics going on behind the completion of the Revised Version of the English Bible in late 19th century, and how the complex social and political context of the translation agents played a big role in the end products of translation: “(The) three aspects – the relation between an imperial, sovereign nation and the position of an Established Church, the integrity and authenticity of denominations within a nation, and the competitive tensions of national and international prestige and responsibility – highlight in magnified proportions Umberto Eco’s insight that translation is not merely about the familiar polarities of source text and target audience. It is about the politics of negotiation about the end-translation, the means by which that point is reached, and the pragmatic factors (time constraints, publication agreements, etc.) that constantly impinge upon decision making.” “‘His love has been our banner on our road’: Identity politics and the Revised Version” in in Scott Elliot and Roland Boer, (eds.) Ideology, Culture, and Translation (Atlanta: SBL, 2012) 49-58.

86 André Lefevere, Translation, Rewriting and Manipulation of Literary Fame, 16-17.
can be considered an action of patronage, but in our study we accept it as part of a patronage system, such as when a patron discourages a translator from working on a translation piece already done by another of its sponsored translators, or when it terminates support for a project until the ideology matches what it prescribes. In recent years the patronage theory has been used to study Chinese translation activities of Protestant missionaries, with George Mak arguing that the BFBS played the role of a major patron of the Union Version through financial support, drafting translation principles, and granting honorary titles to the missionaries who took part in the process. John Lai has explored the way bible tract societies like the RTS (Religious Tract Society) and the ATS (American Tract Society) on one hand financed the tracts production, and on the other controlled the choice of texts to be translated and published. Christopher Daily also demonstrates how both Robert Morrison and William Milne operated according to the strategy set out by their mission society, the London Missionary Society, and did their best to translate and distribute the Chinese Bible to the locals, even when the society leaders did not know much about how to proceed. So while postcolonial criticisms have been a powerful tool to understand the Bible translators, methodologies


88 An example of the former is when Walter Medhurst was discouraged from working on a new translation to replace the Morrison/Milne Bible in the late 1830s, even though like Morrison and Milne, Medurst was also commissioned by the LMS; for the latter, the BFBS’s policy on the translation of the Greek word βαπτίζω in the 1830s would be a good example (see Chapter 5).


91 Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 195; see also Chapter 3.
like patronage theory can also help researchers understand the world of the early Protestant Chinese Bible translators, in relationship to their patrons.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to examine the two groups of early Protestant Christian translators working on the first translations of the Chinese Bible, during the first three decades of the 19th century. Taking advantage of a large number of previously hard-to-access documents now made available online, as well as one important piece of manuscript that has never been examined before, we will use three approaches to reconstruct the separated yet interactive, rival, and at times hostile relationship between the Morrison/Milne group and the Marshman/Lassar group, and try to determine what factors contributed to the eventual outcome of the acceptance of the two earliest Chinese Bibles.

1) A wealth of primary materials such as the personal letters and journals of Morrison, Marshman, and Milne, contemporary records and reports of Mission and Bible Societies (including the British and Bible Society Annual Reports, the Baptist Missionary Magazine, the American Bible Society Report, and the London Mission Society Annual Reports), personal memorials, notes and manuscripts, biographies, and so on will be examined through the lens of historical and sociocultural criticisms. The goal is to identify and evaluate how various historical, social and cultural factors affected these translators in the process of preparing their Bible translations. Special attention will be given to the difference in location where the two groups of translators operated (Canton and Serampore), which led to the different political environment and historical
development at the two locales. This study will also consider other aspects such as the unique personal and social circumstances that enabled them to commence and finish their works, as well as factors such as the use of existing literature, help from natives and printing facilities, which were all crucial for understanding the thought process and decision-making of these translators.

A sociocultural critical examination of these primary documents will be conducted, with a specific focus to determine how the mission agenda and mandates of the mission and bible societies came to influence and, at times, pressure the missionaries into making certain translation decisions and approaches. The study aims to examine closely the social and religious networking of the Protestant translators, and how various sociocultural factors impacted the linguistic outcome of their translated texts.

2) A detailed textual and historical critical examination of the Scripture translations of Johannes Lassar, Joshua Marshman, Robert Morrison and William Milne will be conducted to determine their possible relationship to likely sources such as Jean Basset’s British Museum Manuscript (Sloane 3599) as well as to one another. These valuable manuscripts include the 1807 Chinese translation of the Book of Matthew (Jiayin zun matiao pusa zhiyu 《嘉音遵骂揲菩薩之語》) by Lassar, which is being critically examined for the first time ever. Courtesy of the Lambeth Palace Library of London, the current copy under review is the only extant copy in the world, and the

\[92\] What is inside the brackets represents one Chinese character – one of the phonetic characters created by pairing of the character “mouth” (口) with another character, whose only purpose is to provide the information of how the composite character should sound. These phonetic characters, like the katakana phonetic symbols used in the Japanese, were often used to represent characters not writable in Chinese (e.g. Cantonese slang words) or for the transliteration of foreign characters. A more detailed discussion is provided in Chapter 2.
long-buried historical piece promises to shed light on the earliest Protestant attempts on translating the Scriptures into the Chinese language. Other important pieces include the 1807 handwritten copy of the Basset translation used by Morrison, courtesy of the Hong Kong University Library; the 1810 Matthew by Marshman and Lassar (Ci jiayu youyu zitiao suozhao《此嘉語由於( metodo) 所著》), courtesy of the Cambridge University Library; the 1811 Mark (Ci jiayin you zile suozhao《此嘉音由( metodo) 所著》) and 1813 Luke (Ruohan suoshu zhi fuyin《若翰所書之福音》) by Marshman and Lassar, courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France; the 1811 Luke by Morrison (Sheng lujia chuanfuyin zhi shu《聖路加傳福音之書》), courtesy of the Andover-Harvard Theological Library; the 1813 New Testament by Morrison (Yesu Jilishudu wozhu jiuzhe xinyizhaoshu – juyi banyan yichu《耶稣基利士督我主救者新遺詔書- 俱依本言譯出》), in 8 volumes, courtesy of the National Archives of Australia; the 1822 complete bible translation by Marshman and Lassar, courtesy of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin; as well as the 1823 completion bible translation by Morrison and Milne (Shentian Shengshu《神天聖書》), courtesy of Dr. Kenny Wang of the University of Western Sydney. The in-depth study will examine textual characteristics including the diction, syntax, grammatical features, and phonetic expressions of these texts. These textual examinations and comparisons, many of which were never performed before, will provide us with information regarding the translation criteria and priorities of these works, as well as other valuable historical insights. These include for example the extent to which Morrison relied on the Basset Manuscript when preparing his translations, precisely when

93 Marshman and Lassar used English titles for their translations (e.g. “The New Testament in Chinese” or “The Pentateuch in Chinese”), although they did provide Chinese titles for individual books.
Marshman and Lassar began to gain access to the Basset copy and started referencing it in their works, how likely it was that the Protestant translators used Hebrew and Greek sources in translating the Scriptures, and why Morrison began his translation with Acts—a very unusual choice when it comes to translating the New Testament.

3) According to postcolonial criticism, translation that is carried out between two cultures in an asymmetrical power relationship is always “unequal”, where the hegemonic culture exerts its influence and ideology over the weaker counterpart. At the surface, the translation activities carried out by the Protestant missionaries fit this scenario perfectly, as these were carried out at a time when the Western powers were exercising great colonial influence and control over India (where the Serampore translators worked), and beginning to do so in China. In fact, quite a number of missionaries were employed by western trade companies and governments. For instance Lassar used to work for the Macau/Portuguese government before going to Serampore, and Morrison took up a position in the East India Company in order to gain legal status to stay in Canton. Even the publication of his Chinese dictionary volumes was funded by the East Indian Company. Lin Kenan argues that since only 6% of the 795 titles

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94 Barton Starr believes the legacy of Morrison will always be inevitably intertwined with his involvement with the colonial governments: “What is the legacy of Robert Morrison? He is often praised in articles and books on mission history – and occasionally is vilified in works dealing with imperialism in China because of his work with the East India Company and the two British embassies to China. The truth, as usual lies somewhere in between. Clearly, he shared some of the prejudices of his early nineteenth-century British contemporaries and the desire of evangelicals to share the Gospel with the “heathen” of China. It is equally clear, however, that as Morrison continued to live, learn, and work among the Chinese, he gained a profound respect for Chinese culture, language, and some of the people. While he was not able to move fully beyond himself and the attitudes of his times, neither was he an agent of imperialism in China. He increasingly came to see his role not only as a precursor for other missionaries but also as a bridge between two cultures.” J. Barton Starr, “The Legacy of Robert Morrison,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol.22, no.2 (1998) 75.
translated by the missionary translators between 1810 and 1867 were about humanities and sciences (topics that the general Chinese readers might find useful), but 80% were on Bible and religious tracts, the priorities of Westerners (in this case the missionaries and their societies) were clearly the deciding factor in the selection of texts – “a fact indicating that the countries they came from were in an ascendant position in the balance of power during the period”.95 Yet, even as the dominance of the Western powers over China began to increase in the early 1840s, missionary translators were more committed than ever to “domesticating” their translations. Translators such as Walter Medhurst would translate the Bible into more refined classical Chinese, using Chinese idioms and figure of speech, making them more in tone with traditional Chinese literature, instead of more literal and “foreignized” terms like what Morrison and Marshman did.96 J. Barton Starr also believes that even though Morrison worked for the East Indian Government and helped the British Government with translation, it was out of great financial need and legal considerations, not because he was serving as an “agent of imperialism” and with colonial interests in mind.97 The situation in China in the early 19th century does not fully comply with the basic assumptions of postcolonial theories, because the assumed

95 Lin Kenan, “Translation as a catalyst for social change in China” in Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler (eds.) Translation and Power (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002) 176.

96 This general observation is made when comparing Gützlaflf’s translation completed in 1839, which was a fairly classical work and took a highly domesticated approach to translating names and concepts of the Bible, to some later versions completed right after the signing of the Treaty of Tianjin, such as the Bridgman and Culbertson Bible of 1864, which was comparatively much more literal and less domesticated.

97 As previously noted in J. Barton Starr, “The Legacy of Robert Morrison,” International Bulletin of Missionary Research, vol.22, no.2 (1998), 75. Morrison came to dread working for the East India Company so much that even when facing the possibility of losing William Milne as a helper, he would advise the youngster not to take up a position at the Company just to enable him to stay in China. See Chapter 4.
“asymmetrical power relationship” between China and the West was multilayered and much more complex – China might be militarily the weaker of the two sides at that point, yet it does not necessarily mean that it regarded itself as culturally weaker all the time, or that the translators had a similar perspective. Clearly, a simplistic dichotomous model of power alone is not sufficient to analyze a rich and complicated context like that of China.  

In order to further our sociological understanding of the works and activities of the early Protestant translators, this study will focus more on the theory of patronage of translation, and explore the important roles played by the sponsors behind the translators – the bible and mission societies. These include the London Missionary Society that Morrison and Milne belonged to, the Baptist Serampore Mission which Marshman and Lassar belonged to, and more importantly the British and Foreign Bible Society and the American Bible Society, which would become major sponsors and promoters of Chinese Bible translation works. We will examine the kind of objectives and expectations the patrons set for their translators, the financial incentives (or restraints) they provided, as well as the recognition and other forms of support they used to encourage translators to work towards their ideological goals. By comparing this data with the insights gathered from the sociocultural and historical critical examinations of the texts, we hope to have a

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98 Edwin Gentzler and María Tymoczko have also cautioned about the “uncritical application of power dichotomies” in the early stages of the Cultural Turn in translation studies, in which “scholars were inclined to see an either/or situation with regard to translation: either the translator would collude with the status quo and produce fluent, self-effacing translations, or oppose a particular hegemony and use foreignizing strategies to import new and unfamiliar terms to the receiving culture.” (“Introduction” in Tymoczko, Maria and Gentzler, Edwin (eds.) Translation and Power (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002) xviii).

99 George Kam Wah Mak has also examined the role played by the British and Foreign Bible Society as a patron, focusing on its patronage of the Chinese Union Versions at the close of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th.
better understanding of the early Protestant translators and the sociological and political world they operated in, and determine the reasons for the lasting legacy of Robert Morrison and his works, and the obscurity of the Chinese Bible translation mission of the Serampore Baptists.
2. SERAMPORE AND THE BAPTIST CHINA MISSION

The Baptists have a legacy of involvement in missions and Bible translations in the Far East.\(^1\) The famous “Serampore Trio” of William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward and their work in India had inspired generations of missionaries among the Baptists and other denominations to engage in mission and biblical translations.\(^2\) Carey created the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, and launched the mission in Bengal in 1793. In 1800 he moved to Serampore and was joined by Marshman, a schoolteacher, and the printer William Ward, establishing the missionary community there.\(^3\) The Serampore approach to missions was holistic in nature, emphasizing not just religious evangelism but educational and social missions as well, setting up schools and launching literary and social programs in the Indian communities.\(^4\) Because of this holistic approach in mission and their successes, the famous philanthropist and abolitionist William Wilberforce would refer to the Serampore Mission as “one of the chief glories” of the

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British nation. Even the translation approach of the Baptist missionaries was influenced by this mindset, as Carey preaches on the importance for missionaries to learn the foreign languages, and understand and appreciate the native customs and cultures, in order to effectively share the Gospel to the natives in their own tongues:

The Missionaries must be men of great piety, prudence, courage, and forbearance … and when arrived at the place of their definition, their first business must be to gain some acquaintance with the language of the native, (for which purpose two would be better than one) … They must be very careful not to resent injuries which may be offered to them, nor to think highly of themselves …

The first and main focus of biblical translation for the Serampore Mission was on the many Indian languages and dialects. By 1817, Carey would claim that they had translated or had begun translating the Bible into “nearly forty” Indian languages, even though most of these were “entirely derived from Sungskrit (Sanskrit)”. The Serampore Chinese Mission was launched as an expansion of the Baptist mission works on the Oriental Languages, and unlike the usual holistic approach, it would focus mainly on the linguistic side: the studying of the Chinese language and the translation of the Scriptures into Chinese. The change of strategy was a result of the accidental nature of this mission, and the reality that the Serampore missionaries were not geographically located in China.

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5 In a letter written by Wilberforce to the Haytian (nowadays Haiti) Government on 16 December 1820, in Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce (eds.) The Correspondence of William Wilberforce, Vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1840) 394.

6 William Carey, An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen (Leicester: Ann Ireland, 1792) 75.

This will have a big impact on the eventual reception of their Chinese Scriptures, but we will first examine how the Serampore Mission came to include Chinese as one of their focuses.

2.1 THE ARMENIAN TRANSLATOR

Johannes Lassar, an Armenian immigrant who grew up in Macao, was first mentioned as a Chinese translator of the Bible in a letter addressing the British and Foreign Bible Society on 13 Sept 1806. The sender was Rev. David Brown, the Provost of the College of Fort William and an active promoter of translating the Scriptures into oriental languages, who had been visiting the Baptist Mission at Serampore. Before Brown left for Calcutta he asked the Serampore missionaries working on Bible translations to send a few specimens of their work to him. Among these missionaries was Lassar, who sent a small sample of his manuscript written in Chinese. Brown remarks:  

Mr. Professor Lassar has sent me three Chinese specimens, with a letter in the same language, the work of his own head and hand. As the above little specimens are the hasty production of this morning, I do not recommend them to severe criticism, but Mr. Lassar is a thorough Chinese, and will do the great work of translating the Scriptures into that language, if it please God to spare his life five or six years. He reads every thing in the language as readily as you do English, and writes it as rapidly. The other manuscript specimens are in a rough state, and not fit to be submitted to critical inspection. The Shanscrit [Sanskrit] and Chinese (apparently the most difficult of access) are discovered to be the most practical of all the languages yet undertaken.

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8 The Religious Repository, 1 (1807) 95; the account is also recorded in the Chinese Repository 4 (1835) 252.
Little is known about Lassar, even today. Following his death in 1835, a brief biography of him was published in the *The Chinese Repository*, but even that is full of uncertainties and assumptions: ⁹

Mr. Lassar was an Armenian, born, we believe, at Macao. His parents had two Chinese servants, a man and a maid-servant – both Christians. With them it seems probable that the boy learned to speak the Chinese language in his childhood. We have been informed, that subsequently his father procured for his son a Chinese teacher from Canton, who taught him to read and write the language. He left Macao, our informant thinks, in 1802, for Calcutta, where report said he was engaged by the English government as Chinese interpreter.

Apparently Lassar was employed by the Portuguese government when he was in Macao, responsible for correcting the official correspondence between the Portuguese sectors at Macao and in at the court of Peking. Some time later he moved to Serampore and was resident at the Mansion-house, where he began teaching Chinese to three missionaries there, one of them being Joshua Marshman. ¹⁰ Another source provides a more detailed account of Lassar following his employment in Macao: that he was willing to give up his commercial pursuits there and went to serve at the College of Fort Williams in Calcutta for a salary of 450 pounds a year. ¹¹ Even though Lassar’s

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⁹ *The Chinese Repository* 4 (Canton, 1835) 252.

¹⁰ The *New Annual Register or General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1807* (London: Stockdale, 1807) 94.

qualifications and ability were highly regarded, the salary proved too much for the College to afford, and a plan was devised to retain his service. The College proposed to the Baptist Mission in Serampore a deal: that Lassar would be allowed to reside in Serampore, and in return he would teach the Chinese language to one of its elder missionaries and two of their younger missionaries. With Carey declining the offer to acquire another major language, Marshman ended up being the one learning Chinese from Lassar, along with two sons of his and one of Carey’s. Hugh Pearson’s memoir of Claudius Buchanan provides more details and a less flattering account of the sequence of events: Lassar did travel to Calcutta and was in a commercial venture initially, and “met with some difficulties” with the plummeting of the prices of tea, and had trouble continuing. Buchanan, serving as the Vice-Provost of the College of Fort William at the time, came to learn of Lassar’s linguistic ability and realized the opportunity for the College to finally support the translation works into Chinese. He managed to “liberate (Lassar) from his embarrassments” by providing him with a stipend of 300 rupees per month for translating the Scriptures and for instructing the students at Serampore. And after the College fell on hard times, Buchanan would personally shoulder the expense and continue the stipend payment to Lassar for another 3 years. Thanks to the special arrangement, according to a report in the First Serampore Memoir of 1808, “the lads”

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12 Claudius Buchanan, Christian Researches in Asia, 10.
13 Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 45.
14 The report that Lassar was hired by William Carey to begin translating the Bible is incorrect; from our earliest and most reliable sources, Claudius Buchanan was behind the hiring and appointment of Lassar, with Carey and the Serampore Mission only cooperating with the arrangement. See Treasures of the Yenching: Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Harvard-Yenching, Harvard-Yenching Library Studies, No.1 (Harvard College, 2003) 266.
and Marshman were said to make great process in Chinese learning under the guidance of Lassar, such that their proficiency “could scarcely be expected from those more advanced in years”.

Lassar’s translation of the Scriptures into Chinese also showed considerable progress. By 1807 a Chinese translation of the Book of Matthew was completed by Lassar himself, which was 3 years prior to a collaborative translation effort of the same book with Marshman, and 3 years ahead of Morrison’s first NT book translation of Acts. A copy of such was said to have been beautifully handwritten by Lassar himself, and submitted to the Archbishop of Canterbury for the collection at the Lambeth Library. Another report claims that Lassar was also half way through with his translation of Luke by 1808, though a completed copy of that translation was never made available. If the claim is correct, Lassar probably had a change of plan and dropped the Luke project, and began collaborating with Marshman to work on Matthew (printed in 1810) and Mark (printed in 1811) instead. The two of them did finish a translation of Luke by 1813, but it is highly doubtful that they had based this version on Lassar’s own unfinished edition of 1808, given that the Baptist translators had already begun using the Basset Manuscript as a reference by then (their Luke 1813 shows a clear resemblance to Basset’s translation, as we shall see in Chapter 3).

The 1807 Matthew of Lassar has been mentioned in a number of important works of research, but no one seemed to be certain of its existence, and none has claimed to

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16 The First Serampore Memoir (Dunstable: J.W. Morris, 1808) 52.

17 As shall be seen in Chapter 3, Morrison’s 1810 Acts was just a transcribed version of Jean Basset’s translation of Acts, and the first biblical book that can be said to be mostly the work of Morrison is in fact his Luke of 1811.

18 Claudius Buchanan, Christian Researches in, 10.
have seen the actual manuscript, let alone having conducted any research on it. After some detailed investigative work and relentless research and letter writing, this author has finally located the very manuscript of this translation, still safely kept in the Lambeth Palace Library in London as the historical records indicate! Thanks to the kind assistance of Senior Archivist Dr. Rachel Cosgrave, the author has been able to secure a copy of this very first Chinese translation attempt of the Christian Scriptures by a Protestant, a handwritten copy of the Book of Matthew beautifully crafted by Lassar himself.\(^\text{19}\) The first page of the manuscript has the following words written by Claudius Buchanan, dated on 04 May 1807: “To His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury\(^\text{20}\) For the Lambeth Library; The Gospel of St. Matthew in the Chinese Language; Being the First Fruits of ‘The Christian Institution in the East’”. The idea of this “Christian Institution in the East” was conceived by Claudius Buchanan himself, with the goal of placing a professor in each of the principal Eastern provinces of the College to serve as a literary agent, studying the language and engaging in translation and printing.\(^\text{21}\) With the successful completion and presentation of this first biblical book in Chinese, it was not surprising to find Buchanan expressing great enthusiasm and admiration for the works of the Serampore translators. In a speech he gave on 21 February 1808 he said:

\(^{19}\) *Manuscript MS2081*, still part of a precious collection kept in the Lambeth Palace Library, London. Lassar, an Armenian by birth, was commissioned to translate the Bible first by the Protestant “Christian Institution”, then by the Baptist Mission in Serampore. Hence he is regarded as one of the earliest Protestant translators in this study.

\(^{20}\) The Archbishop of Canterbury at the time was Charles Manners-Sutton (1805-1828).

\(^{21}\) “[The Institute) was not intended to form an expensive establishment; but that a professor should be stationed as a literary agent of the college in each of the principal provinces of the east, to study a particular language, to collect information, to correspond with the society at home, to compose and to print books, and to instruct natives in printing.” Hugh Pearson, *Memoirs of the life and writings of the Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 276.
I must not … omit to commend the zealous and persevering labours of Mr. Lassar, and of those learned and pious persons associated with him; who have accomplished, for the future benefit, we may hope, of that immense and populous region, Chinese versions, in the Chinese character, of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke; throwing open that precious mine, with all its religious and moral treasures, to the largest associated population in the world.22

Unfortunately the Christian Institution concept was short-lived and never got off to an effective start; neither do we have evidence of Lassar ever finishing or publishing these editions of Mark and Luke after Matthew, as mentioned by Buchanan. This manuscript has never been studied, in brief or in-depth, until the current project, and since it is quite possibly the only extant copy of Lassar’s Matthew in Chinese, it is the only existing link and evidence we have to this “First Fruits” period of Protestant Chinese translation of the Christian Scriptures. Therefore, it is very important for us to take a closer look at the 1807 Lassar Matthew, because it represents the earliest example of the Protestant Chinese translation tradition - a tradition very different from Morrison’s, with the style and diction of the translation independent of the Jesuit tradition that came through the Basset Manuscript, introduced by Morrison.23 In addition, the translation of Matthew by Lassar also provides us with valuable insights about the other early Baptist translated works - namely the 1810 Matthew and 1811 Mark completed jointly by Marshman and Lassar - which allows us an idea of the kind of contribution Joshua Marshman was providing Lassar with, during his early years of translating.

23 A detailed account of Morrison’s use of Basset’s Manuscript, and how the Jesuit copy came to influence the Baptist translators in Serampore too after 1812, is given in Chapters 2 and 3.
One question arises: If Joshua Marshman only started to learn Chinese at the beginning of 1806, his knowledge of the language must have been quite limited in the first few years, so it is highly questionable how much he could have contributed to the actual process of translation being such a recent student of Chinese under Lassar; yet interestingly after 1807, almost all of the references made towards the Chinese Bible translation activities in association to the Serampore Baptists were attributed to Marshman alone, or Marshman and Lassar, with Marshman as the clear leader. Not only does this invert the teacher-student order, it has nothing to do with the alphabetical arrangement either. The most logical explanation is that Lassar’s involvement and contribution had been deliberately diminished, because it served better to have Marshman being the lead in the Serampore Chinese mission. A glimpse of the situation may be found in the account of John Marshman, Joshua’s son, who points out that a Mr. Burder, the secretary of the London Missionary Society (LMS), had “sneered at a translation made, as he observed, through the spectacles of an Armenian”. The comment was made in 1807, coinciding with the dispatch of Robert Morrison as a missionary to China by the LMS. According to John Marshman, the brewing rivalry between the two China Missions had kicked off with an uncomfortable realization – that Lassar’s nationality could become a liability. So perhaps the Serampore community’s decision to place Lassar’s name in a less prominent position was to do with a discriminatory disposition towards the ethnicity

24 Marshman was translating the Bible into Bengali and Sanskrit prior to 1806, and could have only turned his attention to Chinese afterwards. John Clark Marshman, The life and times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward. Embracing the history of the Serampore mission, 94.

25 In one source Lassar is listed just as an “assistant” to Marshman, see George Browne, The British and Foreign Bible Society, from its institution in 1804, to the close of its Jubilee in 1854, vol. II (London: BFBS, 1859) 117.

of Lassar by some. Fair to say, this negative sentiment did not go as far as to pressure the community to go mum about Lassar’s contribution, but it did turn Marshman, a member of the “Serampore Trio”, already much respected for his work in the Bengali and Sanskrit Bibles, into the poster figure of the Serampore China mission after 1807, despite his relative inexperience with the Chinese language at that point.\textsuperscript{27} This period of the early rivalry between Morrison and the Serampore translators will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

2.2 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF LASSAR’S MATTHEW OF 1807

The style of the Lassar Matthew translation of 1807 is unique, it served as a template for the earliest translations that he and Marshman completed together, and apparently shows no resemblance to any of the Chinese translations completed by the Catholics (Jean Basset’s or Louis de Poirot’s)\textsuperscript{28}. There is a general adherence to Buddhist terminology, a large number of constructed transliterated terms, as well as a hint of southern dialectic characteristics. The following observation is made by a general evaluation of the Lassar version, and a comparison with a few earlier and later versions of Matthew, namely the Jean Basset translation (early 18\textsuperscript{th} century), the Marshman and Lassar version of 1810, and Robert Morrison’s translation of 1813. Specially featured are

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{27} John Wherry confirms that “though Lassar continued his work upon (the Chinese Bible) until the end, the version has been known to the world as Marshman’s, the Rev. John Marshman, an English Baptist missionary, having been the ruling spirit in its production, and having given to it eleven or twelve years of unremitting hard labor.” He doesn’t give a reason for the disappearance of Lassar’s name, but seems to try to justify Marshman’s eclipse of his teacher. “Historical Summary of the Different Versions of the Scriptures”, \textit{Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China held at Shanghai, May 7-20, 1890}, 48.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} See Chapter 1.
\end{itemize}
either terms that are uniquely Lassar’s, or markedly different from other versions mentioned above. Since Lassar was the first Protestant missionary to undergo the task of translating into Chinese, and there is no indication that he had access to any other Chinese versions prior to him, his translation gives us a rare glimpse of the mindset of a Protestant Chinese translator operating in the early 19th century. Our interest lies in the language style and choice of diction of Lassar, as it might reflect his understanding and experience of the Chinese culture, and his use of the source text; I am also interested in seeing how much (if any) influence his work had over the translations of his Protestant colleagues in the subsequent decades.

2.2.1. THE USE OF BUDDHIST TERMINOLOGY

Johannes Lassar’s work shows great liberty when it comes to using Buddhist terms for his translation, starting with the title of his Gospel According to Matthew, which he translated *Jiayin zun matiao pusa zhiyu* 嘉音遵(口罵)(口挑)菩薩之語 (“The Gospel according to the words of Bodhisattva Matthew”). *Pusa* (菩薩), the Chinese term for the bodhisattva, is widely used by the Buddhists to describe a large number of deities such as *Guanyin Pusa* (觀音菩薩), *Wenshu Pusa* (文殊菩薩, Manjusri), or

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29 As William Smalley has described, “the Gospel has been clothed in multiple languages and has also been colored by those languages and by the cultures of which they are a part,” and has observed that “one cannot translate into Thai without Buddhist terminology.” William A. Smalley, “Language and Culture in the Development of Bible Society Translation Theory and Practice”, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (Apr, 1995) 62. Lassar likely was encountering the same situation.

Dizang Pusa (地藏菩萨, Ksitigarbha).\(^{31}\) Although metaphorically the term can be used to describe people with a compassionate or kind heart, such as saying someone has the *pusa xinqiang* (菩薩心腸, literally “the heart and gut of bodhisattva”, a Chinese figure of speech meaning having the mindset and compassion of bodhisattva), the term as a title is chiefly associated with addressing a Buddhist deity. Lassar uses the term to translate the word “Saint”, as part of the name for the Matthew Gospel - “The Gospel According to Saint Matthew”- as found in the *Authorized King James Version* (KJV).\(^{32}\) The choice of word is very interesting, as it has a very strong Buddhist overtone, something a modern-day Bible translator will try hard to avoid. Also, since Lassar is translating the word “Saint”, it also gives a good indication that he was translating from the KJV, or at least not from the Griesbach edition of the Greek text, since it doesn’t have the word “saint” for Matthew’s title.\(^{33}\) Another term usage that shows similarly strong Buddhist inclination is *fo* (佛), the commonly used Chinese term for Buddha, which Lassar also uses to translate the word “saints” later in the text (27:52). The choice of diction is consistent and deliberate, because later on he translates the “holy city” (27:53) as *focheng* (佛城), making Jerusalem “the city of Buddha”! In Chinese Buddhism, those who manage to escape from the circle of reincarnation are said to *chengfo* (成佛, “become a Buddha”), so it appears that Lassar wanted to convey the Christian concept of salvation and delivery

\(^{31}\) For a brief introduction of Sinicization of the Bodhisattva, see Zhiru Ng, *The Making of a Savior Bodhisattva: Dizang in Medieval China* (Hawaii: Kuroda Institute, 2007) 7-9.

\(^{32}\) It is believed that the *King James Version* used by the early missionary translators was the 1769 edition of the *Authorized Version*, although we will use KJV as the short form through this study.

\(^{33}\) ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΤΘΕΑΙΟΝ (“Gospel According to Matthew”). It is possible that Lassar got the idea from the Armenian Bible too, as on the cover of its Matthew Gospel there was a drawing of an elderly Matthew, with the words “S. Mathevs.” written on it, though more research is needed to determine how much Lassar had relied on the Armenian Bible.
to the earlier Chinese audience by using salvation language that they were familiar with – which turned out to be Buddhist terms for him.

Other Buddhist terms usage include both chanshi (禪師, the “zen masters”, 34 e.g. 2:4, 6:5) and senggang (僧綱, the “monk official”, 35 e.g. 21:23) for “chief priests”; miao (廟, the Buddhist temple) for “synagogues” in 4:23; nanjing (喃經, chanting of the Buddhist mantras) for “prayest” in 6:5; xiese (邪色, the kind of devious sexual temptation that is warned against in Buddhist teachings) for “evil (thoughts)” in 9:4; bushi (佈施, the charitable act of donating to the Buddhist monks and temples) is used for “alms (giving)” in 6:1. Sometimes the borrowed Buddhist terms aren’t quite translating the meaning of the source texts correctly enough; for example Lassar chooses shizhai/shisu (食齋/食素) for the two appearances of “fast” in 9:14. Since shizhai or shisu both refer to the diet of not consuming meat practiced by some Buddhists, they are essential to describing a dietary observance quite different from the ritual of the first-century Jews.

On the other hand, some Chinese popular religious and cultural terms, influenced by Taoist and Confucian beliefs, 36 are also found in Lassar’s Matthew. One interesting phrase is yuzhi (玉旨), used by Lassar to translate the word “angels”, such as in 1:24. The


35 Since the beginning of Ming dynasty (2nd half of 14th century), Seng gang shi 僧綱司 refers to the provincial Office for Monks. Senggang 僧綱 hence refers to the people of the Office, the monk officials. Huai-Chin Nan, Basic Buddhism – Exploring Buddhism and Zen (Maine: Samuel Weiser Inc., 1987) 176.

36 There has been a long-time debate over whether Confucianism should be considered a “religion” or not. While the discussion is way beyond the scope of our present discussion, it should be accepted that various Taoist and Confucian terms had long entered into the religious diction of the Chinese by Lassar’s time. Whether or not Confucianism should be regarded strictly as a “religion”, it should not diminish the fact that that Chinese had used its terms as part of their general religious language.
phrase comes from *fengyuzhi* (奉玉旨), which literally means “edict sent according to the will of the Jade Emperor”. The Jade Emperor, *yudi* (玉帝), is the highest deity in the Taoist pantheon, hence his messengers were often referred to as the *fengyuzhi*. The simplified version *yuzhi* was used by Lassar to translate “the messenger (angel)”, but the problem is that *yuzhi* refers to the edict, the message, not the messenger. So not only did Lassar use a traditional Chinese religious term, he also used it incorrectly. Also, the word *shengren* (聖人, “sage” in the Confucian tradition) is used for a “prophet” (e.g. 1:22, 3:3), and *dizi* (弟子), the word for “students” used in the Confucian Classics, is adopted for “disciples” (26:17, 28:7). Finally, for “virgins” (25:1) Lassar translates it as *jienu* (節女), a Confucian term which means “chaste woman”. Like “fast” above, the translation here is semantically incorrect, because in Confucianism *jienu* referred to an honorary woman who was abiding by its strict moral teachings – which could mean remaining a virgin before marriage, or more often a widow who stayed chaste and unmarried even after one’s husband had passed away, until death. The translation *jienu* is more suggestive of Confucian morals than the original meaning intended.

Lassar’s preference in using Buddhist terminology becomes especially obvious, when we consider how few of these terms are used in Jean Basset’s Matthew, and hence, in Morrison’s too (the topic of Morrison’s reliance on Basset will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3). The practice was already mostly abandoned by the time Marshman and Lassar completed their version of Matthew, only 3 years later, so either Marshman had strong concerns against using these terms, or by that time the two men had agreed that the heavy Buddhist tone was inappropriate for a translation of the Christian
Scriptures. The following table shows how these Buddhist terms quickly disappeared from the subsequent translations of the Chinese Bible:

Table 2.1 Use of Buddhist terminology in the early translations of Lassar and Marshman – a comparison among 4 versions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English (KJV) - Matthew</th>
<th>Lassar – Matthew (1807)</th>
<th>Marshman/Lassar – Matthew (1810)</th>
<th>Marshman/Lassar – Mark (1811)</th>
<th>Marshman/Lassar – John (1813)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“St.” (Matthew) (Book Title)</td>
<td>菩薩 Pusa (&quot;Bodhisattva&quot;)</td>
<td>Omitted</td>
<td>Omitted</td>
<td>Omitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Synagogues” (4:23)</td>
<td>廟 Miao (&quot;Buddhist Temples&quot;)</td>
<td>廟 Miao</td>
<td>廟 Miao (Mark 1:21)</td>
<td>會堂 Huitang (John 9:22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Pray” (6:5)</td>
<td>喃經 Nanjing (&quot;Mantras Chanting&quot;)</td>
<td>誦經 Songjing (&quot;Scriptures Recitation&quot;)</td>
<td>誦經 Songjing (Mark 1:35)</td>
<td>禱 Dao (John 14:16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Evil (thoughts)” (9:4)</td>
<td>邪色 Xiese (&quot;sexual deviation&quot;)</td>
<td>邪色 Xiese</td>
<td>不軌之意 Bugui Zhiyi (&quot;Bad Intentions&quot;, Mark 7:21)</td>
<td>No direct parallel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Fast” (9:14)</td>
<td>食齋/食素 Shizhai/shisu (&quot;vegetarian diet&quot;)</td>
<td>餓戒 Zhaijie (&quot;refrain from eating&quot;)</td>
<td>食齋/食素 Shizhai/shisu (Mark 2:18)</td>
<td>No direct parallel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Saints” (27:52)</td>
<td>佛者 Fozhe (&quot;Buddhas&quot;)</td>
<td>佛者 Fozhe</td>
<td>No direct parallel</td>
<td>No direct parallel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Holy City” (4:5; 27:53)</td>
<td>省 Sheng (&quot;province&quot;, 4:5); 佛城 Focheng (&quot;City of Buddha&quot;, 27:53)</td>
<td>佛省 Fosheng (&quot;Buddha province&quot;, 4:5); 真宇 Zhenyu (&quot;Taoist Temple&quot;, 27:53)</td>
<td>No direct parallel</td>
<td>No direct parallel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37 Duode 鍛德 was the term of Jean Basset chosen for “priest”, apparently based on the Latin reading of “sacerdos”. From the big change of chanshi and senggang to duode, it is very obvious that Lassar and Marshman had started making use of the Basset Manuscript by 1813 (see Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion).
As is evident from the comparison, most of the Buddhist terms used by Lassar (1807) can also be found in the Marshman/Lassar version in 1810, including the very exclusively Buddhist-themed ones such as “zen masters”, “chief monk”, “Buddhist temples”, “Buddhas”, etc. An interesting replacement is that of the “city of Buddha” by the “Taoist Temple” 真宇 for 27:53, apparently showing that the translators were still struggling to understand how “Holy City” should be interpreted figuratively. The change from “mantras chanting” to “scriptures recitation” for the word “pray” is minor, still preserving the strong imagery of a Buddhist ritual, since the term songjing was commonly understood as the manner in which the monks would recite their scriptures aloud. Given the little time lapse between the 1810 Matthew and the 1811 Mark, it is not surprising to see that little has changed when it comes to the use of Buddhist terms by Marshman and Mark. Out of our selected examples, the only major change is the replacement of “sexual deviation” by the more general “bad intentions” for the phrase “evil thoughts” in Matthew 9:4 (Mark 7:21). Another notable change is the reversion back to “vegetarian diet” from “refrain from eating” for “fast” (Matthew 9:14; Mark 2:18), making the translation semantically undesirable once again. Zhaijie was not a very common phrase and has already fallen out of use nowadays, but seems to owe its origin to southern China.38 It is hard to understand why it fell out of favor suddenly in the 1811 copy of Mark. Finally, providing a detailed comparison between Lassar’s earlier translation and Marshman/Lassar’s John of 1813 is not easy, because many of the terms used in Matthew do not have a direct parallel in John. Yet from just the 3 examples given above (“chief priests”, “synagogues” and “pray”) one can already notice drastic changes.

38 According to the authoritative Kangxi Zidian《康熙字典》(The Kangxi Emperor Dictionary).
in diction. From all indications, the abandoning of the Buddhist-themed terms was likely a consequence of the authors consulting the Basset Manuscript (see Chapter 4).

2.2.2. A QUEST FOR THE SOURCE TEXTS

Given the lack of research on this very first Protestant translation of a biblical book, much information about it remains unknown, including the version of the Bible from which Lassar translated his Gospel of Matthew. Although little historical data is available to us, an important source of reference is the account in which Marshman describes, in much detail, the way he and Lassar went about translating the Scriptures in a letter sent to the BFBS in December of 1813. Marshman writes that Lassar would be

39 “The first step, as I have told you, taken in the Translation, is that of Mr. Lassar’s sitting down at my elbow, (where he sits from month to month and year to year,) and translating from the English, assisted by his knowledge of Armenian. For a long time he and I read over the assigned portion together, prior to his beginning it, till he found it unnecessary; he now therefore only consults me respecting particular words and phrases. In due time follows the correcting verse by verse; when, with Griesbach in my hand, I read over every verse in Chinese, and suggest my doubts relative to the force of particular characters, rejecting some, and suggesting others. When a whole chapter is thus done, which sometimes takes three or four hours, I give him the Chinese, and read Griesbach into English very slowly and distinctly, he then meanwhile keeping his eye on the Chinese Version. It is then copied fairly, and sometimes, (that is, when any doubt remains,) it is examined thus a second, and even a third time. It then goes to press, and here it undergoes a fresh ordeal. A double page being set up with our moveable metal types, I then read it over with another Chinese assistant who is ignorant of English. He suggests such alterations as may seem necessary to rend the language perfectly clear. It is then corrected, and a clean proof given, or two or three, if they are required, to be read by different persons. This done, I sit down alone and read it, comparing with Griesbach again, and occasionally consulting all the helps I have. This is to me the most close examination of all. Here, as I have two Latin Chinese Dictionaries by me, I make it a point to examine them for every character, of the meaning of which I do not feel quite certain; and to assist me herein the more effectually, I have a book by me, wherein I write down the meaning of every character I examine. These, as I have told you, are seldom more than twenty, and sometimes not too many. In reading the original in Griesbach, I deviate a little from my first method. I then read verse by verse; now I read a small portion of the original, perhaps five or six verses at one time, and then the same portion in Chinese, that I may view the force and connexion to greater advantage: this I find profitable. Having written in the margin of the sheet every alteration my mind suggests, and every thing that seems a discrepancy, I then consult Mr. Lassar and the Chinese assistant together, sitting with them till every query be solved and every discrepancy adjusted. This done, another clean proof is given, which, when read, I give to my son John, that he may examine for himself, as his knowledge of the Chinese idiom is perhaps greater than my own. When he has satisfied
“sitting down at (his) elbow … and translating from the English, assisted by his knowledge of Armenian”, and after he had revised the translation, he would pass the Chinese copy back to Lassar, and cross-check the translation with him by “read(ing) Griesbach into English”. Hence two to three versions of the Bible might have served as the source and references when the two collaborated in their efforts – the English version which Lassar translated from, the Greek text of Griesbach for proofreading purposes, and likely an Armenian version which Lassar used as reference. It is reasonable to speculate that if the English Bible was used as the main source by the two translators in the early 1810s, it probably also served as one of Lassar’s source texts in 1807, since it would explain the consistency of his style and approach to translation. One problem with this

40 One source stated that “Mr. Johannes Lassar, well known as the assistant to Dr. Marshman in translating from the Armenian into Chinese”, see George Browne, *The British and Foreign Bible Society, from its institution in 1804, to the close of its Jubilee in 1854*, vol. II (London: BFBS, 1859) 117. If an Armenian Bible was used, it would have been the 1666 edition. But more research is needed to determine the extent to which Lassar had relied on the Armenian Bible.
assumption is the question concerning Lassar’s English ability. Marshman at one time praised Lassar for being able to use four languages – Armenian, Portuguese, Hindoostanee, and English – with great fluency, but at another described having problems working with Lassar, because the latter had been brought up in China and “understood scarcely more of English than we of Chinese”. Yet with Lassar being employed by the Macao/Portuguese government and the British government for some time before starting to work on the translation of the Scriptures, there is little reason to question his ability to use a number of languages including Portuguese and English. In any case, he would have a much better supply of materials written in English in Serampore. Meanwhile, in a letter to the LMS on 25 Nov 1819, Morrison also listed the “English public version” – the Authorized Version – as one of the major sources for his “ascertaining the sense of Scripture”, and that he had “made no departure, in any remarkable degree, from the sense of the English version”, because he believed it would be more satisfactory to the Christians in England that he did not make a new or improved version “immediately and solely from the originals”, and in doing so disregard “old and approved translations”. As for the questions of how much he used the Authorized Version, why he deemed it undesirable to translate directly from the originals, and how much he made use of the originals, we will examine further in Chapter 3. For our

41 From Marshman’s letters to the BMS on 20 Aug 1806 and 03 April 1817 respectively, quoted in Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 46, n.120.

42 Neither was Portuguese a very prominent language in Macao when it came to interaction between the Chinese and foreigners, in comparison to English. “By the early 1730s, pidgin English had replaced Portuguese as the medium of communication with foreigners, and after that change the three most important languages for all linguists were pidgin English, Cantonese and Mandarin.” Paul Van Dyke, The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007) 77.

purposes here, it is a reasonable speculation that the English version that Lassar used when translating his 1807 Matthew was the *Authorized Version* as well, since it was the English edition in favor at the time. There is no indication that Lassar knew or used any Greek text before his collaboration with Marshman began, as we should remember that Lassar had never received any seminary training, and got involved in Bible translation mostly for his Chinese ability.

So is there any textual evidence to support the theory that the *Authorized Version* (KJV) was the source text used by Lassar in 1807? This study argues that there is, as some translation features of the 1807 Lassar Matthew do suggest the use of the KJV as the textual basis. This can be illustrated by comparing the Lassar Matthew with the KJV and Griesbach’s Greek text – the version that Marshman claimed they used later:

a) “Saint” (book title of Matthew):

- 嘉音遵(口罵)(口挑)菩薩之語 (Lassar)
  (“The Gospel according to the words of Bodhisattva Matthew”)

- The Gospel According to Saint Matthew (KJV)

- Εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Ματθαῖον (Griesbach)

- 此嘉語由於(口孖)(口挑)所著 (Marshman/Lassar)
  (“The Gospel according to Matthew”)

As discussed earlier, the word “Saint” is found in the KJV, which was translated by Lassar as *pusa* (Bodhisattva). The term was edited out 3 years later by Marshman and Lassar. Since the Marshman/Lassar version still uses a lot of Buddhist terms elsewhere, the reason for the omission of “Saint” was unlikely to do
with the rejection of Buddhist terms. On the other hand, as the term was dropped altogether and not replaced by another term, it does suggest that it is a matter related to the source text. It is very possible that with Marshman joining in the translation process, he cross-checked Lassar’s original translation and found a discrepancy with the book title in Griesbach’s, so the word “Saint” was dropped at the end.

b) “Fowls” (13:4b):

- 他種之時有種落于道鷄來而食之矣 (Lassar)  
  (“When he sowed some seeds fell on the ground and the fowls ate them.”)

- And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up (KJV)

- καὶ ἠλθε τὰ πετεινὰ, καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτά (Griesbach)

- 他下種之時，其種有落於道，鳥來而食之 (Marshman/Lassar)  
  (“When he sowed, some seeds fell on the ground, and birds came and ate them.”)

The translation of πετεινὰ as 鷄 (“fowls”) in 13:4b is unique to Lassar’s Matthew of 1807, and the most logical explanation is that it was the Chinese equivalent to the KJV’s use of the word “fowls”. All subsequent Chinese translations, including the Marshman/Lassar version, use 鳥 (niao, “birds”), which is a far more accurate representation of πετεινὰ.

c) “Giving Alms” (6:1a):

- 謹慎第爾佈施不可把爾之器物當人面而施也 (Lassar)  
  (“Make sure that when you do charity, you don’t give your items in front of men.”)

- Take heed that ye do not do your alms before men, to be seen of them (KJV)
The Lassar Matthew is the only translation that translates “alms” as a standalone noun (qiwu 器物), hence interpreting “do … alms” as the giving out of items instead of the action of charity (almsgiving). The Greek text of Griesbach has already used δικαιοσύνην (righteousness) in place of ἐλεημοσύνη (almsgiving, charity), which was used in the Textus Receptus, and from which the King James Version got “do … alms”. It is interesting to note that the Marshman and Lassar version does not quite follow Griesbach, but provides a confusing translation that is still close to Lassar’s version (爾之施物, erzhi shiwu, which reads “your alms”, but can also mean “your giving of the items”). Since all subsequent Chinese versions have the term in Matthew 6:1a translated as “righteousness”, it does suggest the reliance of both the Lassar Matthew and the Marshman/Lassar Matthew on the Authorized Version.

**“Serpents” (10:16b):**

- 故爾當為豪杰如龍而無辜如鴿 (Lassar)
  ("Be as great as dragons and as innocent as doves")

- Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves (KJV)

- Γίνεσθε οὖν φρόνιμοι ὡς οἱ ὀφείς καὶ ἄκεραι οἱ αἱ περιστεραί (Griesbach)

- 故爾當為豪杰如龍善而鴿也 (Marshman/Lassar)
  ("So be as great as dragons and as kind-hearted as doves")

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44 Προσέχετε τὴν ἐλεημοσύνην ὑμῶν μὴ ποιεῖν ἐμπρόσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι αὐτοῖς
The Matthew by Lassar and by Marshman/Lassar are the only Chinese versions known that translate “snakes” here as “dragons”. Since dragons were a symbol of blessing, authority and royalty in ancient China, Lassar’s translations give the phrase “wise as the snakes” a very favorable twist. In Griesbach two words are used to identify “snake” - ὄφις (a snake, a serpent) and ἔχιδνα (a poisonous snake, like a viper) – but they seem to be quite similar, with the latter just more lethal, as evident in 23:33a when the two are used in a sentence (ὄφεις, γεννήματα ἔχιδνών – “You snakes, you brood of vipers!”). With the KJV translating ὄφις as “serpent” and ἔχιδνα as “viper”, Lassar seemed to try to follow and distinguish between them all the time, always translating “viper” as she 蛇 (“snake” in Chinese), and leaving “serpent” more to the translator’s discretion. For instance when they appear side by side in 23:33 Lassar seemed to be confused, chose to just translate “vipers” and ignored “serpent” altogether (蛇之宗族焉可奔于陰間無量之罪 – “O generation of vipers, how can you escape the everlasting sins of hell?). The Marshman/Lassar version of Matthew 10:16b is just a slight variation of Lassar’s.

e) “Jehovah” (e.g. Genesis 22:14):

Some of the most interesting textual evidence that Marshman and Lassar had used the KJV when completing their translation of the Hebrew Bible can be found in the translation of the name of God as yehehua 耶賀華 or yeahua 耶阿華 - a Chinese rendering of “Jehovah”.45 Though these translations were completed around the late

45 A point interestingly not picked up in Peng Kuo-Wei, “The Influence of the KJV in Protestant Chinese Bible Translation Work”, in David G. Burke, John F. Kutsko, and Philip H. Towner (eds.) The King
1810s – about a decade after Lassar’s Matthew and don’t quite reflect the earliest Serampore tradition\(^4^6\) – it is still worth discussion because of its implications. Not only would a variation of it (\textit{yehuohua} 爺火華) be used in the Bible version circulated by the Taiping Rebels in the 1850-1860s, another variation of it (\textit{yehehua} 耶和華) would be used in the \textit{Union Version} and remains in common use till this day. Many Chinese sources have incorrectly claimed that the phonetic transcription of “Jehovah” began with Morrison’s 1823 translation,\(^4^7\) but it is actually incorrect according to our research. Zetzsche, on the other hand, has correctly identified Liang Afa, Morrison’s and Milne’s press helper and the first ordained minister in China, as the person who started using the phrase in his own Christian work \textit{Quanshi Liangyan} 勸世良言 (“Good Words for Exhorting the Age”).\(^4^8\) The beginning page of his book, a commentary on Genesis 3, contains the phrase 3 times already.\(^4^9\) Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan would get acquainted with the Christian faith through reading Laing

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\(^4^6\) The Pentateuch and the historical books (up to Esther) were completed and printed by the Serampore Press by 1817.

\(^4^7\) “Hong Xiuquan was first influenced by the Chinese translation of Robert Morrison, and confused by the translation of “Jehovah”. Since he did not know it was a phonetic transcription, and because in Cantonese \textit{ye} means “father”, so he thought \textit{huohua} was the name of God.” Yang Sen Fu 楊森富, \textit{Zhongguo jidujiao shi} 《中國基督教史》(The History of the Chinese Christian Church) (Taipei: The Commercial Press, 1984) 181; also Cai Ding Bang 蔡定邦, \textit{Shangdi shengming de fanyi} 「上帝聖名的翻譯」("The translation of the Holy names of God") in \textit{The Hong Kong Theological Seminary Newsletter} 《香港神學院院訊》, No.73 (April – June, 2004) 9.

\(^4^8\) Jost Oliver Zetzsche, \textit{The Bible in China}, 72-73.

\(^4^9\) Quoted in the original Chinese version of the 1823 edition of \textit{Quanshi Liangyan}. The passage is on the sinning of the first human, and the name \textit{yehuohua} was first used: 「夫神爺火華(\textit{yehuohua})所造田野各獸，其蛇為尤狡，且邪神變為蛇魔對該女人曰，爾必不可食園內知惡樹之果，這一句話，實是神爺火華(\textit{yehuohua})所言乎。該女人答蛇魔曰，園內各樹之果，我們可以食之，惟園中一根惡樹之果，神爺火華(\textit{yehuohua})乃命我們曰，爾不可捫之，不可食之，不然，爾則必死矣。」
Afa’s writing,\textsuperscript{50} and the phrase was thus made popular by the mass circulation of Christian materials by the rebels.

A comparison of the translation for “Jehovah” among the translations of Marshman/Lassar and Morrison/Milne will clearly show the origin of the translation:

**Table 2.2  Translation of “Jehovah” in the early Chinese Bibles.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KJV</th>
<th>Marshman/Lassar (1817)</th>
<th>Morrison/Milne (1822)</th>
<th>Taiping Edition (1853)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Jehovah” (Gen 22:14)</td>
<td>耶賀華 Yehehua</td>
<td>神主 Shenzhu</td>
<td>皇上帝 Huang Shangdi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Jehovah-jireh” (Gen 22:14)</td>
<td>耶阿華以利 Yeahua Yili</td>
<td>神主看見 Shenzhu Kanjian</td>
<td>皇上帝照顧 Huang Shangdi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Jehovah” (Exodus 6:3)</td>
<td>耶賀華 Yehehua</td>
<td>神主者 Shenzhu Zhe</td>
<td>爺賀華 Yehehua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Jehovah-nissi” (Exodus 17:15)</td>
<td>耶賀華尼西 Yehehua Nixi</td>
<td>耶何尼西 Yehe Nixi</td>
<td>皇上帝乃本旗 Huang Shangdi Naibenqi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Jehovah-shalom” (Judges 6:24)</td>
<td>哪(口賀)嘩吵(口路)(口巫) Yehehua Shaluwu</td>
<td>神主之平和 Shenzhu zhi Pinghe</td>
<td>------\textsuperscript{51}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be clearly seen, the phonetic transcription of “Jehovah” began with Marshman and Lassar, who mostly translate it as yehehua 耶賀華, though some variations exist when the term appears as a Hebrew compound word, such as yeahua 耶

\textsuperscript{50} For the influence of Liang Afa on Hong, please see Jonathan D. Spencer, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997) 17-68.

\textsuperscript{51} This author does not hold a copy of the Taiping edition of Judges.
for the “Jehovah” in “Jehovah-jireh”. Among the three versions, the Marshman and Lassar translation uses phonetic transcriptions throughout, and in the case of “Jehovah-shalom” even used all constructed characters throughout, true to their original preference for southern characteristics (see later). Morrison and Milne mostly translate the tetragrammaton 神 as shenzhù 神主 – “Lord God”. The word shen is the word used by Basset for “God” in the New Testament, and would remain Morrison’s choice of word still. \(^52\) Morrison and Milne seem to prefer meaning translation over transcription, such as translating “Jehovah-jireh” as shenzhù kànjiàn (“the Lord God sees”), and “Jehovah-shalom” as shenzhù zhì pínghé (“the peace of the Lord God”). The only exception is “Jehovah-nissi”, where the Morrison/Milne version translates as yehe (“Jehovah”) nǐxì (“nissi”). It is clear from the transcription that Morrison and Milne are also influenced by the English rendering of “Jehovah”, though theirs is a shortened version. Another proof can be seen for “Jehovah-jireh”, where Morrison comments that “the translation of shenzhù kànjiàn, in its original language, reads yehe ale”\(^\text{53}\). In this case Morrison and Milne somehow call English the “original language”, and their transcription is yehe, though they prefer the “Lord God” translation shenzhù. Finally the Taiping Bible, most

\(^{52}\) This is quite surprising because the Term Controversy among the Jesuits had began to reach an end by early 1630s, when the “Visitor” André Palmeiro (the Jesuit priest commissioned to visit and inspect Jesuit missions all over the world in early 17th century) ordered the Jesuits in China to use just Tianzhu to signify God, and stopped using either Tian or Shangdi. (Liam Matthew Brockey, Journey to the East – The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) 88.) Although the Papal decree that banned the use of Tian or Shangdi only came in 1704, it is very surprising that not only did Basset not use Tianzhu in his translation, but chose the word Shen, who none of his predecessors used to designate God.

\(^{53}\) Notes on Genesis 22:14, Robert Morrison, Shentian Shengshu 《神天聖書》(Anglo Chinese College: 1823).
believed to be based on the Gützlaff/Medhurst/Bridgman translation,\(^\text{54}\) uses a hybrid approach, translating “Jehovah” figuratively as *huang shandi* 皇帝, “God the Emperor”, as how Hong Xiuquan the god son emperor would address his father, and the second part of the compound word by meaning. Examples of this approach also include *huang shangdi zhaogu* (“God the Emperor” takes care) for “Jehovah-jireh”, and *huang shangdi naibenqi* (“God the Emperor” is the banner) for “Jehovah-nissi”. Marshman/Lassar’s transcription of *yehehua* 耶賀華 (Exodus 6:3) is also used.

Our research shows that the transcription for “Jehovah” began with Marshman and Lassar, not Morrison, and was made popular thanks to the help of Liang Afa and later, the Taiping Rebels (the term was not extensively used in their Bible, but in other writings of leader Hong Xiuquan). As for the reasons why Liang Afa, a close colleague of Morrison and Milne,\(^\text{55}\) would follow the Serampore tradition rather than Morrison’s and Milne’s, we will need more primary information to answer. Since there is evidence that Liang was not totally impressed by Morrison’s and Milne’s translation (see Chapter 5), it is possible that he made his own translation choice of diction in his own writing.

2.2.3. PHONETIC CHARACTERS AND SOUTHERN CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

A highly distinctive feature of Lassar’s Matthew (as well as the Marshman/Lassar Matthew and Mark) is the use of phonetic characters, created for the purpose of phonetic

\(^{54}\) More discussions on this version later in Chapter 5.

transcription to mimic the sound of a particular word, phrase, or term. Elijah Bridgman notices that the technique is frequently used in the writing of the Cantonese language,\(^\text{56}\) in which these words only provide the sound, but have no meaning in themselves.\(^\text{57}\) A regular practice is to add a smaller version of the Chinese character `kou` (mouth, which has the symbolic meaning of “verbally” here) to the left-hand side of another Chinese character that sounds the same or close to the intended pronunciation of the word intended. Since the newly formed character has no meaning in itself, it thus becomes clear to the readers that it is used for phonetic expression only. For example, Lassar translates Matthew as (口罵)(口挑), which is affixing `kou` to `ma` (pronounces as “ma”, but means “scolding”) and to `tiao` (pronounces as “tiao”, but means “picking” or “lifting”). Hence the words (口罵)(口挑) are meant to be understood as the name of some place or person that sounds like `ma tiao` – “Matthew” in this case.\(^\text{58}\) In their 1810 version of Matthew, Marshman and Lassar decided to use `zi tiao` (孖挑) instead of `ma tiao` (口罵)(口挑). (孖孖) is another phonetic character that was created by adding `孖` to孖 (also pronounces as `ma`, but in Cantonese only, meaning “twins” or “two”). Understandably, the choice of the phonetically similar but etymologically different word

\(^{56}\) The debate over whether one should consider Cantonese a “language” or “a dialect” has a long history, which has intensified in the recent years because of the political struggle between Mainland China and the HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administration Region).

\(^{57}\) “(The method makes) use of well-known characters, slightly changed to express new local phrases; in all such cases, regard is had only to the sound of the characters; while the addition, usually that of hau`口` (a mouth) to the left side, indicates that the character is changed. For instance, the three characters `喊弸唪` used to express the sound of the word `hampalång` (all), having no meaning in themselves when used in this collocation, their united sound being alone attended to and recognized.” Elijah Bridgman, *A Chinese chrestomathy in the Canton dialect* (Macao: S. W. Williams, 1841) ii.

\(^{58}\) The transliteration actually works better in Cantonese, which reads `ma til`. Lassar, a native of Macao, would know the Canton Dialect best. Morrison would even question if Lassar and Marshman knew the Court Dialect (Mandarin) at all.
is to avoid the negative connotation associated with (骂), since 驚 does mean scolding and arguing by itself. When the terms are frequently used and more familiar, sometimes the phonetic kou part can be omitted. It also confirms that Marshman and Lassar were a lot more familiar with the Cantonese dialect, because the character孖 only has the ma pronunciation in the Canton Dialect, but it is zi in Mandarin or the Court dialect (hence the pinyin system of transcription reads “zitiao”, because it is based on Mandarin). So for the replacement of (骂) by (孖), the phonetic transcription can only work when pronounced in Cantonese.

Samuel William Wells has also discussed in his 1856 work the *Tonic Dictionary of the Chinese Language in the Canton Dialect* this usage of invented Chinese characters to denote otherwise unwritten words or sounds by those who used the Canton dialect. Wells noticed that the Cantonese dialect had a lot of unwritten sounds or colloquial words that were simply omitted by the local speakers in writing, because they were either not writable or, their inclusion would not be deemed favorably by the well educated. The situation matches exactly what Charles Ferguson would term as “diglossia”, in which the primarily spoken but mostly unwritten Cantonese served as the “low” language, while “high” classical Chinese was reserved for formal, non-spoken

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59 Bridgman gives the example of 美士 mi sz’ (“mister”) and 先士 sin sz’ (“cents”), which do not use the kou formula but are still recognized as foreign, borrowed terms.

60 Later on Morrison would criticize the Serampore translators for not understanding the Court Dialect – the more official dialect used in the North. A more in-depth discussion is given in Chapter 4.

purposes. Wells cited an earlier Cantonese pronunciation work by some Chinese authors, the *Jianghu Chedu Fenyun Cuoyao Heji* (江湖尺牍分韻撮要合集, *A Concise Collection of Pronunciation and Tones used in Society*), claiming that the compilers intentionally left out some colloquial words because of “knowing no authorized characters by which to express (them), nor having any tabular system of initials and finals in which to insert them so that the student could find them.” Although from the book’s introduction the earliest version of this work appeared during the late reign of the Qianlong Emperor in 1782, two later editions (1817 and 1825) still saw the practice of omitting “unaccepted” words continued - a time which overlapped with the first period of the Protestant Chinese Bible translation activities. Wells notes that this practice of word omission had been especially frustrating for foreigners who were trying to learn the dialect, and was not appreciated by all native speakers either. Some Chinese who were “partly educated persons in letters” – likely referring to the non-gentry elites who possessed at least some level of literacy – would often try to choose a familiar character.

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62 Ferguson’s much-cited definition reads: “Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any section of the community for ordinary conversation.” in C. A. Ferguson, “Diglossia”, *Word* 15 (1959), 325-340.

63 Wells writes its Romanized form as Kong-u ch ‘ik-tuk, Fan-wan ts ‘ut-iu hop tsap, which he abbreviates as “Fan Wan”.


65 Matthew Miller believes that the greater rates of education together with a growth in the commercial printing industry since the late Ming period had resulted in a larger population of literate people who were outside of the gentry class (Matthew Miller, “Ming Dynasty Vernacular Fiction and Hu Shi’s Literary Revolution”, *Columbia East Asia Review* (2012), 41). According to Benjamin Elman, the number of successful provincial candidates all over China had also ballooned from 30,000 in 1400 to
that sounded similar to represent one of those colloquial words or sounds. In order to identify those special words, they would create them by affixing the character 椠 (kou) or 人人 (ren) to a phonetically-similar character. Although Wells’ observation is very similar to the one by Bridgman that we have already mentioned, his more in-depth analysis provides us with more revealing data that are relevant to our discussion. First of all, he relates the frequent use of the 椠- or 人人- “affixed” characters to represent certain sets of colloquial words more common among the less-educated users of the Cantonese dialect, because a lot of their daily diction was not representable by the accepted characters; secondly by the 1820s, the practice was still limited to non-official or less serious writings, because it was looked down upon by the higher educated.

It is difficult to trace the beginning of the use of phonetic Chinese characters in the writing of the Canton dialect, but as with the emergence of other forms of vernacular Chinese writings in the past, it probably had to do with a need for verbal rendering or performance (see Section 5). One of the earliest of such works was Yue Ou (粵謳, “Cantonese Songs”), a collection of popular Cantonese songs sung by street performers and prostitutes, compiled by Zhao Zi Yong in 1828. Various words uniquely used to represent the Cantonese diction had already been used, such as 佢 (“him/her”), 唔 (an

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500,000 by 1700, but the passing rate had actually dropped from 6.4% in 1601 to around 1.5% in the Late Qing period. Both sets of figures show that the literacy level of the general population outside of the Literati class must have greatly increased by late Qing. See Benjamin Elman, “Political, Social and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examination in Late Imperial China,” The Journal of Asiatic Studies, 50.1 (1991) 14. In general, some estimates put the literacy in Late Qing at around one in fifty of the rural population, though the proportion would be much larger among the urban population. See John T. P. Lai, Negotiating Religious Gaps – The Enterprise of Translation Christian Tracts by Protestant Missionaries in Nineteenth-Century China, 21-22.

66 It was later translated by Cecil Clementi, eventual Hong Kong Governor, as Cantonese Love-Songs in 1904 (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
Still, since the setting and topics are all locally Chinese, most of the characters used in Yue Ou were already the more “accepted” ones among them. What really encouraged the proliferating use of these phonetic Chinese characters was the need to represent the pronunciation of a foreign language like English, especially by the mid-19th century. Looking for a quick way to learn to use a foreign language without having to learn its grammar or alphabet, the Chinese began to create and put together different Chinese characters to mimic the pronunciation of a foreign language. The result was what is commonly referred to as pidgin English, which allowed the locals a way to interact with the foreigners without actually learning their languages. Some years later William Hunter describes the situation as follows:

Pegeon-English is the well-known name given to that unique language through the medium of which business was transacted and all intercourse exclusively carried on between the ‘Western Ocean’ foreigners and Canton Chinese …Foreigners came to Canton for a limited period, and would not or could not apply themselves to the study of so difficult a language as the Chinese, of which even a sufficiency for commonplace purposes was not easy to acquire … the shrewd Chinaman succeeded in supplying this absence of the knowledge of his own language by cleverly making himself familiar

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67 A list of these characters can be seen in Don Snow, Cantonese as Written Language: The Growth of a Written Chinese Vernacular (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004) 49.

68 The word Pidgin was also known as “pigeon” originally, which came from some very poor translation of “business” by some Chinese locals. Hence “business English” became “pigeon English” or “pidgin English”. Some authors call it “CCP”, China Coast Pidgin (Umberto Ansaldo, Stephen Matthews, and Geoff Smith, “Chinese Coast Pidgin” in Anasaldo Umberto (ed.), Pidgins and Creoles in Asia (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012) 62). Since the acronym is commonly used for the “Chinese Communist Party” nowadays, it will not be used in this work.

with sounds of foreign words, and conforming them to his own monosyllabic mode of expression, at the same time using simple Chinese words to express their meaning. He thus created a language, as it may be called, deprived of syntax, without the logic of speech, and reduced to its most simple elements. It took firm root, became the conventional medium of intercourse in respect to transactions of enormous value and magnitude, and exists in all its vigour and quaintness to this day.

To enable the locals to speak this kind of in-between “language” - something Morrison termed as “half English, half Chinese”\textsuperscript{70} – pidgin phrasebooks were published as learning tools and quick references. The earliest pidgin phrasebooks extant today were mainly on Chinese pidgin Portuguese (especially used in Macau) or Chinese pidgin English (mainly used in Canton plus elsewhere), and most of them based on the Cantonese dialect, in which many of the phonetic characters were used. Writers such as Uchida Keiichi\textsuperscript{71}, K. Bolton\textsuperscript{72}, and Zhou Zhen\textsuperscript{73} have identified a few of these pidgin works published since the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, which included a number of shorter phrasebooks such as the \textit{aomen fanyu zazi quanben} 《澳門番語雜字全本》 (“A glossary of foreign vocabularies used in Macau”) and the various editions of the \textit{hongmao tongyong fanyu}《紅毛通用番話》 (“Common language used by the Red


\textsuperscript{73} Zhou Zhen He 周振鶴, \textit{Yiyan shuyu} (revised edition) 《逸言殊語》 (增訂本), Shanghai People’s Press 上海人民出版社 (2008) 152-167.
Hairs”), designed to provide commonly used and simple phrases for daily communication purposes. It is difficult to assert how early these works began to circulate, but since they were already mentioned in the two articles published by Samuel William Wells in 1836-7, they must have been in use even earlier. These were followed by two longer works – the *huaying tongyu* (華英通語) (“The Chinese-English Common Phrases”) of 1855, and the massive 6 volumes *yingyu jiquan* (英語集全) (“A Collection of English phrases”) by Tong King-Sing, a graduate of the Anglo-Chinese College in Hong Kong, who later emerged as a major figure of reform in the dying days of the Dynasty.

The rise of the Chinese pidgin coinciding with an extensive use of the phonetic characters should be considered a logical development. That was because these pidgin works were intended for practical everyday use in places like Canton and Macau and not for literary appreciation, hence the sentences chosen as illustrations must be colloquial. Given that many Cantonese words and sounds were not writable, phonetic characters had to be created and used to present the Cantonese sentences as closely as they would sound in a conversation. In addition, given that languages like English and Portuguese are sound-based and the Chinese language is non-alphabetic, there is a lack of Chinese characters which can present all the sounds needed to mimic the complicated western language pronunciation. As a result, the increase in use of phonetic characters and in the

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75 According to Akihumi Yahanashi there are 4 versions of *huaying tongyu* (華英通語). The one that this author uses is a later edition purchased by Fukushi in San Francisco in 1860, and which was later brought back to Japan.

new ways of combining them quickly became fashionable in the writing of Chinese pidgin. Thanks to these scenarios, the Chinese pidgin works would contain a lot more phonetically constructed characters than their earlier Cantonese writing predecessors such as *A Concise Collection of Pronunciation and Tones used in Society* or the *Yue Ou*. On the other hand, this increased use of phonetic transcriptions was not merely restricted to the use of the Cantonese dialect and the constructed characters, but a similar situation can be observed with Chinese pidgin written in other dialects too. Such can be seen in another early Chinese pidgin work, *The Chinese and English Vocabulary* by Robert Thom, published in Canton sometime before 1843. Serving as the British consul at Ningpo (close to Shanghai), Thom wrote his Chinese pidgin according to “the Peking or Court dialect” (Mandarin), with an intention to “facilitate intercourse at the Northern Ports”.  

Understanding that most other pidgin works used southern dialects such as Cantonese, he even felt obliged to include a warning at the back of the book “Any native therefore who

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77 A detailed description can be found in the *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany* in 1844, quoting an M. Stanislas Julien, Professor of Chinese in the College of France: “The work alluded to is a Chinese and English vocabulary, published for the use of the Chinese. It is headed by a preface in Chinese, written in a moderate and conciliatory tone, which the Emperor must have read with no less interest than satisfaction, should it have been brought under his notice … Hitherto, the almost exclusive object of sinologists has been to compile dictionaries for the services of Europeans; but the opening of four new ports has given birth to new wants, and, among its other consequences, has created a sort of necessity for the publication of the vocabulary which we have now the pleasure of announcing. It was an idea at once happy and bold to aim at furnishing the Chinese with the opportunity of acquiring, through the medium of their own language, an acquaintance with that of England. But an immense difficulty had to be encountered in attempting to set forth to the eye the sounds of a foreign tongue, the pronunciation of which is so arbitrary, by employing for that purpose the signs of a language that has no alphabet. To triumph over this obstacle, and others which need not be enumerated, nothing less was required than the learning and experience of a man who has had his abode in China for the last ten years, and to whom the spoken language of the Chinese is as familiar as his vernacular tongue. The author is Mr. Robert Thom, whose abilities are well known throughout Europe; the gentleman who, in connection with the younger Morrison, acted as interpreter to Sir Henry Pottinger during his negotiations with the Chinese plenipotentiaries; and this, not only in arranging the terms of the recent peace, but likewise in since discussing and settling the articles of that commercial treaty which now throws China open to European enterprise and activity.” *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany, vol. III* (1884), pp.462-463.
pronounces them with a Provincial accent, must mis-pronounce the English words; and a Canton or a Fukien man will – molto magis – make nonsense of it altogether.” A comparison between the Cantonese and the Mandarin pidgins of the same English sentences, however, shows that the method of phonetic transcriptions was used regularly in both groups of works, but Thom’s phrasebook made use of mostly “typical” characters found in the Chinese language, and much fewer constructed characters (such as the kou- and ren- affixed words), as they were intended to be spoken in the Court accent.

Having this background of modern phonetic Chinese writing in mind, we should perhaps not be surprised by Lassar’s extensive use of them in his Matthew. Growing up in Macao, Lassar would have been familiar with the use of phonetic characters in representing the Cantonese words or sounds, and might likely be acquainted with Chinese pidgin Portuguese when he was working as a translator for the Portuguese government in the colony. Given that most of the names and concepts found in the Bible had no Chinese equivalence, and that he had effectively no previous Chinese biblical versions to refer to, his decision to use a great number of phonetic Chinese characters in representing the English sounds of the biblical terms is understandable. What is perhaps more surprising is the extent to which Lassar used these characters: Jesus’ genealogy in Matthew 1 provides a vivid illustration of such an approach, with the large number of foreign names included in a mere 25 verses of that chapter. For example, for Mathew 1:2 (“Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren”), Lassar uses phonetic characters (the kou-affixed characters) for all but one of the 10 characters needed to translate the names of “Abraham”, “Isaac”, “Jacob” and “Judah”. Among these words, more than half of them have no meaning or are very rarely used, making it obvious to the
readers that they are intended to be read phonetically only. In addition, as in the case of 啞吧嚹 (口 FixedUpdate) we have seen earlier, the proper way to understand Lassar’s Chinese phonetication should be through the Cantonese pronunciation, which gives ma til (Cantonese) rather than zi tiao (Mandarin), with the former pronunciation a lot closer to the sound of “Matthew” than the latter. In the following table of comparison, the Cantonese transliteration for Lassar’s 1807 Matthew and Marshman’s/Lassar’s 1810 Matthew is also provided, in order to provide the readers a sense of what these Chinese names were likely intended to sound by Lassar: 78

**Table 2.3 Comparison of Chinese translated names in four versions.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>KJV</th>
<th>“Abraham”</th>
<th>“Isaac”</th>
<th>“Jacob”</th>
<th>“Judah”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lassar (1807)</td>
<td></td>
<td>啞吧嚹 (口 FixedUpdate)</td>
<td>意(口 FixedUpdate)</td>
<td>喝呷</td>
<td>(口 FixedUpdate)(口 FixedUpdate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aabaalaaham/ Yabalakan</td>
<td>Jisat/Yise</td>
<td>Jegaap/Yexia</td>
<td>Jukdaa/Yuda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshman/Lassar (1810)</td>
<td></td>
<td>啞吧嚹 (口 FixedUpdate)</td>
<td>意(口 FixedUpdate)</td>
<td>喝呷</td>
<td>(口 FixedUpdate)(口 FixedUpdate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aabaalaaham/ Yabalakan</td>
<td>Jisat/Yise</td>
<td>Jegaap/Yexia</td>
<td>Jukdaa/Yuda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basset (~1700)</td>
<td></td>
<td>阿巴朗 Abalanq</td>
<td>依撒 Yisa</td>
<td>雅各 Yage</td>
<td>如達 Ruda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison (1813)</td>
<td></td>
<td>亞百拉罕 Yabolahan</td>
<td>以撒 Yisa</td>
<td>牙可百 Yakebo</td>
<td>如大 Ruda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**78** A more interesting and potentially revealing comparison will be one that compares the Armenian pronunciation of the biblical terms with the Cantonese pronunciation of Lassar’s translation. But since the split of the Armenian language into Eastern Armenian and Western Armenian happened around Lassar’s time (Talar Chahinian and Anny Bakalian, “Language in Armenian American communities: Western Armenian and efforts for preservation,” *International journal of the sociology of language*, 237 (2016) 39), and the number of Armenian dialects fall somewhere between 2 and 120 (Bert Vaux, *The Phonology of Armenian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 7), with the little we know about Lassar’s background, it is very difficult to determine which form of Armenian did he speak. The limitation makes a very in-depth phonetical analysis of Lassar’s transliteration quite difficult.

**79** The Cantonese transliteration system used is the jyutping system. For the first two rows of Table 2.3 the first transliteration provided is in Cantonese, and the second is in Mandarin.
Since Lassar and Marshman do not use any punctuation to denote places and people at all (the style of these punctuations vary, but are usually written as a sideline or a circling, at times even done with a different color\textsuperscript{80}), it would be very difficult for their readers to decide if certain characters constituted a name or not. So the presence of these otherwise meaningless characters is indeed a good indication that some foreign names are intended there. In contrast, even though Basset also uses phonetic transcription to translate these names in Matthew 1:2, none of the characters used are constructed characters, and he simply puts together commonly used characters to serve his purpose. This is also the reason why Basset uses prepositions diligently, so that the readers can understand what these characters are intended for. Morrison, following Basset, also uses common characters for transcription purposes. With Morrison’s translation eventually eclipsing Marshman’s and Lassar’s in both distribution and popularity (as we shall see in Chapter 5), the northern/Court dialect tradition of Basset’s would prevail (thanks to Morrison), with the southern/Canton dialect tradition of using constructed characters becoming a thing of the past.

Finally there are also expressions commonly used in the south (e.g. in modern-day Cantonese) that can be found in the Lassar’s translation. These phrases were already being excluded in the northern Court dialect tradition by the time of Lassar and Marshman, and would eventually disappear in the diction of the Mandarin language of

\textsuperscript{80} As seen in Basset’s handwritten copy of his NT translation manuscript, the one kept in Biblioteca Casanantense.
today. Some of them include guoxi 果係 (5:3), zhaijie 窮戒 (9:14), damai 打埋 and qiyu 企於 (24:15b). According to Ouyang, the main difference between modern written forms of Mandarin and Cantonese is found in their vocabulary systems, and the difference is much more pronounced in the common daily words, and much less obvious in more formal registers. It is likely that these words were daily used phrases in the south, which Lassar picked up in his days living in Macao and used in his translation of Matthew. With their usage fading away in the North, they remained as the evidence of the southern characters of the Lassar Matthew.

Marshman and Lassar would complete and publish their Bible translation in 1822, a year earlier than Morrison and William Milne. However, because they were operating in Serampore, their version would never become as widely distributed and used as the Morrison/Milne Bible (a fuller analysis will be given in Chapters 4 and 5). It is difficult to contend that their version had exerted much unique influence on the non-Baptist circles or on later Bible versions, except for the word “Jehovah” which we have already discussed. This study, however, has allowed us to examine the early Baptist tradition of Chinese Bible translation in Serampore – a biblical translation approach that used the KJV and was heavily influenced by the phonetic and pidgin writing style popular in Southern China, and a pioneering Protestant attempt that did not appear to have consulted

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81 In fact zhai 諱, meaning “not eating” (formed by putting the character “no” on top of the character “eat”), is so uncommon that modern day dictionaries can only offer its Cantonese pronunciation (zai) and not its Mandarin pinyin sound. The pronunciation zhai is a speculation of this author.

earlier Catholic works. We can only ponder what would have happened to the modern-day Chinese Bibles if this Serampore tradition had turned mainstream after the 1830s. The answer we will never know, as the landscape of Protestant Chinese translation of the Bible was fundamentally altered by the arrival of Robert Morrison to China in 1807.
Fig. 2.1 Opening page of Johannes Lassar’s *Gospel of Matthew* of 1807, reprinted with permission of the Lambeth Palace Library.
Fig. 2.2  An inner page of Johannes Lassar’s *Gospel of Matthew* of 1807, showing the beginning of Chapter 6, reprinted with permission of the Lambeth Palace Library.
Fig. 2.3 Joshua Marshman’s and Johannes Lassar’s *Gospel of Mark* of 1811, reprinted with permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.
Fig. 2.4  Joshua Marshman’s and Johannes Lassar’s *Gospel of John* of 1813, reprinted with permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.
3 THE BEGINNING OF THE MISSION IN CHINA

Much has been said and written about Dr. Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary who set foot in China, and who is generally recognized as the “Father of the Chinese Mission.” Although somewhat inaccurately, he is often credited as the first to translate the Christian Bible into Chinese and bring it to the Chinese people, and modern-day accounts about him and his achievement are regularly full of lavish praises and admiration, especially among Chinese sources. Although there remain a lot of misinformation and misconceptions about the man and his missionary activities, the true story is still not lacking amazing feats and considerable courage and perseverance.

3.1 THE YEARS OF PREPARATION

It did not take long for the London Missionary Society to issue an approval, when Robert Morrison applied to become one of its missionaries in May of 1804. The decision came just one day after the chair, Rev. Alexandar Waugh, received a letter from the young Morrison, pleading with him “to lay before the gentlemen of the committee, the commencement and progress, as well as present state, of (his) desire to engage in the

1 It is still common to come across modern writers who simply refer to Morrison as the very first person who completed the translation of the Chinese Bible – “Another significant milestone in the history of Bible mission in China is the completion of the first Chinese Bible translation by Robert Morrison (1782-1834), the first Protestant missionary of China.” Pamela Wan-Yen Choo, “Bible Missions in China”, Pauline Hoggarth, Fergus Macdonald, Bill Mitchell and Knud Jorgensen (eds.) Bible in Mission (Eugene: Regnum Books International, 2013) 185.

2 One reads: “Robert Morrison deserves to be written about again and again, because he was truly the trailblazer of Christianity in China, and tried to spread the Gospel to 300-400 million Chinese; he served as a representative and model for all missionaries to come after him.” (Tang Qing 湯清, Zhongguo jidujiao bainianshi《中國基督教百年史》“The First Hundred Years of Protestant Mission in China” (HK: Tao Sheng Publishing House, 1987) 87).
missionary work”. Morrison’s request was met with an unanimous approval, and neither nor was the Society in any way ambiguous about the objective of its China mission: “To acquire the Chinese language, and translate the Sacred Scriptures,” which was in line with founder David Bogue’s general strategy for the Society “to go to great lengths to accomplish (the task of sharing the Gospel) properly, including setting up schools and translating the Bible into the native tongue.” As for the specific method for achieving that goal, however, the Society had little direction or advice to give to Morrison, and there was in fact considerable skepticism in the country regarding the feasibility of even translating the Bible into a totally different language like Chinese. Unfortunately for Morrison, the only known sinologist in Britain at that time – Sir George Staunton, an original member of Lord Macartney’s delegation to China during the reign of Qianlong, and the translator of the Daqing Luli (the Great Qing Legal Code) into English - was not residing in the country (Morrison would eventually get to know Staunton personally, but

3 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 27 May 1807 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1A); Eliza Morrison, Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison, Vol. 1, 52.

4 “The translation and circulation of the Scriptures has always had an important place in the missionary movement, but in the case of China it was the main and, at first, the only motive” (Marshall Broomhall, The Bible in China, 45); see also Eliza Morrison, Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison, Vol. 1, 67-68.

5 Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 37.

6 There was a lot of skepticism in England regarding “the practicality of acquiring the Chinese language to any tolerable degree, and of expressing in it, with precision and force, the great truths of divine revelation.” Eliza Morrison, Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison, Vol. 1, 67; Moseley also recites some of this skepticism: “But such is the character especially of the Chinese Language, as to render such a society useless, for this language does not admit of any translation to be made into it, and in our present situation, it would be almost impossible from the want of talented men and money to make translations into either of the others.” William Moseley, The Origin of the First Protestant Mission to China and History of the Events which Induced the Attempt, and Succeeded in the Accomplishment of a Translation of the Holy Scriptures (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1842) 14.
it would be 3 years later in 1807). Yet Morrison remained undeterred; with very few ways to learn the language, he resorted to learning it from a Chinese man who was brought by Captain Henry Wilson to England and happened to be living in London at that time. When Morrison went to meet and interview Yong Saam Tak in 1805, the latter was asked if he knew the “Court Language of China” (Mandarin), and the man from Canton said he could read and write it very well, though he was a little slow in speaking it. In the end, Yong was willing to teach Morrison the Chinese language in exchange for some English lessons for himself, and the lessons began soon after Morrison moved to London in the autumn of 1805. Yong would prove a somewhat reluctant teacher for his English student, and although Morrison would try to arrange his travel to China with him as an employee of the BFBS, the plan fell through. Nonetheless, the help of Yong did allow

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7 Staunton affirms this in his autobiography: “It was in the spring of this year (1807) that I became first acquainted with the Rev. Dr. Morrison, through the medium of a letter from Sir Joseph Banks, which he presented to me upon his first arrival in China as missionary. From that period down to that of his lamented decease, in 1834, I was in constant communication with him, either personally or by letter. I was invariably his friend and advocate, and, considering the official position I held in China, I might add patron.” Eliza Morrison, Memoirs of the chief incidents of the public life, 36. Staunton would also dismiss the idea that there was any rivalry between them, saying that he “cultivated the Chinese language altogether for different purposes, and much less exclusively and assiduously than (Morrison) did.” 37.

8 In Chinese characters 容三德, the English name is also written as Yong Sam-tak.

9 Morrison’s letter to LMS from Clapham (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1A), the letter was undated, but by the order of events it was likely written in 1805.

10 Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 93.

11 In a report dated 17 Feb 1806, Morrison told a LMS board that Yong, for various reasons, had refused to continue teaching him (Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 93); Eliza Morrison also writes about a unhappy episode of cultural difference and clash between Morrison and Yong, which may perhaps shed some light on Yong’s reluctance in instructing Morrison: “From (Yong), (Morrison) obtained his first insight into the Chinese language; and in him he found a specimen of that proud and domineering temper for which his nation is so proverbial … On one occasion Mr. M. threw a piece of paper into the fire on which his teacher had written some characters after having committed them to memory; but such was Sam’s indignation, that for three days after he refused to give a lesson to his pupil, who, to avoid a similar offence, wrote the characters on a plate of tin, from which he could efface them, when done with.” Eliza Morrison, Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison, Vol. 1, 77.
Morrison to get started on his Chinese training, which was crucial to his early acquaintance of the language. The difference it made becomes clear when we consider how little Morrison knew about the Chinese language prior to learning it from Yong. It can be demonstrated by a copy of the “The Lord’s Prayer in Chinese Characters” found among his early letters kept in the SOSA archives in London, on which he titled “Taken by G. Burder, June 2, 1802, from a writing of Mons. Chaumont. The original was lately sent from Perkin in China”, 12 with an additional line instructing readers how to approach the script: “the Chinese is read in columns downwards, from right to left”. 13 Although the reading instruction is correct, the piece was actually written in Korean Hangul, with Romanization pronunciation given for the characters! Nor was it Lord’s Prayer, but just a random collection of Korean syllables with no overall meaning. And even though the date on which Morrison wrote his comments is unknown, it proves that Morrison had not a single clue about what Chinese characters looked like even as late as mid 1802. 14 Within the same collection an actual piece of the Lord’s Prayer in Chinese can also be found – titled “Oratio Dominica” and which features a Chinese translation very similar to earlier Jesuit versions. 15

12 The same Chaumont was mentioned by William Moseley, who called him “a very devout and amiable Ecclesiastic of the Church of Rome, who had spent six years in China, and read the language fluently.” The Origin of the First Protestant Mission to China (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1842) 15. Judging by the confusion between Chinese and Korean characters, either Morrison was mistaken by the content of the page, or Chaumont was overrated for his Asian languages ability.
13 Morrison to LMS, dated 25 Dec 1805 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1A).
14 The piece is undated, and although the collection includes materials from 1802 to 1806, it is hard to imagine Morrison was still so unaccustomed to the language that he couldn’t distinguish between Chinese and Korean as late as 1805.
15 The version is very similar to the ones found in old Jesuit works such as Tianzhu Jiaoyao (《天主教要》, “The Essential Doctrines of the Catholic Church”, Bibliothèque nationale (France), Chinois 7373 ), except the fact that it has the last part of Matthew 6:13 (“For Thine is the kingdom, and the
The piece has an English translation for each of the Chinese characters written next to it, dated 25 Dec 1805. It illustrates that not long after taking lessons from Yong, Morrison was already making progress and could tell that the so-called “Chinese” Lord’s Prayer he obtained earlier was nothing like the Chinese language he came to be acquainted with.  

3.2 THE MANUSCRIPT

In addition to getting a tutor, Morrison also sought help from whatever books and resources he could find. His break would come from an obscure manuscript of a Chinese translation of part of the New Testament. The copy was first discovered by Rev. William Moseley of Northamptonshire, the earliest Protestant visionary for translating the Bible for the Chinese people, who first heard of a report stating that part or whole of the New Testament had already been translated by “a Roman Catholic Priest, who spent six years in China”. A strong advocate of translating the Scriptures into the “Oriental” languages, Moseley was able to locate this manuscript in the British Museum two years later: a “manuscript in the Chinese Language, totally unknown to the public. This though lettered ‘Quatuor Evangelia Sinicè’ proved to be on examination a Harmony of the Evangelists,  

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16 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 27 Dec 1805 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1A).

17 It was William Moseley, who six years before the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society, issued a circular urging “the establishment of a Society for the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the languages of the most populous Oriental nations.” Marshall Broomhall, *The Bible in China*, 50.

the Acts, and all St. Paul’s Epistles, except that to the Hebrews.” According to the handwritten notes written on the front, “the transcript was made at Canton in 1737 & 1738, by order of Mr. Hodgson, who says it has been collated with care and found very correct. Given by him to Sir Hans Sloane in September 1739”. The manuscript was later donated to the British Museum as part of the Sloane collection, and subsequently numbered Sloane 3599. Little was known about the manuscript at the time, though Sir George Staunton believed that it was likely “a translation from the Vulgate, made under the direction of the Jesuits”. Hence, the Sloane copy discovered by Moseley was often referred to as “the Sloane Manuscript”, “the British Museum Manuscript”, or “the Harmony of Gospels”. Its author’s identity remained unknown for more than a century after Morrison’s time, but thanks to the works of Willeke and Moule, we can now be quite certain that it was the work of French Jesuit missionary Jean Basset, who worked in China from 1689-1707. Using the journal of the Chinese priest Andrew Ly (1692-1774), a student of Basset who carried on the Catholic ministry in the Province of

Sichuan after the former’s death, Willeke discovered a piece of the translation record that matches the Manuscript well.  

When Father Joannes Basset (Anglicized: Jean Basset), of happy memory, was still among the living, and exercised his ministry in the southern and western parts of this province, he had translated, besides other smaller works which are very useful to the mission, but are still in manuscript, and the first part of the Small Catechism which has appeared in print up to “Baptism” inclusive and is being used by Christians of this province, also the New Testament from the Latin into the Chinese idiom, beginning with St. Matthew, up to the first chapter of the Letter of St. Paul to the Hebrews. Prevented by death, he was unable to finish the wonderful work he had undertaken.

The clearest indication that Andrew Ly was referring to the British Museum Manuscript is the mention of the translation up to just the “primum caput” of the Book of Hebrews, which is exactly what we find in the British Museum Manuscript. According to the official Catholic record, Basset arrived at Canton in the year 1689, and had served in the missions of Guangxi and Sichuan Provinces. He died in December 1707, just 45

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26 Many Christians in those days considered the Pastoral letters and Hebrews part of the Pauline corpus.

27 With Jean Basset’s authorship confirmed, we will call the manuscript the “Basset Manuscript” or simply the “Manuscript” from here on. The first part of the Manuscript, the harmony of gospels section, will be referred to as the “Basset Harmony” or simply, the “Harmony.”
years of age, likely just shortly after he completed translating the first chapter of Hebrews.28

As we look further into his style of translation, it is not difficult to find in Basset’s translation a job well done,29 given that it was the first major undertaking to translate the whole New Testament by any Catholic translator.30 The reason why it descended into obscurity is unknown, and it probably has to do with the many other priorities of the Jesuits at the time, even though they had received the permission to translate the Bible as early as 1615.31 The Propaganda Fide of 6 December 1655 probably had a role in it too, which prohibited any printing of books by missionaries without written permission.32 So the quality of translation was unlikely the reason why Basset’s copy never got

28 Bernard Henry Willeke, “The Chinese Bible manuscript in the British Museum”, Catholic Biblical Quarterly 7.4 (Oct. 1945) 451. Willeke’s finding also disproves earlier speculations about the dating of the Manuscript. One of these was provided by Marshall Broomhall, who writes that “in 1804, a Chinese manuscript labeled Quatuor Evangelia Sinice was discovered in the British Museum … This find was nothing less than a transcript, made in Canton in 1737, of a Roman Catholic translation of a Harmony of the Four Gospels, of the Acts, and of all St. Paul’s Epistles.” The Bible in China, 52.

29 Sir George Staunton has high praises for the Manuscript, calling it “one of the most accurate and elegant translations I ever met with from any European language into the Chinese character; and being probably unique in this country, its value is (proportionally) enhanced by that circumstance.” Sir George Staunton to Rev. John Owen, dated 25 April 1804. See John Owen, The History of the Origin and First Ten Years of the British and Foreign Society, 92.

30 Yet we should never assume that these western translators ever worked alone, because many of their native helpers and co-workers have simply got forgotten in our passed-down history. See Thor Strandenaes, “Anonymous Bible Translators: Native Literati and the Translation of the Bible into Chinese, 1807-1907”, 121-148.


32 For instance Louis de Poirot told the Propaganda in 1803 that he had translated most of the books of the Old and New Testaments in vernacular Chinese (Mandarin), but did not receive the permission to print it either (Nicolas Standaert, “The Bible in Early Seventeenth-Century China”, 38-9). The translation is Guxin Shengjing 古新聖經, the first Chinese Bible translated into Mandarin, more than a half century before the first Protestant Bible in Mandarin Chinese (the Nanking Version of 1856).
published. According to Uchida, there are as many as 4 extant copies of this manuscript. The copy currently kept in the Biblioteca Casanantense of Rome (Mss. 2024) is believed to be the earliest and most complete version, containing all of the four Gospels, the Book of Acts, as well as the Pauline letters. Two other copies (kept in the British Museum and the Cambridge University Library) were later versions of the original, which have the full Gospels replaced by a Harmony of the Gospels. It is not certain who composed the Harmony, but both Moule and Uchida speculate that the author was probably Basset himself, and the Harmony was perhaps among the other “works” done by him. This study concludes differently, chiefly for two reasons. First of all we have textual proof of differences between two of the copies (the Rome copy and the British Museum copy), such as the expansion of the translation for “Christ” from jidu 基督 in the Biblioteca Casanantense copy to the long form jilishidu 基利士督 in the British Museum copy, showing the trace of text editing by the person(s) who abridged the four Gospels into the Harmony. Secondly, the two feature very different handwriting, which makes it hard to argue that they were from the same set of hand. As for who did the editing, there is little way for us to determine at this point. All we know is that Ly for a time held 3 original copies of Basset’s translation, and we can say that all copies have been accounted for. There is still one more copy in the University of Hong Kong, which

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33 “From what has been written it will be recognized that, within certain limits, the Church of Rome has permitted the translation of the Scriptures, but, speaking generally, she has not approved of their wide and free circulation among the people.” Marshall Broomhall, *The Bible in China*, 44.


was the copy transcribed and brought to China by Morrison, with notes written on it.\textsuperscript{37} Since it is the very copy that Morrison used, it will be our major focus in the later sections.

After discovering the Basset Manuscript, William Moseley wrote \textit{A Memoir on the Importance and Practicability of Translating and Printing the Holy Scriptures in the Chinese Language, and of circulating them in that vast empire} in 1801, calling for the direct printing and distributing of the Manuscript:

The manuscript translation is now in the British Museum, and the copy has been collated and found very correct. Digitus Dei est hic! The subject of the New Testament, being comprehended in these detached parts, it is not necessary to translate more for the first attempt. Nothing, therefore, remains for us to do, but to print and circulate a sufficient number of copies. Some difficulties may attend their distribution, but the whole will give way to the methods of circulation I have to propose.\textsuperscript{38}

It took the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) a few years to finish their research and consultation with Sir George Staunton, and they reached three conclusions and decisions in 1805: 1) That it confirmed that the Manuscript did contain a Harmony of the Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline Epistles (except for Hebrews); 2) Although the translation was considered accurate and stylistically superior to other known Chinese translation from European languages, it appeared to be a work “made from the Vulgate under the direction of the Jesuits”, given its language style and wording; 3) The cost for

\textsuperscript{37} This author has obtained two copies, and has used it with permission from the University of Hong Kong Library, as well as Dr. I-Jin Loh 駱維仁牧師 and Bible.fhl.net of Taiwan.

\textsuperscript{38} The memoir is included in the appendix of William Moseley, \textit{The Origin of the First Protestant Mission to China}, 95-116. Moseley’s statement about directly printing the manuscript is found in 109-110; see also \textit{The Quarterly Review} (London: John Murray, 1847) 427.
printing it as it was would be too high – roughly £2,500 for 1000 copies, and more than £6,000 for 5000 copies.\(^{39}\) Apparently it was its Jesuit origin, the costs concern, and the fact that it was an incomplete copy that swung the committee’s decisions against it in the end.\(^{40}\) Despite Moseley’s optimism, his plan of printing the Manuscript never took off.

On the other hand, Morrison also began inquiring about the Manuscript and two Chinese dictionaries kept by the Royal Society by the end of 1804.\(^{41}\) On 27 Dec 1804 he informed the LMS that the British Museum librarian agreed to loan out the Manuscript if he could obtain a special leave, and told them the importance of accessing at least one of the two Chinese language dictionaries held by the Library of the Royal Society.\(^{42}\) When Morrison finally got hold of the Basset Manuscript, he quickly proceeded to make a copy of it. According to Eliza it was Morrison, who after acquiring the “mode of writing Chinese, and some degree of familiarity with the characters”, began the transcription of the Manuscript with the help of Yong.\(^{43}\) Given that Morrison had only started acquainting himself with the language, and judging from the reasonably decent handwriting (by this author) and the amount of English notes written next to it (showing that Morrison was still at an early learning stage), it was probably too difficult for him to take up the main


\(^{40}\) The Society was somehow often confused about the contents of the Manuscript, mistakenly claiming that it had “a Harmony of the Gospels only” in the 1806 report, one year after they got it right in 1805. It was the single reason given in the 1806 report that the plan for printing it had been abandoned. In The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, v.1-4 (1811) 133-134.

\(^{41}\) The first time the topic of the Manuscript came up was in a letter dated 30 October 1805.

\(^{42}\) Morrison’s letter to LMS on 27 Dec 1805 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1A); see also Eliza Morrison, Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison, Vol. 1, 78.

task of transcription even with Yong’s assistance.\textsuperscript{44} William Milne, on the other hand, lays the responsibility of copying the British Museum Manuscript and the Latin-Chinese dictionary squarely on the shoulders of Yong, but comments that:

An attempt [by Morrison] was also made to learn something of the language, from the native just mentioned (Yong); but what was acquired proved afterwards of very trifling utility. The Dictionary and Harmony of the Gospels were more useful.\textsuperscript{45}

Milne would later describe Yong as possessing “a skeptical indifference to every kind of religion – a feeling very common among his countrymen”,\textsuperscript{46} and likely had a low view of the Chinese training Yong was able or willing to provide Morrison. Yet he was well aware of how important the Manuscript and the dictionary turned out to be for Morrison, and saw Yong’s contribution mainly through that aspect.

### 3.3 ROBERT MORRISON’S ARRIVAL IN CANTON

When Morrison set sail to China in January of 1807, he had only a little more than a year of Chinese training by Yong, as well as a small inventory of Chinese tool books including the Basset Manuscript, the Royal Society Chinese-Latin dictionary, the dictionary of Sir William Jones,\textsuperscript{47} an abstract of Fourmont’s grammar of the Chinese

\textsuperscript{44} Christopher Daily believes it was a joint effort, that “Saam Tak introduced Morrison to the rudiments of the Chinese language and together the men transcribed the Chinese Harmony of the Gospels from the Basset manuscript.” In \textit{Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China}, 93.

\textsuperscript{45} William Milne, \textit{A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China} (Malacca: Anglo-Chinese Press, 1820) 55-56.

\textsuperscript{46} William Milne, \textit{A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China}, 56.

\textsuperscript{47} Little is known about this dictionary of William Jones, and how big a role it played in offering Morrison some useful help on Chinese translation. It has been argued, though, that Jones’s Chinese
language\textsuperscript{48}, and Yong’s instructions about Chinese writing and pronunciation.\textsuperscript{49} Arriving in Canton after seven months at sea, Morrison immediately realized the numerous obstacles one faced being a lone Protestant missionary operating in the Empire.\textsuperscript{50} Among the biggest of such was the prohibition by the Qing government of its Chinese subjects to teach the Chinese language to foreigners, on penalty of death. The help he could solicit from other Westerners was limited too, even though he was able to keep in contact with Staunton (who was residing in Macau at the time) and receive various kinds of help from the senior statesman such as books, advice and referrals over the years, including the recommendation of having a Roman Catholic Chinese from Peking to instruct him.\textsuperscript{51} Yun would prove a faithful helper over the next few years. On the other hand, Morrison also resorted to learning from the Europeans who were residing in the country before him – these Europeans would employ local servants and try to learn Chinese from them.


\textsuperscript{49} Christopher Daily, \textit{Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China}, 104.

\textsuperscript{50} In the first year Morrison was constantly worrying about being ejected from the country. In a letter dated 04 November 1804 Morrison wrote to Joseph Hardcastle of the LMS, saying that “Now, it only remains for the Chinese to forbid me staying here, and the Portuguese at Macao. I trust the Lord will provide me a place of residence amongst this people. The human probability is, that I shall pass unnoticed. The Romish clergy at Macao, Sir George informs me, have it amongst them that I am come out to oppose them: and that there they are as rigid, if not more so, than in Romish countries in Europe. He thinks, however, that I yet may go down to Macao for my health, in the summer season: but that will add to my expense.” In Eliza Morrison, \textit{Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison}, Vol. 1, 162.

\textsuperscript{51} “On his arrival. Sir George (Staunton) introduced Mr. M. to Mr. Roberts, the Chief of the English Factory, and obtained for him, as a teacher, Abel Yun, a Roman Catholic Chinese from Pekin. The acquisition of the language was regarded by Mr. M. as his first duty, and to this he assiduously devoted himself.” In Eliza Morrison, \textit{Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison}, Vol. 1, 159.
Morrison was hopeful that in the secrecy of his private living quarters, he would be able to continue his Chinese education by this manner.\footnote{Morrison’s journal entry on 05 September 1807 (CWM/LMS, South China, Journals: Journal 3), quoted in Christopher Daily, \textit{Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China}, 109.}

If in the good Providence of God I be permitted here I do not doubt of being able to learn the language. I hear the vulgar tongue perpetually spoken and learn to speak it from my boy. Every time that I walk out the characters are presented to the eye in various ways, which connected with the studying of them in private will in a little time render their appearances familiar.

The downside of learning from a servant boy, however, was that the sounding (“a very coarse pronunciation”) he was picking up was often looked down upon by the more educated and privileged in the city, who claimed that they could not understand “the country people and the crowd of collies”.\footnote{Morrison’s letter to Joseph Hardcastle on 04 November 1804. Eliza Morrison, \textit{Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison}, Vol. 1, 163.} Apart from receiving “private” tutoring, Morrison was also able to acquire Chinese books through his servants. For example, a servant of his by the name of Ah Tsoi was able to enter into the city and purchase a forty-volume set on the history of China for his employer.\footnote{Christopher Daily, \textit{Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China}, 110.} Still, the process of learning was expectedly difficult and tedious, and subject to all sorts of interruption. For example, his study was interrupted for 5 months in 1808, following political turmoil between China and England. Though Morrison had in general kept a sealed lip over the exact political circumstances in his letters and journals, Eliza reveals that the dispute started when Lord Minto, the Governor General of India, sent a fleet and an armed force to Macau without authorization to “defend” the trading centre from the French, without realizing that the
port city was only under Portuguese jurisdiction thanks to a dedicated arrangement with the Qing government.\(^{55}\) The Chinese government was furious, and English subjects were ordered to leave Canton, with some having to stay onboard British vessels during periods of hostilities, including Morrison himself.\(^{56}\) In a letter to his father Morrison lamented that he was “still without (his) books”, showing that the evacuation was probably rushed and messy, and undoubtedly added to the woes and frustration of the missionary.\(^{57}\)

It was also around this time period that he began greatly appreciating the help of two of his servants, which would change the course of his approach. They were Ko-sien-seng, an older and more experienced teacher of whom Morrison spoke highly,\(^{58}\) and Low Heen, who proved to be a very capable scribe to his employer, whose transcription skills and knowledge about printing Chinese materials were deemed indispensable by Morrison. In one of his letters he wrote:\(^{59}\)

> I have also Low Heen, whom I mentioned to you before. He transcribed for me the *Harmony of the Gospels* and the *Acts of the Apostles*. He put them into the form of Chinese books which they had not before and in transcribing wrote in full all that in the copy were contractions, which


\(^{56}\) Morrison was on board *Warley Whampton* when he wrote on 28 Oct 1808 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1A).

\(^{57}\) Morrison ended up staying onboard “Warley” for 3 months, from October 1808 to January 1809. Morrison’s letter on 01 Nov 1808 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

\(^{58}\) “My tutor Ko-sien-seng, a respectable, able schoolmaster, in the middle of life, yet continues and is as diligent as he was when I last wrote to you.” Morrison’s letter to his father on 21 Jun 1809 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

\(^{59}\) Morrison’s letter to LMS on 04 Dec 1809 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
Dr Montucci spoke of as so nice and laborious, but then which, to a person who knows the language nothing is more easy.

3.4 THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES OF 1810

Just two years since arriving in China, with his Chinese language skills still having much room for improvement, Morrison quickly found Low Heen’s abilities a great asset. The servant offered an opportunity otherwise inaccessible to Morrison – to have the Basset Manuscript transcribed, revised and arranged into a print-ready layout, and have it printed and distributed as it was. The idea of printing the transcribed copy directly came up as early as mid-1808, when Morrison discussed the expenses and feasibility of printing part of the dictionary and the Basset Manuscript in this manner. Morrison felt that while it was possible to print part of the Manuscript, it would be more beneficial to proceed with printing of part of the dictionary first, because:

It is probable that (when) you hear from me again I shall have passed round to Penang if not to Calcutta in order to print the first part of the dictionary which I have in hand – by the first part I mean that which had the English word preceding the Chinese. My proceeding to do this however is quite conditional. I shall not think of it without your direction… the whole or greater part of the expenses be bore by friends in this country. Should that be the case I presume there will be no objection. I could now be carrying on a translation of the Scriptures, through the assistance of the Chinese [that] I have, but I judge it more

60 This is referring to an account of the Chinese Manuscript written by Antonio Montucci in the Gentleman’s Magazine for October and November 1801. Montucci even offered his service to the newly-formed BFBS as an editor for the printing of the Manuscript “for the benefit of 300 millions of people”. John Owen, The History of the Origin and First Ten Years of the British and Foreign Society. London: Tilling and Hughes (1816) 89-90.

61 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 03 Jul 1808 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
prudent to pursue the object above mentioned, in order to perfect myself in the language and more than that to prepare the way for theirs. Should the Lord give life and enable me to publish a moderately good dictionary, such as I propose – one will facilitate the acquisition of the language to future missionaries, more experiential service will be rendered to the good cause than any other possible way of filling up my time at present.

It is clear from this letter that Morrison’s preference by mid-1808 was still to have the dictionary printed first, and not the Basset Manuscript, citing his inadequacy in his understanding of the language, and the future benefits for getting a dictionary printed for other missionaries following his footsteps. But with Low Heen proving an adequately capable helper, Morrison’s tone had seemingly changed when he wrote to the LMS in mid 1809, sharing a more positive view towards printing a transcribed version of the New Testament:

The man, who has been with me upwards for a year, Low Heen, is now transcribing the M.S. of the gospels [etc.], & putting it into a Chinese form. Which will also be a preparation for printing it, should it be thought proper. I had some thoughts of endeavouring to obtain a cutter of the types of the Chinese character, but judged that it was yet rather premature, & might prevent the thorough acquisition of the language.  

The suggestion was brought up again in December of the same year, with Morrison gently urging the Society to come to a decision about funding the printing of the Manuscript, writing that “Low Heen is also with us as usual and is writing out the Harmony [etc.] in the manner of Chinese books: which will make it ready for printing

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62 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 21 Jun 1809 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
any part of it when you authorize and enable us to do it.”

Morrison’s change of mind and stronger conviction to have the Scriptures printed first probably had to do with several reasons – the ongoing difficulties associated with learning and working with the Chinese language, the uncertainty of the political situation and the reality of constant disruption (such as the recent Minto incident), the able hands and solid help he enjoyed from Low Heen, and most probably, his ongoing race against the Serampore translators in translating the Chinese Bible. Although Daily argues that Morrison based his decision on a favorable evaluation of the reliability of the Basset Manuscript, judging from his readiness to heavily revise the Basset copy (as shown in his translation of Luke in 1811), the decision to print the Manuscript “as it is” was most likely made strategically to take a quicker route to complete the translation of the New Testament.

Low Heen was crucial to Morrison’s plan not just in the transcription of the Manuscript, but because the servant could also arrange for the printing of the Scriptures on behalf of his employer. The consideration had much to do with finances, with Morrison writing to the Society that “were the Chinese (printing) it for themselves the expense would not be great, but being done for foreigners our opposition to a standing law of the Empire the expense will thereby be much increased.” Since it was also illegal

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63 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 01 Apr 1809 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

64 Daly argues that Morrison finally decided to print Low Heen’s transcription because he “eventually came to the conclusion that Basset’s translation was faithful to both the original Greek text and the spirit of the Chinese language, and further that the terms employed by the manuscript to describe Christian concepts were appropriately indigenous and common” (Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 133). However, Morrison has not left any writing letters or journals confirming this interpretation, so the most we can speculate is that he found Basset’s translation satisfactory and useable. The funding consideration (see later) and his dissatisfaction about the lack of progress likely played a much bigger role.

65 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 03 Jul 1808 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
for foreigners to print and distribute the Scriptures among the Chinese, having Low Heen to do the job was the best option available at the time. However, in December 1810 when the first 1,000 copies of the transcribed Acts of the Apostles were printed, Morrison was very upset at the final cost (521 dollars), which was about 100 dollars more than he had expected before. Calling Low Heen “unfaithful” and “not trust-worthy”, he was more upset at the breach of trust, believing that Low Heen must have cheated him of some printing costs (the final cost actually turned out to be 75 dollars less, as Morrison confided in a second letter, written just a month later). Lamenting the fact that the foreign missionaries “shall never be able to have the S.S. printed here as low as the Chinese have books done”, Morrison would never quite trust the locals to take charge of

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66 “I have been grieved this evening to find that Low Heen has been unfaithful. I employed him to get a thousand copies of the Acts of the Apostles printed for me. The character and paper are to be of the finest quality. Also the binding, and I am to have the plates. I have sent a copy to you by Mr. Plowden. I trust you will rejoice to see this beginning through. I agreed for five hundred and twenty one dollars. That the charge would be somewhat higher than for China books I knew but did not suppose that it was one hundred and odd dollars higher as he has this evening confessed to me it is. I regret the circumstance of his being not trust-worthy, much more than the loss of the money. We shall never be able to have the S.S. printed here as low as the Chinese have books done. The plates which I have had cut will strike off 15,000 before they need to be repaired. You will see more on this subject in my public letter.” (Morrison’s letter to LMS on 28 Dec 1810 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B). Morrison’s letter to Rev. J. Clunie in the same month was personal and even more bitter: “I employed him to get 1000 copies of the Acts of the Apostles printed in Chinese, and he connived at my being charged twenty-five or thirty pounds more than the proper price. He told me so this evening, and confessed his fault. It grieves me very much, as I cannot now trust him. It is very desirable to have persons on whom we can place entire confidence, but that is not the case with the Chinese. A want of truth is a prevailing feature in their character; hence mutual distrust, low cunning, and deceit. I pray that the Lord may soon grant to me some from among the heathen who will faithfully join in the promulgation of divine truth. I want some humble, persevering fellow-labourer. I feel much the want of time for my several duties. I have much less confidence in myself than I once had. You may think it strange, but it is true, that since I left you I have forgotten much of the little that I once knew.” (Eliza Morrison, Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison, Vol. 1, 293-294).

67 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 18 Jan 1811 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
the printing arrangement completely again. Yet despite the less than satisfactory experience, the printing of Acts was met with great enthusiasm in England, and has ever since been regarded as “the first Scripture circulated in China”, though it was not an original translation by Morrison and came more than three years after Lassar’s Matthew, and a little after Marshman’s and Lassar’s Matthew. To the Societies and the supporters of mission work back home, while an accurate translation of the Scriptures was of certain importance, the effectiveness in getting those translated copies into the hands of the nonbelievers was just as, if not more, important. Eliza quoted from a newsletter of the LMS addressing to the public in September of 1811:

By the fleet just arrived, the Missionary Society has received the pleasing intelligence from Mr. Morrison, of his having printed 1000 copies of the Acts of the Apostles; three of which he has forwarded to the Directors. The expense of printing these was between 400 and 500 dollars, or about £100 sterling; but from the same wooden types he will be able to take off 100,000 copies, by only occasionally retouching the types where necessary. It is a most delightful consideration to every lover of his Bible to reflect, that so large a portion of the human race are capable of reading Chinese. Three ambassadors from Leen-keen, or the islands of Lekyo, who had come with tribute to China, arrived just in time to be presented with some copies. The vernacular tongue of these islands is a dialect of the Chinese language, which is read by all their literati.

Another flattering report issued by the Society directors in May 1811 reads:

68 Another reason was that the Chinese copies had a Chinese label mistakenly placed on its cover, falsely referring to it as a Taoist text, which made Morrison understandably quite uneasy. (Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 135).

69 Also known as the “Loo-choo Islands” or “Ryukyu Islands”, nowadays Okinawa.

70 Eliza admitted that her source came from one with a later date. Eliza Morrison, Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison, Vol. 1, 296-297.
When we consider Mr. Morrison as the first Protestant Missionary to this vast country, and as the translator of the sacred Scriptures, the word of life and salvation, into the language of three hundred millions of souls, we cannot but intreat the prayers of the whole Society that the great Head of the Church may be pleased to prolong his valuable life, till he shall not only have completed the translation, but printed and circulated it through all the regions of that extensive empire.71

Daily, however, writes that “the public reaction to Morrison’s edition of the Acts of the Apostles was mixed”, leaving him bewildered and “confused” at the end.72 Yet this impression of a mixed reaction comes mainly from a letter of Morrison in 1819 – some 9 years after the publication of his Acts and a few years after he had completed the whole New Testament – written mainly to defend himself from heavy criticisms against his extensive use of the Basset Manuscript, leveled mainly by Marshman.73 From the more contemporary records, however, the immediate responses were overwhelmingly positive, and had a very positive impact on the overall financial picture for Morrison – an area we will look more into at the end of this chapter.

3.5 MORRISON’S USE OF THE BASSET MANUSCRIPT – LUKE OF 1811

After publishing the Acts of the Apostles, Morrison focused on translating Luke. Since translators of the New Testament books would usually start with the Gospels, especially Matthew (e.g. Lassar, Marshman/Lassar) or John (e.g. Karl Gützlaff’s

71 Eleazar Lord, A Compendious History of the Principal Protestant Missions to the Heathen, selected and compiled from the best authorities, vol. II (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1813) 206-207.
72 Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 136.
73 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 25 Nov 1819 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 2).
Japanese translation of 1837), it was odd to have Morrison begin with Acts and then move on to Luke. Morrison gave several reasons for his rather unique sequence:

   In printing the Acts of the Apostles first, I believe I mentioned before that my reasons were – its being first ready, and that by doing it, I might make an essay as to the practicability of having the S.S. printed in this neighbourhood. But for these reasons the history of our Lord’s life would certainly have been my first publication.\(^{74}\)

   Out of these reasons the first was probably the most relevant, with the last being least so (if the history of the Jesus’ life was in mind he should have begun with Luke or any of the Gospels). This study strongly speculates that Acts was the first book chosen because it truly was the most “ready” of the NT books – given that Morrison’s copy of the Manuscript only had a Harmony of the Gospels, he needed to do a lot more work editing and translating before he could have any of the Gospel books ready for publication. It does appear that even though Morrison never shied away from admitting his use of the Basset Manuscript, he was reluctant to reveal fully how his reliance on the Manuscript had affected his translation and printing strategy. As he attempted to further assert his authorship in the translation process, his articulation of the use of the Manuscript varied over time too. Following the printing of 1,000 copies of Acts Morrison wrote quite frankly in early 1811:

   I have also sent three copies of the Acts of the Apostles which I had printed. Only the preface is strictly my own composition.\(^{75}\)

\(^{74}\) Morrison’s letter to LMS, Nov 1811 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B); Daily seems to have accepted Morrison’s reasoning quite readily, or at least does not attempt to probe deeper (Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 133).

\(^{75}\) Morrison’s letter to LMS on 18 Jan 1811 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
Ten months later however, when he was about to print Luke he would adopt a more authoritative and original tone:

This work – I mean the translation of the Gospel by St. Luke – is my own translation, the Acts of the Apostles was only edited by me.\(^{76}\)

When Morrison presented his complete translation of the NT he would give a more comprehensive portrayal of his use of the Basset Manuscript over the overall process of translation:

The Gospel, the closing Epistles, and the Book of Revelation, are entirely my own translating. The middle part of the volume is founded on the work of some unknown individual, whose pious labours were deposited in the British Museum. I took the liberty of altering and supplying what appeared to me to be requisite; and I feel great pleasure in recording the benefit which I first derived from the labours of my unknown predecessor.\(^{77}\)

Up until recently, Morrison’s explanation had generally been accepted in full, except when challenged occasionally by individuals who were able to make careful comparisons between his translation and that of Basset (e.g. Marshman in 1817, see Chapter 4).\(^{78}\) Still, few found it necessary to question Morrison’s version of events, including modern day scholars.\(^{79}\) Our goal here is to determine more accurately the extent

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\(^{76}\) Morrison’s letter to LMS, Nov 1811 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).  
\(^{77}\) Morrison’s letter to LMS on 11 Jan 1814 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).  
\(^{78}\) Zetzsche’s analysis remains one of the best studies on Morrison’s reliance on Basset, and he argues that “the Gospel harmony, which to a large extent was a fairly exact rendering of parts of the Gospels in a new order, was used extensively by Morrison” by demonstrating that Morrison followed Basset very closely on John 1:1-13. Yet he provides no such proof for the other gospel books. (Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 36, especially n62).  
\(^{79}\) “Scholars have not yet explored the relationship between Basset’s abbreviated Harmony of the Gospels and the complete standard Bible. Since the Basset manuscript was a Harmony of the Gospels rather than a translation of all four Gospels, is it really possible for Morrison to copy Basset’s Gospel of St Luke verbatim? Scholars have made interesting claims regarding Morrison’s dependence upon Basset
to which Morrison relied on the Basset Manuscript, and the possible reasons behind some of his source dependence and translation decisions. It helps to begin with the Book of Acts, which can be expected to be just a transcribed version of Basset. By conducting a visual examination to compare the first few verses of Morrison’s 1810 Acts to that of the Basset Manuscript, we can have a sense of the similarity between the two (diction and syntactic differences are indicated as bold): 80

Table. 3.1  A Comparison of Acts 1:1-5, as found in Morrison (1810) and Basset (~1700).

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80 Marshman used the total number of characters altered divided by the total number of pages to determine the number of characters altered per page, in order to show how similar Morrison’s translation was to the Basset Manuscript (Marshman’s letter to LMS on 13 Dec 1816, copied on 16 Jun 1817 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B)). The technique gives a general idea of dependence, but provides little detail about the nature of the similarities and dissimilarities. The author realizes the current technique only looks at a small section of the texts and is inadequate, but believes it can provide another perspective of Morrison’s dependence on the Basset Manuscript (e.g. if a section of the texts shows great similarity, then it is impossible for Morrison not to have used it at all). This author defines “dissimilarities” as altered or replaced diction, and considerable change of word order or sentence structure. The passages are selected randomly, unless otherwise stated.
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<td>陡斐肋余先言耶稣始行训诸情。至于以圣风嘱所选之使徒。而升天之日。盖受难四旬之后其以多自徵已活。現伊等而言天國之情。又同食間命曰。勿離柔撒冷。惟候父之許。汝曹所曾聞出吾口。蓋若翰固授水洗。汝曹乃不日受聖風之洗。</td>
<td>陡斐肋。余先言耶稣始行训诸情。至于以圣风嘱所选之使徒。而升天之日。盖受难四旬多自徵已活。現伊等而言天國之情。又同食間。命曰。勿離柔撒冷。惟候父之許。汝曹所曾聞出吾口。蓋若翰固授水洗。汝曹乃不日受聖風之洗。</td>
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The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

(Acts 1:1-5, KJV)

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81 This version is taken from a photograph of the first page of Morrison’s 1810 Acts, included in Marshall Broomhall, *Robert Morrison – A Master-Builder*, 58.

82 The version of the Basset Manuscript used in the comparisons in this chapter is the Hong Kong University version – the one which Morrison brought with him from London to China. The choice is specifically made because both the Biblioteca Casanantense copy and the British Library copy are slightly different from this HKU version, though it is not clear whether the changes were made deliberately or by mistakes. By using this version, we can better determine what kind of changes Morrison made when doing his translation, using Basset’s as a reference.

83 A highly standardized punctuation system was yet to develop during that time, so both Basset and Morrison used just “。”, the Chinese period, for the function of both a comma and a period throughout. Modern-day writers often replaced some of these by “，”，the Chinese comma, in order to indicate how the sentences should be spaced and read. The author has kept the original punctuation for the sake of more accurate comparison.

84 The Chinese often used an underscore to denote place and people’s names, but format variations existed, as found in the different notation systems used by Basset and Morrison, with the former using a single underscore to refer to people’s names and a double for place names, while the latter used a border to indicate place names.
It is visibly obvious that the differences between the two versions are very minor. In this illustration, just 2 changes can be found in Acts 1:1-5 – i) A slight rearrangement of the placement of the punctuation marks; ii) The slight extending of the sentence from 而升天之日。蓋受難四旬多自徵已活 (“From his suffering to the day of ascension, for more than 40 days, he himself testified to many that he was alive”) to 而升天之日，蓋受難四旬之後其以多自徵已活 (“And on the day of ascension, for more than 40 days after his suffering, he himself testified to many that he was alive”). None of these bring any significant changes in meaning, and the sentence rephrasing in ii) is also very minor, evidence of a copy which relied heavily on the Basset Manuscript and was sent to the press almost untouched.85 How about the version of Acts Morrison published with the rest of his New Testament translation in the year 1813? Did Morrison manage the time and expertise to prepare a much different version 3 years later, or did he just use the same of 1810 version? We can have a good idea by making another comparison between the 1813 copy of Acts and Basset’s:

Table. 3.2  A Comparison of Acts 1:1-5, as found in Morrison (1813) and Basset (~1700).

85 So reports that stated that “In September, 1810, Mr. Morrison sent the Acts of the Apostles carefully revised with the Greek text” were very inaccurate. The London Encyclopædia or Universal Dictionary of Science, Art, Literature, and Practical Mechanics, comprising a Popular View of the Present State of Knowledge illustrated by Numerous Engravings, a General Atlas, and Appropriate Diagrams, Vol.13 (London: Thomas Tegg, 1829) 261.
Acts 1:1-5 (Morrison, 1813)

弟阿非羅肋（Theophilus）

余先言耶穌始行訓諸情。至于以聖風囑其所選之使徒而升天之日。蓋受難後復以多實憑據，四旬之間，現已活與伊等看。而言天國之情。又同食間命曰：勿離耶路撒冷，惟候父之許。汝曹所曾聞出吾口。蓋若翰固施水洗。汝曹乃不日必受聖風之洗。

Acts 1:1-5 (Basset’s Harmony, ~1700)

陡斐肋（Theophile）

余先言耶穌始行訓諸情。至于以聖風囑其所選之使徒而升天之日。蓋受難四旬多自徵已活。現伊等而言天國之情。又同食間。命曰。勿離柔撒冷。惟候父之許。汝曹所曾聞出吾口。蓋若翰固受水洗。汝曹乃不日受聖風之洗。

The 1813 version of Morrison’s Acts shows more changes from Basset’s version, though the two are still quite similar. Some of these changes are, however, indicative of the important translational decisions Morrison had made after acquiring a better knowledge of the Chinese language and being more confident in making the necessary revisions:

1) **Name Changes** - this marks one of the more significant differences of Morrison’s NT from Basset’s, by using longer transliterated names, replacing *doufeilei* 陡斐肋 (“Theophile”) with *diafeiluo* 弟阿非羅 (“Theophilus”). Another similar conversion is for the word “Jerusalem”, which Morrison changes to *yelusaleng* 耶路撒冷 from Basset’s version of *rousalen* 柔撒冷 (“Hierosolymis”). The changes do not appear to be related to a difference between English and Latin

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86 *Yesu Jilishidu wozhu jiuze xiniyizhaoshu – juyi banyan yichu* 《耶穌基利士督我主救者新遺詔書-俱依本言譯出》 (“The New Testament of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – all translated from the original languages”). Notice the adding of “all translated from the original languages” at the end of the title. Given that half of the translation was completed using the Basset Manuscript (see later), the statement can hardly be true.

87 This phrase was further revised from “升天之日” (“the day of ascension”) in 1813 to “而被取上去之日” (“the day he was taken up”) in 1823, closer to the original meaning of the text.
pronunciation though, and appears more a personal translation preference of Basset, who would always limit his transliterated names to 3 syllables – probably from his understanding that Chinese names usually were made up of 2-3 syllables, rarely 4 or more, unless they were not of Han origins.  

A second preference of Basset is to not translate the “s” sound, as can be seen in his ignoring of the end “s” sound of “Hierosolymis”. We have no writings of Basset to explain why he made such preferences, but the Protestant translators that came after certainly did not agree. Hence “Christ” would be changed from jidu 基督 to jilishidu 基利士督 (see later), in which shi 士 gives the “s” sound in “Christos”. Note also the expansion from 2 characters to 4 characters.

2) More Contemporary Style - Morrison added Chinese pronouns such as qi 其 (he) and postposition such as zhijian 之間 (during) to Basset’s translation – words that had little meaning on their own, but helped the paragraphs to appear more contemporary and easier to understand.  

While a fuller discussion of the different Chinese writing styles the Protestant missionaries faced in the 19th century will be provided in Chapter 5, the syntactic changes probably show that Morrison felt the Chinese style used in the Basset Manuscript (roughly a century earlier) a little too archaic; it also suggests that if Morrison had had more freedom to choose his style

88 A feature unique to Basset’s translation, as no such adherence can be found with his predecessors. For example in the 1636 Shengjing Zhijie 聖經直解 (“A Straight Explanation of the Bible”), Emmanuel Diaz would translate “Christ” as 契利士督 Jilisidu and “Jerusalem” as 日路撒冷 Rulusaleng.

89 See Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 37, n.64.
of Chinese (i.e. if he wasn’t relying on Basset’s), he probably would have chosen the Mandarin style of writing.\(^{90}\)

3) Misunderstanding Classical Diction - Morrison apparently made a mistake by changing Basset’s 四旬多自徴已活。現伊等而言天國之情。又同食間 (“For forty more days showed himself to be alive, appearing in front of others to talk about the things of heaven, and to eat together”) to 四旬之間、現已活與伊等看。而言天國之情 (“During the forty days, he has now lived for others to see, and to talk about the things in heaven”). The problem apparently has to do with the word xian 現, which can mean both “appearing” (as a verb) or “now” (as a conjunction), depending on the context. When Basset uses it he means “appeared”, as allowed in more classical syntax, but Morrison most likely misread it as “now”, hence he changed xian 現 (appeared) into xianyi 現已 (now … already), and had to rephrase the sentence to make it legible, which resulted in a mistake. This translation mistake would remain in Morrison’s version, and found its way to Marshman’s and Lassar’s NT too, only to be emended in Gützlaff’s and Medhurst’s version in 1839.\(^{91}\)

4) Different in Sources – It is clear even from these few verses that Morrison did attempt to revise Basset’s translation when he felt the former had made a mistake.

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\(^{90}\) See Chapter four, when Milne suggested to Morrison to use the Mandarin style of writing, only to be rejected by the former.

\(^{91}\) The problematic sentence remained in Morrison’s 1813 version of the New Testament, as well as the 1823 version by him and Milne. This translation of the text had obviously influenced the translation by Marshman and Lassar (for more proofs of such influence please see later sections), whose 1822 version of Acts 1:3b reads 四旬之間現已活教伊等看 with just a variation by one word (bolded), which does not change the overall meaning of the line. The mistake was only corrected by Gützlaff in 1839, with a slightly different version in 1840 reads 耶穌自顯復活，立憑據示門生看 (“Jesus showed himself as alive, and gave testimony to his disciples to see”), finally getting rid of xianyi 現已.
Such can be seen when he adds to his translation 其以多實憑據 ("and he, using many proofs") – a line that corresponds to “in multis argumentis” in Latin, which Basset seems to have omitted by mistake. This is significant because it shows that Morrison did make an effort to revise the Basset Manuscript according to the source version he did possess, whether it was the KJV or the Greek, despite the tight timeline he was facing to complete the New Testament.

From the above-noted changes we can conclude that although Morrison was still largely using the Basset Manuscript as the basis for his 1813 Acts, he did, unlike in the 1810 transcribed version, attempt to make bigger changes whenever he saw them as appropriate, most notably in the transliteration of the people’s and place names, as well as in places where Morrison believed there was a mistake. However, while Morrison was right in some cases, his still relatively inadequate Chinese led to the misreading of some of Basset wordings, resulted in mistakes that would remain for some years.

After finishing Acts Morrison picked Luke next,\(^92\) which appeared quite logical given that its wording and style were closest to Acts among the gospels. Another possible reason was that Luke was one of the most frequently used books in Basset’s Harmony, especially when it comes to the earlier chapters (see below), hence it would be a reasonable choice to do Luke right after Acts. Zetzsche has concluded that Morrison uses

\(^{92}\) The rough sequence of books completed by Morrison between 1810 and 1813 (the completion of the NT) is roughly as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/Chapter</th>
<th>Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1810 (Dec)</td>
<td>Acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811 (Nov)</td>
<td>Luke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>Paul’s Epistles of Romans, Corinthians, Galatians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>The remainder of the NT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Basset’s Gospels “extensively” from his observation of Morrison’s translation of John 1:1-13. But if Morrison was using the same approach for Luke (and other gospels) as he did for Acts, it is a little difficult to explain the length of time he spent working on Luke—a full year from the end of 1810 to late 1811. Despite the fact that he had suffered from the devastation of losing his first child James, had managed to complete a small tract in Chinese, and was working on his Chinese grammar over the same period of time, the length of time he took to finish Luke is still considerably long, given his progress during that period of a few years (he completed the entire NT by 1813). This study suggests that we cannot simply accept Zetzsche’s assumption and consider Morrison’s gospels another set of books heavily based on Basset’s; instead, a more detailed comparison between the two is necessary to reach our conclusion. To begin, let’s start with a better understanding of the morphology of the Basset Harmony.

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93 “Morrison followed Basset very closely on John 1:1-13, got off track because of Basset’s omission of verse 14, and then translated verses 15-18 rather independently.” Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 36, n62.


95 Thor Strandenaes is the first to give a detailed breakdown of the components of the Harmony ("The Sloane MS 3599: an early manuscript of an incomplete version of the New Testament", *Theology & Life* 6 (1983) 67-69). Thanks to modern-day computing, the current table has more clarity, and provides one extra piece of information – the presence of Robert Morrison’s handwriting notes. Daniel Kam To Choi has also listed the order out, in a more simplified layout, in *Bairisheng de zhongwen shengjing chaoben jiqi dui zaoqi xinjiao zhongwen yijing de yingxiang* 白日陸的中文聖經抄本及其對早期新教中文譯經的影響 (“The Chinese Bible Manuscript of Jean Basset and its Influence on the Early Protestant Chinese Bible Translation”), 《華神期刊》*China Evangelical Seminary Journal*, no.1 (2008) 62-66.
Table. 3.3   The Morphology of Basset’s Harmony of Gospels.96

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ch</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(4) 1:18ab-25a</td>
<td>(1) 1:1-4; (3) 1:5-56</td>
<td>(2) 1:1-13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(2) 1:17</td>
<td>(1) 1:57-80; 2:1-21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(1) 2:1-12; (3) 2:13-23</td>
<td>(2) 2:22-39; (4) 2:40-52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(2) 3:4-10; (5) 3:11-17</td>
<td>(1) 3:1-6; (3) 3:10-14 97</td>
<td>(4) 1:19b 98-26a; (6) 1:15-18, 30-34, 99 28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(5) 4:23-24</td>
<td>(4) 1:19-20a; 1:21-28</td>
<td>(1) 4:1-14a; (3) 5:1-11</td>
<td>(2) 1:35-51; (6) 2:1b-12a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>(3) 4:12-16</td>
<td>(2) 3: 19b-20; (4) 7:1b-10, 11-35</td>
<td>(1) 3:22-36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>(2) 9:9-17, 18-34</td>
<td>(1) 2:1-13</td>
<td>(3) 3:1-21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(4) 12:9b-50</td>
<td>(3) 2:23-28</td>
<td>(1) 4:16-31a 100</td>
<td>(2) 4:46-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>5:1-7:27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(1) 7:28; 9:36-38; (3) 10:1b-10, 11-41; 11:1a; 8:1b-4, 14-17; (5) 14:1-11</td>
<td>(4) 6:12-13, 14b</td>
<td>(2) 6:12-13; (4) 10:1, 101 8-11; (5) 6:30; 10:17b-42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

96 The table of Harmony components is arranged by chapters and by gospels, so that the degree of reliance on the various books is clearly visible. The order of appearance of the components is indicated numerically ((1), (2), etc.), and the underlined verses indicate where Morrison had written a considerable amount of notes — usually by writing the translation in English right beside Chinese characters. The chapters are assigned by Basset for the Harmony, and do not correspond to any of the gospels, including Matthew (although it has 28 chapters also).

97 Strandenaes and Zetzsche state that it is 3:10-13, in fact it goes to verse 14, but Basset has merged the tax collectors line with the soldiers line, forming a shortened sentence, whether on purpose or by mistake.

98 The line “And this is the record of John” is omitted.

99 For parts that do not have all the verses Strandenaes marks them as “abridged”. Since it is not our emphasis here and in order to provide more clarity to the list, such abridgement is not indicated in our list.

100 Mistakenly marked as “John 5” by Basset.

101 The Harmony has 72 disciples, using the Vulgate version (“Dominus et alio septuaginta duos et misit illos binos ante faciem suam”), and apparently adds a line reading “just as he had appointed the 12 previously”, seemingly to make the paragraph sound more coherent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ch</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>(1) 19:1-30; (3) 20:1-16; 8:23-34</td>
<td>(4) 5:18-20</td>
<td>(2) 9:49-50; 57-62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>(2) 25:1-13, 31-46</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1) 13:10b-17; 17:20-37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>(3) 8:11-12</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1) 5:1-47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>(1) 23:1-34; (3) 22:16-22</td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) 11:53-54</td>
<td>(4) 6:1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>(2) 14:28-32; 16:5-12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1) 6:3-20; 6:22-71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7:1-52; 8:1b-59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

102 A textual issue with Mark 8:26 here with Basset following the Vulgate (et misit illum in domum suam dicens vade in domum tuam et si in vicum introieris nemini dixeris), translating as "耶稣遣之回家。曰。往尔家。若進鄉。勿向人說焉。（"Jesus sent him home, and said: 'Go to your home. If you enter into the village, don’t tell anyone.'"）According to Metzger, the reading supported by most sources is μηδὲ εἰς τὴν κώμην εἰσέλθῃς ("Do not enter the village"), with the Greek edition used by the Vulgate μηδὲ εἰς τὴν κώμην εἰσέλθῃς μηδὲ εἴπῃς τινὶ ἐν τῇ κώμῃ ("do not enter into the village nor speak to anyone in the village") obviously a combination of the first two (Bruce Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (German Bible Society: 1994), on Mark 8:26). The KJV follows this third reading by translating the verse as “Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.” Morrison is likely revising Basset’s according to the Authorized Version, as he translates it as 耶穌遣之回家曰。勿進村。又勿告之與何村人也。（"Jesus sent him home and said: "Do not enter the village, nor tell any of the villagers about it."）"

103 Basset made a mistake with his reference here, and includes it in the section under “Luke 12”.

104 Interestingly, Basset has inserted a number of verses from Luke in between John 4:40 and 4:41. Since the last line of these Luke verses talks of the woman whoblurts out the line "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you" (Luke 11:27), and John 4:41 talks about the people (Samaritans) telling “the woman” (the one at the well) that they now believe in Jesus because of His words and not just what she told them, it seems like Basset is trying to make the two women identical.

105 Basset made a mistake here by citing the source as “Luke 25”.

106 It is a heavily edited and much shortened version of John 6:1-2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ch</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>(3) 21:1b-11; (5) 21:14-16; (9) 21:23-32; (11) 21:21-22; 22:23-34; (13) 22:41b-46</td>
<td>(2) 14:8-9; (7) 11:11c-14; (10) 11:12; (12) 12:28-34a</td>
<td>(4) 19:39-40, 42-45&lt;sup&gt;100&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>(1) 12:1-8; (3) 12:9-11; (6) 12:19-50; (8) 2:14-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>(3) 26:48-50b; (6) 26:53-54; (8) 26:56c; (12) 26:65-74b&lt;sup&gt;111&lt;/sup&gt;  (14) 26:73c-75</td>
<td>(2) 14:32b:39; (4) 14:40-44; (8) 14:51-52; (10) 14:55-61</td>
<td>(3) 22:43-44; (4) 22:48; (6) 22:51-53; (11) 22:67b-70</td>
<td>(1) 18:1-2; (5) 18:4b-11; (7) 18:12; (9) 18:13-24; (13) 18:26-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>(1) 27:1-10; (4) 27:19; (6) 27:21-22;&lt;sup&gt;112&lt;/sup&gt; (9) 27:24-25; (15) 27:45-46;&lt;sup&gt;113&lt;/sup&gt; (17) 27:51-54</td>
<td>(12) 15:29-30; (18) 15:40-41, 42b; (20) 15:43-45; (22) 15:46c-47</td>
<td>(3) 23:5-12; (5) 23:13-15; (7) 23:22;&lt;sup&gt;114&lt;/sup&gt; (11) 23:26-37; (13) 23:39-43</td>
<td>(2) 18:28b-38; (8) 19:1-15; (10) 19:16-17a; (14) 19:19-27a; (16) 19:28-30; (19) 19:31-35; (21) 19:39-42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>100</sup> Basset made a mistake here by citing the source as “John 12”.

<sup>109</sup> Basset made a mistake here by citing the source as “Luke 17”, and has heavily edited v.45.

<sup>110</sup> The reference to this verse is totally missing, and mistakenly included under the reference to Luke 22.

<sup>111</sup> These verses have been heavily edited by Basset – from Peter denying Jesus three times down to just one time.

<sup>112</sup> 依爾規巴斯圤。我當准尔釋一人囚命將一極惡囚名巴拉把。當時叛亂殺人者。偕耶稣號基利斯督置之眾前 (“According to the custom of Passover, I permit you to release one prisoner. So he ordered one notorious prisoner Barabbas, who was a rebel and a murderer, to be placed in front of the crowd with Jesus, the one called Christ.”) – this first part of the paragraph is heavily edited and does not have a direct equivalent version in the Gospel.

<sup>113</sup> Basset did not include the line “Eli Eli lama sabachthani”, but just gave the Chinese translation of the meaning of Jesus’ exclamation straight away.

<sup>114</sup> The verse is heavily edited by Basset.
According to this table, not only does Luke feature dominantly in the Harmony, found in all but 3 chapters overall, it also dominates the early chapters of the Harmony, with a total of 132 verses found in the first four chapters, compared to just 46 verses (from Matthew), 31 verses (from John), and 0 verses (from Mark). If we look at the overall annotation picture, Morrison made a lot of translational notes at the beginning chapters of the Harmony, navigating laboriously his way through the Basset copy. Although there doesn’t appear to be a certain pattern or a favorite book when it comes to the overall picture of his annotations, the clusters of notes found as late as chapters 24 and 25 suggest that Morrison was more interested in certain gospel accounts and stories, and would look up those parts specifically and made notes. If he had done it systematically by chapters over time, the notes would likely not appear as clusters, but be concentrated in the early chapters only, while becoming scarcer and scarcer later on.

If we do a similar comparison between the Harmony and Morrison’s translation of Luke, it becomes clearer why he seemed to have spent a good amount of time to complete Luke. Let us start from the very beginning of the Gospel of Luke, where a visual comparison shows much fewer similarities between the two versions, very unlike the case of Acts:

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115 Basset mistakenly wrote the reference down as Matthew 21.
116 Luke 24:3 has been replaced by Mark 16:4-5 in both Morrison’s copy and the British Library copy, as can be seen later in this chapter.
117 Basset added “Amen” at the end of verse 53.
Table 3.4  A Comparison of Luke 1:1-5, as found in Morrison (1811) and Basset (~1700).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>因多已將陳傳吾輩中所有成之事。照自始親視之。而為言吏者傳示吾輩。又因自最始余亦悉知諸情。故似宜敘寫達爾至美弟阿非羅以致爾曉已所學言之真也。</td>
<td>至善陡斐勒。因向多有以吾間已成諸事。依自始親見而為言之吏輩之傳授。務緒厥紀者。余既勤繹諸之緣由。亦擬為爾以敘書之。以致爾識素學各言之真也。黑落待如達王時。有一鐸德名匝加列。在阿畢亞之班。厥妻乃亞隆之後女。名依撒伯。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>亞王時有一主祭者。其名匝加利亞屬亞比亞之班。厥妻屬亞倫倫之女。其名以利撒畢。</td>
<td>亞王時有一主祭者。其名匝加利亞屬亞比亞之班。厥妻屬亞倫倫之女。其名以利撒畢。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesse, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed. There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. (Acts 1:1-5, KJV)

From the above table it is visually obvious that Morrison’s Luke of 1811 departs drastically from the Basset Harmony version. Given that the Harmony contains many parts taken from the Gospel of Luke, Morrison could have easily decided to base his translation more closely on Basset’s. Yet this comparison demonstrates that Morrison had tried to come up with a different Gospel of Luke. It is possible that after printing the transcribed copy of Acts, Morrison desired to come up with a version he could truly call his own in 1811. Even though we see considerably more revisions are being made in the

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The copy this author is using is currently held by the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, courtesy of the donation by a Dr. Stoughton. As before, the differences between Morrison’s (1811) and Basset’s are indicated as **bold**.
case of the 1811 Luke, Morrison is following similar criteria for revisions as before: 1) Names – The change of names – such as from zajialie 匝加列 to sajialiya 驚加利亞 (“Zacharias”), yisaba 依撒伯 to yilisabi 以利撒畢 (“Elizabeth”), and heiluote 黑落忒 to xiluode 希羅得 (“Herod”). As noted earlier, Basset prefers to keep the transliterated names no more than three Chinese characters long, even when they have multiple syllables to begin with, perhaps as a way to stay consistent with Han Chinese people’s names; 2) More Contemporary Style – When Morrison seeks to rewrite some of the Chinese, it appears that he again tries to write in a more contemporary way. The approach is to add particles and supportive words (like prepositions) to makes sentences sound less archaic, such as converting wujian 吾間 to wubezhong 吾輩中 (“among us”, with zhong 中 being the added preposition), or susxue 素學 to yisuoxue 已所學 (“have learned”, with 所 being the additional particle); 3) Diction – A number of archaic expressions such as 务緒厥紀者 (“people who have recorded them”) and 余既勤繹諸之原由 (“since I have worked hard understanding the beginning of all these”) have been rewritten totally, limiting the use of older terms such as the possessive pronoun jue 睢 (his/her/their).\(^{119}\) Morrison also replaces the Chinese transliteration duode 鎮德 (of “priest”, from the Latin word “sacerdos”) by zhujizhe 主祭者, which in Chinese has the meaning of being “the one who officiates sacrifices (ji 祭).\(^{120}\) Morrison might have found a transliteration based

\(^{119}\) W.A.C.H. Dobson, *Late Archaic Chinese: A Grammatical Study* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959) 138. This shows an active attempt of Morrison to remove these archaic terms, because they are left unchanged in passages that see little revisions by Morrison, such as John 1:1-18 (see Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 37, especially n.64).

\(^{120}\) Basset has marked 鎮德 with a dotted underline in the Biblioteca Casanantense copy – an indication that it is some sort of a sound translation that is not a name nor place. From the Latin word “sacerdos”,
on a Latin term too suggestive of its Catholic origin; 4) Sources – even in just five verses we can notice variations of translation as a result of different sources used by the two. For example for verse 4a Basset has 以致尔識素學各言之真也 (“so that you know that what you have been learning is the truth”), but Morrison changes it to 以致爾曉已所學言之核實矣 (“so that you know the certainty of the things that you have learned”). Using the Vulgate, Basset has chosen the word “truth” for “veritatem” of the Latin text (“ut cognoscas eorum verborum de quibus eruditus es veritatem”). Morrison finds 核實 “certainty” a better phrase because it is found in place of “truth” in the Authorized Version (“That thou mightest know the certainty of those things”), or perhaps he has also consulted the Greek text and chooses the term to translate ἀσφάλεια (“firmness, certainty”121) from the version (ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν).

Another example is found in verse 3b, where Morrison understands ἀνωθεν (“from the beginning”) as a time reference, hence translating 又因自最始余亦悉知諸情 (“and as I have also understood all these since the very beginning”), which is similar to how the Authorized Version translates ἀνωθεν here: “after investigating everything carefully from the very first”. Basset, however, does not have the phrase, and translates it just as 余既勤繹諸之原由 (“since I have worked hard understanding the reason of all these”). Once

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again the discrepancy apparently comes from the Latin text, which is missing the translation of ἄνωθεν altogether (visum est et mihi adsecuto a principio omnibus diligenter ex ordine tibi scribere optime Theophile).

Considering the number of changes and amount of consideration that went into Morrison’s version of Luke, even over just a short stretch of a few verses at the beginning of the gospel book,\textsuperscript{122} it is quite clear that Morrison did try to come up with a translated version that he was more satisfied with, and felt greater liberty to make changes and revisions as he pleased. From the gospel components chart in Table 3.1 we can see that parts of almost every chapter of Luke are incorporated into the Harmony, except for chapters 8 and 20.\textsuperscript{123} Therefore it would not have been too difficult for Morrison if he chose to rely more heavily on the Basset copy when he worked on the gospel, nor did he need to do such an extensive revision of the text, but could have followed the same procedure as he had done with Acts a year earlier. So the most logical reason is that Morrison did not want to just rely heavily on Basset’s version for his Luke of 1811. So

\textsuperscript{122} One of the most semantically significant revisions Morrison makes is by replacing Basset’s 因向多有以吾間已成諸事…務緒賅紀者 (“Since many have put into record the things that have been fulfilled among us”) with 因多已將陳傳吾輩中所有成之事 (“Since many have narrated the things that have been fulfilled among us”). The variation is caused by the difference in interpreting ἔπεξείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν, which means “undertake to narrate in the right order”. While Basset understands it as written record, Morrison interprets it as oral transmission (陳傳). The opening verses of Luke are well known for their complex and problematic Greek, so it is not unusual to see translators differing in their rendering of the paragraph (See Philip Goodwin’s concise summary of the challenge of translating the opening verses of Luke in Translating the English Bible – From Relevance to Deconstruction (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2013) 79-86). The KJVA is not very clear either, translating it as “Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events…”, so Morrison may have thought it refers to oral transmission only.

when we read his words in 1814 that “the Gospel, the closing Epistles, and the Book of Revelation, are entirely my own translating”,¹²⁴ there appears to be some basis after all.

3.6 MORRISON’S USE OF THE BASSET MANUSCRIPT – OTHER BOOKS

Yet, there are still considerable problems if we are to accept all the gospel books to be “entirely” Morrison’s work. Not only is it evident that he used the Basset copy as a major reference, he also seems to have gone back to relying on it heavily with the other gospel books. Zetzsche, by comparing Morrison’s translation of John 1:1-13 with the Harmony, concludes that “the Gospel harmony, which to a large extent was a fairly exact rendering of parts of the Gospels in a new order, was used extensively by Morrison”.¹²⁵ After our current finding, it would mean that Morrison, after attempting to translate Luke in his own words in 1811, had reverted to a strong reliance on the Basset Manuscript for John between the years 1812 and 1813.¹²⁶ Applying once again our visual examination of comparison, we can quite easily confirm Zetzsche’s claim:

**Table. 3.5** A Comparison of John 1:1-13, as found in Morrison (1813) and Basset (~1700).

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¹²⁴ Morrison’s letter to LMS on 11 Jan 1814 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

¹²⁵ Zetzsche’s analysis remains one of the best studies on Morrison’s reliance on Basset, and he argues that “the Gospel harmony, which to a large extent was a fairly exact rendering of parts of the Gospels in a new order, was used extensively by Morrison” by demonstrating that Morrison followed Basset very closely on John 1:1-13. Yet he provides no such proof for the other gospel books. (Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 36, especially n.62).

¹²⁶ In order to verify Zetzsche’s criticism, a visual test is given for the two versions of John 1:13 below, with all the discrepancies (except for punctuation differences) indicated by the use of bolded texts:
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:1-13, KJV)

As can be clearly seen, the differences between the two are very few indeed (especially for the latter part). Daniel See has done a more detailed comparison between the two versions and, in agreement with Zetzsche, concludes that to describe the situation "using modern terminology of translation, Morrison had just slightly revised the Basset
translation in order to complete his translation work”. Although See still finds that some of these sparse revisions indicate the different translation preferences and source dependence of the two translators, it does not alter the fact that Morrison’s John 1:1-13 was heavily borrowed from Basset, and reflected a change in course in Morrison’s approach.

But why did Morrison go back to relying on the Manuscript, after trying his hand on Luke? We argue that the decision probably had something to do with Morrison’s frustrating slow progress in preparing Luke in 1811, and the realization of the level of difficulty involved in translating a biblical book on his own. It had probably become clear


128 See has made some interesting observations about the revisions made by Morrison. One of them is the change from 識 (“know, understand”) to 認 (“recognize, understand”) in verse 5. See believes that Basset chose 識 for the Latin word “comprehenderunt” and Morrison, consulting the KJV (“comprehended”), used 認 instead. This is not a strong argument because there isn’t a substantial difference between “comprehenderunt” and “comprehended” to merit the change of word, nor is 認 much different from 識, if the former is understood along the line of “comprehension”. There is a possibility that Morrison made the revision after consulting the Greek original (ὁ κατέλαβεν), which has the sense of “accepting” and “receiving”. In that case 認 can be understood alongside of 承認, which means “acknowledge”. Yet See is right on the point when he critiques this choice of diction by pointing out that the phrase 弗認 in verse 5 now reads exactly the same as that in verse 10 (ὁ ἐγνώ). Although 認 can mean “recognize” (認得), the identical phrase gives the impression that the two phrases are also identical in its original language, which is misleading from a translation point of view.

Another point is the minor addition of the article 其 before 言 (word) in verse 1 and 生命 (life) in verse 4. See argues that since Vulgatic Latin lacks a definite article, Basset also left out the article in his Chinese translation, such as translating “et vita erat lux hominum” as 而生命乃人類之光. Morrison, in order to translate the feminine article in ἡ ζωὴ more accurately, adds 其 and makes it 其生命乃人類之光. Again, See’s conclusion is doubtful because there is no indication that Morrison regularly tries to add the Chinese article to reflect the presence of the Greek definite article, for example he feels no need to add another article before the Chinese word 暗 (darkness) in verse 5, even though he can, in order to follow the Greek text (ἡ σκοτία) more closely. Moreover, it is common to find in classical writings the omission of the Chinese articles and particles, so Basset could have done it purely from a stylistic point of view, instead of being influenced by the Latin syntax; Morrison is thus just doing a less classical style of Chinese writing, by adding the articles at different places.
to him just how long it would take for him to finish the whole Bible anew, especially with the kind of obstacles he was facing outside of his translation activities. A major source of such frustrations came from his agreeing to work for the East India Company at the “Office of Chinese Translator to the English Factory at Canton” since 1809. Though the position provided him with legal status in Canton, more stable income and the opportunities to improve his Chinese, Morrison found the appointment a necessary evil, and very destructive to his translational work. In a letter dated November of 1811 he wrote to the LMS saying:

Regret that I do not make the rapid progress that either you or I wish. It has pleased God, whose ways, thoughts past finding out, are always just and good, to lay his hand heavy upon me. Or perhaps I should rather adopt the words of him who was much more afflicted and say, “The finger of God hath touched me.” But my greatest hindrance has risen from my connection with the Company. Having with your approbation accepted of a situation, honour and conscience both require a faithful and assiduous discharge of its duties.

With the Serampore duo by that time already finishing the translations of both Matthew and Mark, and himself facing a difficult work situation in Canton which he could not back out of, Morrison’s chances of climbing ahead in the race appeared slim. After spending almost a year completing the translation of Luke, Morrison finally managed to print and send copies of it to the LMS in early 1812. He wrote of the shipment of the Gospel and the short Chinese tract:

129 Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 127-128.
130 Morrison’s letter to LMS, November 1811 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
131 We will establish the conditions of the race and rivalry more fully in the next chapter.
I trust you will receive them safe, and accept of these in the affection that they will prove a blessing to the Heathen. Slow is the progress which we make, but we will not be discouraged. The over sanguine will be disappointed: may it be ours to preserve. The handful of corn scattered on the tops of the mountains shall one day shake like Lebanon.\textsuperscript{132} (Underlined by this author)

What happened afterwards was remarkable – just ten months after this heavy-hearted letter, Morrison reported on 19 Dec 1812 that he already had “most of the Epistles in the press” and that he would be sending copies to the Society by the next month’s shipment (though the copies were only dispatched in February of 1813).\textsuperscript{133} A rough percentage model (by plotting completion % by pages against year) would show that after finishing Luke in 1811, Morrison’s progress underwent a significant growth in speed, especially from the year 1812 to 1813.\textsuperscript{134}

\textbf{Table. 3.6} \textbf{Morrison’s NT translation progress by the years (as table and graph).}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Books in Translation</th>
<th>Completion %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>Acts (140/1268) – 11.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>Luke (160/1268) – 12.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>Romans, 1 &amp; 2 Corinthians, Galatians (245/1268) – 19.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>The rest of the NT (723/1268) – 57%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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\textsuperscript{132} Morrison’s letter to LMS on 09 February 1812 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

\textsuperscript{133} Morrison’s letter to LMS on 19 Dec 1812 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

\textsuperscript{134} Length of every NT book of Morrison’s 1813 translation, in pages: Matthew (161), Mark (103), Luke (160), John (131), Acts (140), Romans (122), 1 & 2 Corinthians (101), Galatians (22), Ephesians (20), Philippians (15), Colossians (14), 1 & 2 Thessalonians (22), 1 & 2 Timothy (38), Titus (7), Philemon (4), Hebrews (50), James (17), 1 & 2 Peter (31), 1, 2, 3 John (24), Jude (5), Revelation (81). A total of 1,268 pages for the whole New Testament.
Given the remarkable speed of completion, it would appear likely that Morrison did go back to using the Basset copy more after 1811. Our objective here is not just to confirm that a borrowing did happen, but to try to understand a bit more about the mechanism – a) Did Morrison begin translating Luke in his own words in early 1811, and continue to do so until he finished? Or did he begin to rely heavily on Basset mid-way through? b) How similar are the remaining books of Morrison’s Gospels as compared to those of Basset? c) We have seen the four main ways Morrison went about revising the Basset translation. Did he do the same for the Pauline Epistles? To begin, we will compare Morrison’s 1811 Luke with the Harmony again, only this time we would choose a passage midway through in the Gospel, and another that is found at the end of the book. The purpose is to examine whether Morrison changed his approach to translation and began using of the Basset Manuscript throughout the course of translating Luke in 1811,
or did he only begin to rely on the Manuscript more as the process dragged on. We will compare the two versions using verses 12:16-21, and verses 24:3-9:

Table 3.7  A Comparison of Luke 12:16-21, as found in Morrison (1811) and Basset (~1700).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>其設比方言伊曰。或富人之地生豐盛。因心內想云。我將為如何。因未得處藏我實。且日。我將如此為。就拆下吾之倉房。而建更大。遂彼藏我諸實與物。後將言我靈魂。靈魂爾有多物藏埋為多年。享安。食飲。作樂。惟神言之。爾無知者。今夜爾靈魂由爾將問。則爾所備之物屬誰乎。如此人藏財為已。而在神並非為富焉。</td>
<td>且設喻曰。一人之田大穰。其心中想。我將何處。蓋無收藏之所。又自謂。即如此作。必拆舊廬。另作寛闊。而所將穫。與諸財賄皆積焉。然後謂。我魂。我魂乎。尔已有許多年可用之財。安歇飲食自宴矣。然神之。狂乎。今晚討尓魂。尓有所備。且歸誰乎。凡為己積財。弗依神為富者。皆是也。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plenteously: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:16-21, KJV)

Table 3.8  A Comparison of Luke 24:3-9, as found in Morrison (1811) and Basset (~1700).

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135 Apparently a typo in Morrison’s version, the character should be 己 (“oneself”).

136 然神之 does not make much sense and is likely a copy typo. The Biblioteca Casanantense copy reads 神謂之 (“God says”).
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且進。惟不遇主耶稣之身。伊等又因大疑惑時。忽有兩人於亮衣。侍立。婦驚垂面向地。其人謂伊曰。爾何在死者之中。而尋其生者。其不在此。乃已起。爾憶其在加利利時何言爾。云。人之子須被付罪人之手。被釘十字架。而第三日復活起。伊等即憶厥言。而由墓回。以是諸情報十一門徒。與其另外諸者。入墓見少年坐于右。伊等驚。臉俯向地。神使謂之曰。婦毋惶爾曹何尋生者于死輩之中。不在此。乃復活。汝可記其猶在加里辣已謂汝曰。人子該見付于罪人之手。釘十字架。及第三日復活之句。伊等方記厥言。自墓出回。細備告十一。及餘眾矣。

And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. (Luke 24:3-9, KJV)

The visual examination of comparison shows that the two versions of Luke 12:16-21 are quite dissimilar, with Morrison making various changes to the syntax and diction of Basset’s for a more contemporary read, as well as correcting what he feels is a mistake in the Harmony version (e.g. he changes Basset’s yiren 一人 (“a person”) to fuyen 富人 (“rich person”), which is consistent to the Greek (Ἀνθρώπου … πλουσίου – “a certain rich man”(KJV). The inaccurate phrase is perhaps a miss or an omission on Basset’s part, since the Vulgate also reads “hominis cuiusdam divitis”). These differences are indicative of Morrison’s consultation of the English and/or Greek Bible, in contrast to
Basset, who used the Vulgate instead. When it comes to Luke 24:3-9 the two versions are very different, mainly because there seems to be a mix-up in the Harmony, where Mark 16:5 (“As entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted”) has been used instead of Luke 24:3-4 (“And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments”), even though there is no mention of the use of Mark 16:5 in the text.

A comparison of the versions finds the British Library (Sloane) Harmony and the Hong Kong University (Morrison’s copy) Harmony committing the same mistake, but not the Biblioteca Casanantense version of the full gospels. It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate further how the textual discrepancies came into existence, but it is clear that Morrison was able to identify the mistake and instead of following the Harmony, translated the sentences according to Luke 24:3-4. As a whole, the differences between Morrison’s translation and the Basset Harmony are simply too many and too substantial to suggest that Morrison, because of the slow process in getting Luke ready for printing, began to rely heavily on Basset towards the end of the book. By randomly selecting passages from the beginning, middle and the last parts of Luke and performing the

\[\text{The syntax here in Morrison’s version separates the items of enjoyment (except for eat and drink, which are placed together as a phrase) by a preposition (享安、食飲、作樂 – “relax, eat and drink, have fun”), similar to the arrangement in Greek (ἀναπαύου, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου) and in English (“take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry”(KJV)). Basset has them grouped together in one sentence (安歇飲食自宴矣然 – “just rest, eat, drink and enjoy oneself”), which is consistent with the Latin syntax (requiesce comede bibe epulare). It is also interesting to note that Morrison has translated 食飲 literally for “eat and drink”. The usual Chinese way is the other way round (飲食), which is what Basset has. Perhaps wanting to match even the word order of Greek/English, or to be different from Basset’s version, Morrison’s decision however has created a phrase that’s quite foreign and awkward to the ears of a Chinese reader.}\]
comparison, it becomes clear that the Morrison had used the Basset Manuscript with careful discernment, and was far from just copying and relying on it.

How about the other gospel books that Morrison worked on in 1812 and 1813? Did Morrison follow the same approach he used for Luke, or did he follow Basset’s copy more closely in order to speed up his work, as we have witnessed in John 1:1-13? Again I have picked two passages from the middle and later sections of John to conduct our visual examination. The basic criteria are that the passages should come from a part of the Harmony where there are at least a few continuous and unabridged verses of John; also, the passages should not be those that Morrison had commented extensively on, as it might indicate that he had selected and worked on it quite early on. The passages chosen in this case are 10:7-15 (the “I am the good shepherd” saying) and 21:17-22 (Jesus appearing to the disciples on the shore of Tiberias after resurrection):

Table 3.9 A Comparison of John 10:7-15, as found in Morrison (1813) and Basset (~1700).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John 10:7-15 (Morrison’s NT, 1813)</th>
<th>John 10:7-15 (Basset’s Harmony, ~1700)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>時耶穌再謂伊等曰。我確確語爾等。我為羊棧之門。凡先我者為賊為掠。然羊弗聽伊等。我是其門、若有人從我而入、其將得救。伊可入出而遇飼。賊來特以偷、以殺、以壞、我來致爾得生活、而生活之有餘。我乃善牧者其善牧為羊而捐命。然彼非牧者、乃個傭人羊所弗屬者、見豺狼來即離羊而逃、致豺狼捉羊、而散伊等。傭人逃、因為為傭者。而不顧羊。我乃其善牧者、且認我本羊而被伊等之認識。即如父者認我、我認父焉。又我因羊而捐本命。</td>
<td>耶穌再喻之曰。我實確語爾等。余為綿羊之門。向來者、皆竊賊也。而綿羊弗聽之。余乃門也。從我而入者。得救全也。得出。得入。而遇牧糧也。賊來。惟欲以竊。以殺。以敗。余來。使羊得活。又蓋得活也。余乃善牧。善牧為羊捐命也。僱以其非牧。羊亦非本業者。視豺狼。棄羊。狼且殺。且散羊。僱逃走。蓋其僱。與羊無涉者。故也。余乃善牧。知余羊。余羊亦知余。即如我父知余。余亦知父焉。我亦置命為余羊。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (John 10:7-15, KJV)

Table 3.10 A Comparison of John 21:17-22, as found in Morrison (1813) and Basset (~1700).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John 21:17-22 (Morrison’s NT, 1813)</th>
<th>John 21:17-22 (Basset’s Harmony, ~1700)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>第三次其謂之曰、若拿之子西們爾愛我乎。彼多羅因第三次言之云、爾愛我乎。覺得悶且答之曰。主汝無所不知。汝知我是愛爾也。耶穌謂之曰、養我羔矣。我確確言汝知、汝幼時自帶隨意而走、惟汝老時、將伸手及他人縛爾、且移汝到不欲往之所。其言此示知其將以何死而榮神。言此畢、其謂之曰、從我也。彼多羅轉身見耶穌所愛之門徒從後、其先於晚飯時依耶穌之胸曰、主賣付爾者誰也。彼多羅見之謂耶穌曰、主此人將何為。耶穌答之曰、我若要他等待我來與爾何干、爾從我也。</td>
<td>三問之曰。西蒲若翰之子。爾愛余否。伯多羅以主問之。爾愛余否。至三。因憂且答之曰。主尔無所不知。尔知我愛尔矣。主謂之曰。尔宜牧余羊矣。我確確語尔。矣尔幼時。素自繫。隨意游行。然尔至老時。必伸尔雙手。而他人繫尔。且牽尔弗願之所矣。主指其將受何榮光神。所以言此也。言此後。又謂又曰。尔隨余。伯多羅轉見夫耶稣所愛之徒。于晚食憩主懷。而言。主將付尔是誰者。在後隨伯多因問耶穌曰。此乃如何。耶稣答之曰。余如是欲備之至余來于尔何涉。尔隨余矣。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following: which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. (John 21:17-21, KJV)

In this case the visual examination is not revealing the picture so clearly, giving the impression that Morrison had also used Basset heavily when preparing his copy of the John’s Gospel. Yet if we look at these differences closely a more complex picture will emerge. The reason is that although the changes are visually extensive, most of these are minor word replacements that do not truly affect the meaning of the texts at all, such as with the different forms of pronouns (e.g. the first personal singular pronoun “I” from yu 余 to wo 我, making it sound more modern) or of names (e.g. “Peter” from baiduoluo 伯多羅 to biduoluo 彼多羅 and “Simon” from ximan 西滿 to ximen 西們). In other cases, the replaced word and the one replacing it can form a Chinese compound word138 – for example the phrase muyang 牧養 (“to shepherd”) is made up of the words mu 牧 and yang 養, and when they stand alone each can have the same meaning of “to shepherd” or

138 Morphologically speaking, some Chinese compound words must be formed in a certain order, e.g. muyang 牧養 (“to shepherd”) does not make sense if it is written as yangmu 養牧, but some do not, e.g. both gaoyang 羊羔 and 羊羔 yanggao have identical meaning. Please see Stanley Starosta, Koenraad Kuiper, Siew-ai Ng, and Zhi-qian Wu “On defining the Chinese compound word: Headedness in Chinese compounding and Chinese VR compounds”, Jerome L. Packard (ed.) New Approaches to Chinese Word Formation (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998) 347-370.
“to pasture”, provided that we understand it within the appropriate context (for example when speaking about tending a flock). So when Morrison replaces *muyuyangyi* 牧余羊矣 with *yangwogaoyi* 養我羔矣 for John 21:17b (“feed my sheep”, Βόσκε τὰ πρόβατά μου), the difference has more to do with style because both *mu* 牧 and *yang* 養 which can both mean “pasturing” (a flock) - *yu* 余 / wo 我 are virtually interchangeable. Hence these changes are rather cosmetic and style-related than semantically significant. The only variation in meaning is from *yang* 羊 to *gao* 羔 (verse 17), but it was likely inadvertent in intention because like *muyang* 牧養, the words *yang* 羊 and *gao* 羔 also form a compound word that means “sheep” (*yanggao* 羊羔). So by replacing *yang* 羊 with *gao* 羔, Morrison probably just wanted to just find another word with a very similar meaning. But although *yang* 羊 by itself means “sheep”, *gao* 羔 by itself can also mean “young sheep”, hence the translation is open to a different interpretation by this change.

From these two snapshots of Morrison’s translation of the John’s Gospel we can speculate that he did not proceed with a heavy use of the Basset Manuscript like he did with Acts back in 1810, but neither did he appear too ambitious with his revision efforts, like he did with Luke in 1811. The translation approach for John seems to lie

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139 These Chinese terms are compound words, where each of the characters and the phrase itself carry the same meaning. This is the case with phrases such as *muyang* 牧養 (“to shepherd”), *gaoyang* 羔羊 (“sheep”), *siliang* 飼糧 (“pasture”), *touqie* 偷竊 (“to steal”) or *suicong* 隨從 (“to follow”). Given the right context, all of *mu* 牧, *yang* 養, *muyang* 牧養 can mean “to shepherd”, and the same works with all these example pairs too.

140 Daniel Kam To Choi also does a small comparison between Basset’s Luke and John with Morrison’s Luke of 1811 and John of 1813, and concludes that “After Luke, Morrison had started to develop his own translation characteristics, and his translation would be different from Basset’s to a certain degree” (Daniel Kam To Choi, 蔡錦圖, “The Chinese Bible Manuscript of Jean Basset and its Influence on the Early Protestant Chinese Bible Translation” 白日陞的中文聖經抄本及其對早期新
somewhere in between – it has far too many revisions to be called just an edited borrowing of the old translation, but the variations are not as numerous and semantically significant as to call it a new translation either. It is very possible that by 1812 Morrison was under increasing financial and time pressure to come up with the rest of the New Testament translation, so he abandoned the more aggressive revision we have witnessed in his Luke, and took up a moderate approach to use and revise Basset’s text in order to come up with his own. Zetzsche certainly has a point when he remarks on the close resemblance which we find between Morrison’s and Basset’s versions when it comes to John 1:1-13, but that passage appears to be more an exception that norm, at least from the two other passages we have chosen to do the visual examination on.

Just to have a more complete picture about the Gospels translated by Morrison, let us look at Matthew’s Gospel as well.\footnote{A visual test has not been performed on the Gospel of Mark, because comparatively speaking there is much less of it in the Harmony, especially in the earlier chapters. So even if we find Morrison following Basset closely in some chapters, there are still a large number of verses which Morrison had to translate anew, hence our speculation will still be inconclusive.}

\textbf{Table 3.11  A Comparison of Matthew 13:1-8, as found in Morrison (1813) and Basset (~1700).}
The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. (Matthew 13:1-8, KJV)

The comparison gives a similar impression to what we have noticed with the Gospel of John – that Morrison has made a number of changes in his translation, but many of those are just cosmetic changes and few are significant or indicative of a major departure from Basset’s version. For example the changes from haibin 海濱 to haibian 海邊 (“the shore”), zhong 羣 to dazhong 大眾 (“the crowd”), zhongzhan 羣站 to zhongli 羣立 (“the crowd standing”), ri 日 to taiyang 太陽 (“the Sun”) are all superficial variations, as each is totally identical to its replacement in meaning. Other changes come from the
rewriting of phrases with less classical and archaic style and more of a wordy sentence structure (such as adding Chinese particles), while the meaning is kept consistent. These examples include changing from *boshi* 播時 (“when sowing”) to *qibozhongshi* 其播種時 (“when sowing the seeds”), and from *tianniao* 天鳥 to *tianzhiniao* 天之鳥 (“birds of the sky”). The latter example sees the addition of the Chinese particle *zhi* 之 to the term, which serves as a possessive particle. However, since *tianniao* 天鳥 already has the meaning of “birds of the sky”, the particle would be considered redundant and omitted in Classical Chinese. There are just two changes that are more significant: first of all it is the additional line in verse 5 – “because there wasn’t deep soil there”, which is present in the original (διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν βάθος γῆς) and the KJV (“because they had no deepness of earth”), but missing in Basset’s, even though it is present in the Vulgate (quia non habebant altitudinem terrae). The second is the addition of the word “times” (*bei* 倍) in verse 8. The word is not found but just implied in both the Greek original and the Latin Vulgate, which is followed by Basset. Morrison’s inclusion of the word may reflect his decision to rely more on the *Authorized Version* for this instance (“some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold”). As a whole we can observe a pattern highly similar to that of John, with Morrison making a number of revisions, though most of them reflect little or no real change of meaning or sentence restructuring.

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142 As discussed earlier, Marshman translates it as 鴫 (“fowl”), instead of Basset’s and Morrison’s “bird”, clearly demonstrating his reliance on the KJV. Morrison renders it 天之鳥 (“birds of the sky”), which is essentially the same as Basset’s 天鳥, adding just an additional particle (之) which is redundant in terms of meaning. Since the original is just τὰ πετεινά (the birds), so Basset’s translation is itself slightly different from the original, with a touch of Chinese expression (bi-character terms are very common in the Chinese language, so it is seldom for Chinese to write just 鳥 (“birds”), but more usually 飛鳥 (“the flying birds”) or 天鳥 (“the birds of the sky”)). That Morrison’s choice of diction so closely resembles that of Basset, indicates a subtle but detectable reliance on the Jesuit’s style.
Finally, in order to have a more complete picture of the way Morrison uses the Basset Manuscript, let us take a brief look at two passages from the Pauline epistles—a corpus where Morrison admitted to using Basset’s extensively, as he had done with Acts. The first passage picked is Romans 1:1-7:

Table. 3.12  A Comparison of Romans 1:1-7, as found in Morrison (1813) and Basset (~1700).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romans 1:1-7 (Morrison’s NT, 1813)</th>
<th>Romans 1:1-7 (Basset’s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>耶穌基利士督之僕保羅。被召為使徒。分派事神之福音。其所昔以先知輩許于聖經。論已子以肉軀作于大五得之種。明述為神之子。有能者以聖風而以自死輩之復活。耶穌基督吾主。吾所以而受聖寵。且使徒之職。以伏信萬民為厥名。汝輩亦在其中。而蒙召屬耶穌基督者。保羅與凡在羅馬神之寵愛。蒙召聖之輩。願汝輩自神吾父。且吾主耶穌基督受寵和矣。</td>
<td>耶穌基督之僕。蒙神召為使徒。蒙擇事神。昔以其預知輩。見許于聖經之福音。明已子以肉軀與之作于達未之種。以聖風預定為神之子。因得而自死輩之復活。耶穌基督。吾所以而受聖寵。且使徒之職。以伏信萬民為厥名。汝輩亦在其中。而蒙召属耶穌基督者。保祿與凡在羅馬。神之寵愛。蒙召聖之輩。願汝輩自神吾父。且吾主基督受安矣。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:1-7, KJV)

The visual comparison already shows that Morrison’s copy is very similar to that by Basset; nevertheless, the picture is still somewhat misleading, because quite a few of these changes are just a replacement of names or titles, such as jilishidu 基利士督.
(Morrison) vs. *jidu* 基督 (Basset) for “Christ”, *baoluo* 保羅 (Morrison) vs *baolu* 保祿 (Basset) for “Paul”, and *dawude* 大五得 (Morrison) vs *dawei* 達未 (Basset) for “David”. If we exclude these changes, the two passages are indeed very similar, with none of the changes representing a huge departure by Morrison’s from the Basset copy. Since Morrison readily admitted his reliance on the Basset copy, the result is not surprising. What is perhaps more interesting is the resultant lack of consistency this renewed reliance (on Basset) reveals in our texts. A good example is the translation for “Jesus Christ”, where we can observe Morrison using both the short version (*jidu* 基督) and the long version (*jilishidu* 基利士督). As noted earlier, Basset avoids long translated names in Chinese, thus keeping his translated names no more than three Chinese characters in length, and regularly omitting the “s” sound in the translation. By comparing the Basset copy in the Biblioteca Casanantense of Rome (the one with the four Gospels in full, believed to be the original edition of Basset’s work) and the British Museum Sloane Manuscript (the one with the Harmony of Gospels instead of the four Gospels in full, currently in the British Library143), we discover that only the short form (*jidu* 基督) can be found in the Rome copy, meaning the long form (*jilishidu* 基利士督) was a late addition to Basset, probably converted by the scribe who worked to reduce Basset’s Gospels to a Harmony. Since both forms existed in the Sloane Manuscript copy already, Morrison’s (Hong Kong University) copy had both forms too, hence the inconsistent use was already present before Morrison started translating. Yet, by relying so heavily on his copy of Basset, Morrison had also inherited the inconsistent use in his translation without

143 The copy (Oriental Manuscripts, Sloane 3599) was kept in the British Museum until the end of the last century, when it was moved to the British Library with all other manuscripts.
attempting to revise it. A good example can be seen in Acts 4, where verse 4:10 using the 
long form (“be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of 
Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified” 爾眾位及凡以色耳以勒民。必知因拿撒 
勒耶穌基督。爾等所釘十字架上), but shortly after the short form is used in 4:26 
(“The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, 
and against his Christ” 地之王立與憲輩會合攻主。攻厥基督也). Following Basset 
closely, Morrison used both versions in chapter 4 of his 1813 Acts too.

This is just one example of the terminological and stylistic inconsistency 
associated with the Morrison NT of 1813. Other examples include the word for 
“Pharisees”, which is found in the form of falixi 法利西 in Luke (e.g in chapter 18), but 
in the form of phonetic characters falishen (口法)喇哂 in John 1:24.144 The problem is 
likely related to the process of translation and Morrison’s dependence on Basset’s 
Manuscript. Morrison had switched back and forth from heavily relying on Basset’s 
(Acts, Pauline Epistles) to relying less on it (especially Luke, but other gospel books too), 
to finally producing his own work (most of Hebrews to Revelation). Given this lack of a 
general translation standard and approach, it is not hard to find discrepancies in the style 
and diction within Morrison’s 1813 translation. Marshman’s accusations of Morrison’s 
“total reliance” Basset’s in the later years can be understood, if we consider how 
completely the latter would at times switch back to relying on the Basset Manuscript, in 
order to speed up the completion of the Chinese NT (see Chapter 4). If we pick a passage

144 Shen 喲 was probably intended to read as the phonetic character xi (西), however since shen itself 
is another word, it becomes confusing how the word should be pronounced.
with no names or titles (such as Romans 13:1-7), the visual comparison will reveal the situation even more clearly:

Table. 3.13  A Comparison of Romans 13:1-7, as found in Morrison (1813) and Basset (~1700).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romans 13:1-7 (Morrison’s NT, 1813)</th>
<th>Romans 13:1-7 (Basset’s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>各靈皆宜伏上權。蓋權無非由神。且所有權者皆神命之。是以抗權者。抗神之例。</td>
<td>人人皆宜伏高權。蓋權無非由神。且所有者。皆神命之。是以抗權者。自取罪罰。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>且伊抗者。自取罪罰。蓋諸宗不令懼于善行。乃于惡。汝欲弗懼權。即行善。而獲其褒。蓋其為神之吏。</td>
<td>且伊抗者。自取罪罰。蓋諸宗不加懼于善行。乃于惡。汝欲弗懼權。即行善。而獲其褒。蓋其為神之吏。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>爾行惡宜懼。蓋其執刀非虛。其乃神之吏。以討罰行惡者。是以汝輩必屬伏。不惟以免罰。且以安心。因此爾輩亦納糧。蓋伊等為神之吏。常供是役也。爾輩則與各人所該宜還。該糧即還糧。該稅即還稅。該懼即懼。該敬即敬。</td>
<td>爾行惡宜懼。蓋其執刀非虛。其乃神之吏。以討罰行惡者。是以汝輩必屬伏。不惟以免罰。且以安心。因此爾輩亦納糧。蓋伊等為神之吏。常供是役也。爾輩則與各人所該宜還。該糧即還糧。該稅即還稅。該懼即懼。該敬即敬。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. (Romans 13:1-7, KJV)
Almost the entire section is duplicated without any revision or editing, even though the only substantial change – the addition of the line in verse 2 – should be considered an important one, because it was definitely a missing translation in the Basset’s translation. Still, one cannot ignore the extent of the reliance, and it definitely leaves little room for Morrison to exercise the kind of textual and stylistic discretion he did with Luke or even the other gospel books, resulting in a NT translation with a considerable degree of variation and inconsistency.

The current textual study has been very useful for the understanding of Robert Morrison’s role and decision-making as a translator. We can conclude that much of his NT translation was in fact a revision of the Basset copy, although the extent to which he relied on the British Museum Manuscript changed over time, with some of the books having just small and minor revisions (e.g. the Pauline Epistles), and some with considerable revisions and changes (e.g. Luke). This change of translation approach can perhaps best be understood from a historical critical perspective: with societal, financial and political pressures weighing on him, and with the team of rival Baptist translators not far from his mind, Morrison had to resort to using the Basset copy at times to keep up the pace. Yet, one should not forget that Morrison still had to translate the final few books of the NT and the entire OT portion of the Bible anew, with the help of Milne but mostly on his own. During this same period of time he also managed to finish a number of important works, including the Chinese grammar and the 3-volume Chinese English

145 A general comparison between Morrison’s Old Testament and that by Louis de Poirot (the Guxin Shengjing) shows no similarity, so the OT portion was entirely the translation of Morrison and Milne. Understandably Morrison did follow the same terminology he had used in the New Testament (e.g. Abraham, Moses, etc.), but that was as far as the Jesuit version had helped him with the OT.
*Dictionary.* Morrison had certainly made textual compromises with his Bible, but his effectiveness as a networker and promoter within the missional network would help make his translation the very first Chinese Bible that enjoyed general acceptance.
Fig. 3.1 The Korean Lord's Prayer that Robert Morrison mistakenly assumed to be Chinese in 1802 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1A, reprinted with permission of the SOAS Library, University of London.)
Fig. 3.2  Jean Basset’s *Gospel of John*, written before 1707, reprinted with permission of the Biblioteca Casanantense of Rome.
Fig. 3.3  Jean Basset’s *Harmony of Gospels*, written before 1707, reprinted with permission of the British Library (©The British Library Board, Egerton 3599 (Sloane 3599)).
Fig. 3.4 Jean Basset’s *Harmony of Gospels*, written before 1707. This copy is the one brought by Robert Morrison to China, with his handwritten notes on, reprinted with permission of Dr. I-Jin Loh and bible.fh.net.
Fig. 3.5  Robert Morrison’s *Gospel of John* in 1813, reprinted with permission of Dr. Kenny Wang of Western Sydney University.
4. PARTNERSHIP AND RIVALRY –
THE COMPLEX WORLD OF THE FIRST PROTESTANT TRANSLATORS

When Robert Morrison presented his complete translation of the New Testament to the LMS in early 1814, his tone was very humble, almost to the point of being apologetic, asking the recipients of his monumental work to be forgiving towards his work of imperfection and his iniquities as a foreigner to the Chinese language. He was even appealing to his reputation of integrity, and asking those who knew him to trust in his most honest intentions: ¹

Allow me to notice, that I give this translation to the world not as a perfect translation. That some sentences are obscure, that some might be better rendered, I suppose to be matter of course in every translation made by a foreigner; and, in particular, in a translation of the Sacred Scriptures, where paraphrase is not to be admitted. All who know me, will believe the honesty of my intentions, and I have done my best. It only remains that I commit it, by prayer, to the divine blessing.

The tone of Morrison’s letter might have sounded overly and unnecessarily humble to the members of the LMS, because after all Morrison had achieved what some just a few years ago believed to be impossible – to render the whole of the New Testament from its original language of Greek into the mysterious yet much used language of the Chinese people. The fact that Morrison succeeded in doing that in just 6 years after arriving in China in 1807 deserved a lot of praise, especially when the only other team who had had any successes so far in the area – the Serampore translators of Marshman and Lassar – just managed to complete 3 books of the New Testament by

¹ Morrison’s letter to LMS on 11 Jan 1814 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
1813. Whatever blemishes one could find in Morrison’s translation, were certainly very minor in comparison to the tremendous feat the missionary had accomplished. Recognition of Morrison’s achievement was immediate – a 1815 report wrote of Morrison that his “assiduity, perseverance, and efficient progress in the Chinese language, are attested by the most respectable and competent judges, has completed the translation of the New Testament.”2 And in a Jubilee Memorial written for the Society in 1844 by John Morison (unrelated to Morrison), the missionary was already firmly acknowledged as “the father of the Chinese mission”.3

Given our knowledge that Morrison’s 1813 NT was to a varying degree an edited version of Basset’s work – arguably the reason why Morrison sounded so apologetic and defensive in one of the greatest moments of his career as a translator and a missionary – Morrison’s eventual emergence as the undisputed champion of Chinese Bible translation begs a more in-depth look than simple assumptions. This study is no means trying to

2 Included in The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society (1816), xxiv.
3 “The father of the Chinese mission was the Rev. Robert Morrison, D. D., who entered on his bright career in 1807. Before he left England he had made considerable progress in the study of the Chinese language, and, on his arrival at Canton, he addressed himself in the most self-denying manner to the task of acquiring a complete knowledge both of the Canton and Mandarin dialects … But notwithstanding all the restrictions and disadvantages he had to encounter, Dr. Morrison acquired an accurate acquaintance with the language, in a much shorter time than could have been expected. His scholarship was such, that he was speedily appointed as Chinese interpreter to the East India Company; an office which, while it secured his residence at Macao, contributed in no small degree to his facilities for conducting his Chinese studies… In 1814, Dr. Morrison’s edition of the Chinese New Testament was completed at press. He afterwards proceeded with his translation of the Old Testament, and, with the powerful assistance of Dr. Milne, was enabled to give it to the public in a few years. Besides his translation of the Scriptures, Dr. Morrison published many other works, mainly of a philological character. The chief of these were, a Grammar of the Chinese Language; a Collection of Dialogues and detached Sentences, Chinese and English; a View of China, containing a Sketch of Chinese Chronology, Geography, Population, Government, Religion, and Customs; and a Dictionary of the Chinese Language, containing all the characters which occur in the original Chinese dictionary, in 32 volumes, published in 1816, by order of the emperor of China.” John Morison, The fathers and founders of the London Missionary Society: a jubilee memorial including a sketch of the origin and progress of the institution (London: Fisher, Son & Co., 1844), xxxi.
discredit Dr. Morrison’s achievement: the fact that he managed to have the entire Chinese New Testament completed within 7 years, even with the help of the Basset copy, was itself very remarkable. Not to be forgotten is that he was also officially employed by the East India Company to work as an interpreter from 1808 onward, while roughly around the same time he managed to produce many other works, most notably the 3-volume Chinese dictionary. So there is little doubt that Morrison was very gifted and toiled extremely hard to achieve the results that he was famous for. Still, we must understand that the popularity of the Morrison version over that of the Serampore Baptists and his long-lasting legacy, were not wholly or mostly due to his linguistic ability. Few at that time could critique his works from a language point of view, but some who could weren’t necessarily impressed by the result either (most famously Medhurst, when he argued that the BFBS should support his revision of the Morrison Bible). It is obvious that Morrison was not entirely happy with his own work either, as we have seen in previous chapters. Having had to rely on much of Basset’s translation for Acts and the Pauline epistles, and given that Basset was quite a different translator in terms of writing style and choice of words, writing more than 100 years before, Morrison must have felt the limitation and frustration of not having the time and resources to revise the whole translation to his satisfaction, or at least to make it more consistent throughout. Ironically, though Morrison earned his fame as an extremely successful and effective translator, his final translation of the NT was perhaps one of his lesser successes in the overall process of translation.

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4 See Chapter 5.

5 Also, Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 43.
So what factors allowed Morrison to have produced a translation much more readily accepted than that of the Serampore translators, who had begun their work earlier and had better resources (i.e. the Serampore Press and relatively higher political tolerance) than he had? According to the theory of patronage in translation, patrons such as the British Foreign and Bible Society (BFBS) and the various mission societies (e.g. the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) and the London Missionary Society (LMS)) supported the translators not only by means of financial support, but also by recognizing and elevating a translator’s status through their acceptance and endorsement.\(^6\) This study argues that for the two groups of earliest Protestant Chinese translators, these types of financial and societal methods of support played a more important role in determining the eventual recognition of the translator and his/her works. One should not forget that these translators were more than just language professionals or linguistic experts, but operated as facilitators of the whole translational process – part of a much larger system in which they had to navigate between the sources of support (e.g. Bible societies, missionary societies, denominations, individuals, etc.) and the recipients (e.g. the readers, the critics, the general public etc.). As this early episode of the completion of the Chinese Bible shows us, the most widely endorsed “translators” were often the ones who could develop the best patron-agent relationship and trust, through identifying their goals clearly, successfully propagating and promoting their works, and prevailing over rivals and competitors. In the case of Morrison/Milne and Marshman/Lassar, we can really see how the many strengths and characteristics of Morrison, in addition to language abilities, helped him to outshine the Serampore team, and to enjoy long and enduring admiration

\(^6\) André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and Manipulation of Literary Fame*, 16.
as the standard bearer of the Christian mission among the Chinese and in the Chinese language.

4.1 THE CLEAR GOAL

From the very beginning the LMS had set the most important goal for its lone missionary traveling to China – to compile a Chinese-English dictionary that would benefit the mission in the long run, as well as to translate the Scriptures into Chinese, as soon as possible. The original plan of teaming up Morrison with a second missionary fell through; William Brown remarked on the difficulty of working with Morrison and backed out of the mission. Unable to find a replacement, the LMS went ahead with dispatching Morrison to Canton, but was clearly uncertain about what to expect, since Morrison was their very first missionary sent to China. Perhaps if it had not been for Morrison’s determination, the commission would have delayed until a partner could be found for him. The absence of a detailed plan and a general lack of direction were already very apparent from the first year on, as we read in a letter of instructions sent to Morrison by the LMS on 20 Jan 1807:

Under the uncertainty in which we are, as to the spot where you may reside, it would be highly improper in us to restrict your conduct by any

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7 As noted in the 30 Jul 1804 LMS Board minutes, which state that “it appears to the Directors that the translation of the Scriptures into the Chinese language is an object of the highest importance to the interest of Christianity and the most suitable and effective means of attaining that object will be by the residence of two missionaries in China.” Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 90.

8 William Brown wrote that “Almost from the day I arrived at London, I have had reasons to believe Mr. Morrison has never been satisfied with me as his companion. Whether the reasons be well or ill founded, it will be obvious to you we cannot be associates in the same mission.” In his letter to the LMS in April of 1806 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1A); Eliza Morrison mentioned the episode too, and understandably omitted Brown’s comments and reasoning, Eliza Morrison, Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison, Vol. 1, 69-70.
specific instructions. We must necessarily leave you at full liberty to act on every occasion according to the dictates of your own prudence and discretion . . . We trust that no objection will be made to your continuing in Canton, till you have accomplished your great object of acquiring the language. When this is done, you may, probably, soon afterwards begin to turn this attainment into a direction which may be of extensive use to the world: perhaps you may have the honour of forming a Chinese dictionary, more comprehensive and correct than any preceding one; or still the greater honour of translating the Sacred Scriptures into a language spoken by a third part of the human race.9

In essence, the Society was asking Morrison to improvise, and wishing the best outcome for their first-year missionary in the mysterious foreign land – first to acquire the language, then “perhaps” complete a dictionary, and if possible, the Scriptures in Chinese. So it is fair to say that Morrison’s commission was not truly a translator in the straight sense, but a facilitator of the Chinese mission, one that would need to utilize all his skills and resources available to go from learning the Chinese to composing, translating, and distributing the Christian materials in Chinese.10

Morrison was constantly under financial difficulties, especially before his agreeing to serve as a translator for the Crown. The request for money was a consistent theme in his letters. The reality soon set in after his arrival in Canton, as he detailed in another earlier letter:

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9 Instructions to Morrison from the LMS on 20 Jan 1807 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
10 Jessie Lutz gives a telling picture of what the conditions were like for the early missionaries to China: “Missionaries were often left to formulate policy and make decisions on their own initiative, for their sending societies in the West had such scanty knowledge about the region and peoples that they could offer only general guidance. An exchange of letters between Europe and Southeast Asia in the 1820s required eight months or more, so that responses to opportunities or to events on the field had already been taken by the time the missionaries received instructions. Opening China: Karl F.A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852, 43.
House board and rent are extremely high, which in its measure has served to disquiet me. I have at present two unfurnished rooms, which cost me 250 dollars. My board in the family is 400 more. In addition to this heavy expense, I have to keep a boy, at a cost of eight dollars monthly; find candles; purchase the little furniture necessary for the rooms; obtain a few Chinese books; and there is, moreover, the expense of a tutor. The Chinese with whom Europeans deal in purchasing the necessities of life are ever watching to take every advantage. Send me, if you please, letters of credit for a little more money.

Out of the very real concerns of making his stay financially sustainable as well as legal, Morrison reluctantly accepted the position of “Office of Chinese Translator to the English Factory at Canton” offered by the East India Company at the end of 1809. Although the position did offer him the legal status to stay in Canton, and the annual salary of £500 certainly provided greater financial stability (he was married at that point), with an increased chance to use and improve on his Chinese, Morrison was quite frustrated to have to be distracted by the extra work duties, as well as the negative image associated with working for the company. In a letter to the LMS he lamented that “Missionaries should be wholly unconnected with political transactions, unless perfectly amicable; and not court but avoid the notice of governments.” Another letter of the same year (1811) even sees Morrison placing the blame of his slow progress in translation on this appointment, as he wrote: “Regret that I do not make the rapid progress that either you or I wish … my greatest hindrance has risen from my connection with the company.” Morrison clearly considered this arrangement a necessary evil, and

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13 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 07 Jan 1811 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
14 Morrison’s letter to LMS, November 1811 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
the experience had left such a sour taste in his mouth that when he came to providing
dvice to William Milne, he strongly argued against him joining the company – As early
as 1807, Morison had already received a letter from the then 23-years old Milne, offering
his service to the Society and asking Morrison for a recommendation.¹⁵ Milne would
prove to be an invaluable help to Morrison in his translational works, since the young
missionary, arriving Macao in July 1813, would become very well versed and proficient
in Chinese. Yet Milne was soon ordered to leave Macao by the governor, as the Catholic
priests feared that another Protestant missionary would only add to the further demise of
the Catholic mission there.¹⁶ Despite facing the great inconvenience of losing Milne,
Morrison still discouraged his young fellow missionary to follow his footsteps in seeking
employment with the East India Company in order to stay in China, stating how
undesirable the arrangement would be from his own experience: “I strongly dissuade
from embarrassing connexions in secular affairs for the sake of mere residence . . . the
result of this is not my Brother much to regret in leaving this place for one where more
liberty shall be enjoyed”.¹⁷ In the end Milne was forced to move and stay with the Ultra-

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¹⁵ Morrison’s letter to LMS on 29 Apr 1807 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
¹⁶ Given the political relationship Portugal had with Great Britain, the expulsion was purely a decision of
religious nature, as reasoned by the Macao government: “Mr. Milne is a subject of Great Britain – a
country that is spilling its blood, and wasting its treasures, to preserve the integrity of the kingdom of
Portugal; moreover, he has infringed none of the local regulations of the Portuguese in this place.
Hence, it can hardly be considered honorable to refuse the ordinary rights of hospitality to any subject
of an allied country. But Mr. Milne, it is supposed, has some religious object in view, which it is
feared, may prove detrimental to the interests of the Church of Rome.” Robert Philip, The Life and
¹⁷ Morrison’s letter to LMS on 15 Jul 1813 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B);
also (Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 224-5 (n.107).
Ganges mission in Malacca in May of 1815, but he managed to continue to provide translation support to Morrison.18

Such was the ongoing struggle of Morrison just to stay in China to continue his work, not to mention the additional funding he needed to muster in order to print and distribute the Chinese biblical books (we have already seen how he was upset by the high costs of printing the 1811 edition of Acts, and how the incident damaged the trust he had in Low Heen in Chapter 3).

The situation of the Baptists in Serampore was, compared to what Morrison was facing, difficult but less dire. Supported and sponsored by both the College of Fort William and the Serampore Mission, Marshman and Lassar were mostly able to pursue their Scriptures translation and Chinese learning activities without serious distraction. To call Serampore a safe haven, is however, misleading, because of the continuous hostilities the East Indian Company displayed against the missionaries, and the deteriorating relationship between Britain and Denmark as a result of the Napoleonic wars. The city of Serampore had been part of Danish India, which government was friendly and supportive towards the Protestant missionaries. The Danish protection waned, however, following its naval defeat in Copenhagen in 1807 and the occupation of Serampore by the British government in 1808.19 Fortunately for the Baptists, the occupation did not translate into hostilities toward their missionary works there, and Lord Minto, said to have become

19 The occupation lasted till 1815, but the city no longer could enjoy the lucrative trade as it did before the conflict, and the decline of Danish rule was complete when it was sold to the British in 1845. Flemming Aalund & Simon Rastén, *Indo-Danish Heritage Buildings of Serampore – Survey report by the Serampore Initiative of the National Museum of Denmark*. The National Museum of Denmark (2010) 12.
“personally acquainted with (the missionaries’) characters and their proceedings”, allowed them to “prosecute their labours without interruption”. The fact that the political conflict was not even mentioned in the First Serampore Memoir published in 1808, may suggest that little did come out of all the worries regarding the British occupation. However, the Memoir can also be misleading at times, such as when it suggests it would be readily achievable and economical for the printing of the Chinese Scriptures to begin at the Serampore Press, given the skills of a wood engraver soon to join them from England, coupled with the cheap Bengalese labour. The assessment turned out to be an exaggeration, as Marshman did encounter problems getting the Chinese woodblocks prepared at the Serampore Press, with the workers there not familiar with the mode of Chinese printing. Not until Marshman solicited the help of some native workers from a nearby factory which was established for printing calicos, were they successful in getting some Chinese pressing done, which was “sufficiently distinct and legible, and which afforded every prospect of gradual improvement.” In addition to the technical details, the costs for printing remained a big concern for the Baptist missionaries just as much as they did for Morrison.

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20 "(The Baptists) could not but consider it a most providential circumstance that the settlement should have been continued in the hands of the friendly government of Denmark long enough to afford them that protection which enabled them to tide over an important and dangerous crisis." John Clark Marshman, *The life and labours of Carey, Marshman, & Ward: the Serampore missionaries*, 163.

21 Two paragraphs were devoted to the discussion of the Chinese Mission, and the picture painted was a rosy one. *The First Serampore Memoir*, 1808, 52-53.

22 "Printing in (the Chinese) language is very far from being impracticable with us; nor is the expense likely to be very great, especially if, as we have reason to expect, we should be favoured with a brother from England skillful at engraving in wood. The patterns of the letters can be given here with accuracy; and through the cheapness of labour in Bengal, it is probable that the Chinese Scriptures may in process of time be printed to nearly as great advantage at Serampore as at Canton or Pekin." *The First Serampore Memoir*, 1808, 53.

4.2 THE PROMOTER

A mistaken perception of a translator is that of someone who sits at his or her desk all day long, shutting themselves off from the distraction of the world, and engaging in an epic struggle with words and phrases. Rather, a translator is essentially a communicator, who in addition to transferring the words of one culture to another, also needs to communicate effectively with sponsors, supporters and publishers in order to be effective. It was certainly true for Morrison/Milne and Marshman/Lassar in the pioneering days of translating the Chinese Scriptures. Both groups faced uphill battles that threatened to hinder or even terminate their missions, with people questioning the very feasibility of translating the Bible into Chinese.\footnote{One of those early doubters was Charles Grant, one of the Directors of the East India Company. After reading William Moseley’s 1789 circular, Grant was sympathetic to Moseley’s vision but remained unconvinced: “although the undertaking was a practical impossibility, it did a young man much credit to employ his talents in such a desirable undertaking … no translation of the Holy Scripture could be made into the Chinese language.” Marshall Broomhall, \textit{The Bible in China}, 50.} It became essential for these translators to keep their patrons and supporters, mostly in England, informed and excited about their achievements. They also felt compelled to offer evidence and figures of successes to their mission boards in the West, who in turn used them to solicit support themselves.\footnote{Jessie Gregory Lutz, speaking about the comparable situation faced by Karl Gützlaff and his contemporaries – though some years later than that faced by Morrison and Marshman. \textit{Opening China: Karl F.A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852}, 159.} Being able to demonstrate the validity and potential of their works, hence, turned into an essential and ongoing exercise to not only keep support flowing in, but also keep the whole projects afloat.

One of the major patrons of these missionaries was the British Foreign and Bible Society (BFBS), which played a crucial role in the production of the Chinese Bible in
China. The Society can be said to be a fulfillment of the vision of William Moseley, the Congregational minister who on March 7, 1789 issued a circular urging the “establishment of a Society for the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the languages of the most populous Oriental nations”. Founded six years later in London in 1804, the BFBS was established as an interdenominational Protestant organization that encouraged the wider distribution of the Bible to various cultures and countries. Because of its broad appeal, the Society was able to draw in considerable support across the vast supportive base of different Protestant denominations, and was so successful that by just 1809, it was already sponsoring the distribution, printing and translating of the Bible in 152 languages or dialects. Just focusing on the Chinese Bible translation, the amounts given to Morrison/Milne & the Serampore Mission throughout the early years (up to the year 1824) of Chinese Bible translation reached almost £7,500 and £27,000 respectively (though the latter figure was provided for all the Oriental language translations the Serampore Mission engaged in, among which was Chinese).

In order to impress the decision-making of supporters such as the BFBS and other mission supporters, missionaries not only would give regular updates on their progress,

26 “The production of this most important version (i.e. a Chinese Bible), and of the numerous successive editions through which it has passed, is mainly if not entirely due, under Providence, to the generous aid of the British and Foreign Bible Society, who, from first to last, advanced more than ten thousand pounds in furtherance of the translation and circulation of the Chinese Scriptures” (Samuel Bagster and Sons, The Bible of Every Land – A Sacred Scriptures in Every Language and Dialect (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1848) 5).


29 For the grant figure for Robert Morrison please refer to Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 44 n.103 (see also Chapter 1); for the Serampore figure see Proceedings of the General Conference on Foreign Missions (London: John F. Shaw & Co., Paternoster Row, 1879), 422.
but cultivated a culture of positive reporting. As mentioned in Chapter 2, David Brown (Provost of the Fort William College) had reported to the BFBS of receiving 3 specimens of Lassar’s Chinese Matthew as early as 1806,\(^{30}\) which seemed to have initiated the long-running support of the Society to Serampore on the works done on the Oriental languages.\(^{31}\) When the Committee finally received a specimen of the work in 1809 the reaction was very positive,\(^{32}\) and quickly deemed a work superior in quality than anything that could be produced in England. The Committee was so impressed that they immediately approved an annual grant of £1,000 for three successive years — which according to the BFBS financial statements should correspond to the support from 1808 to 1810.\(^{33}\) The payment was usually disbursed to the “Corresponding Committee in Bengal”,\(^{34}\) for the purpose of printing and distributing the Scriptures “in the Oriental

\(^{30}\) The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, v.3 (1807), 154.

\(^{31}\) Funding for Serampore was first recorded in the 1808 report, but since in the 1809 financial report this 1808 amount is called “the 3rd donation”, it is believed that the first annual amount approved for Serampore was provided in 1806, after David Brown’s report. George Mak is partly incorrect when he states that the 1811 funding to Robert Morrison was when the BFBS “started its patronage of Chinese Bible translation”, though one can argue that the funding for Serampore was provided towards works on Oriental languages that included Chinese, but that for Morrison the funding was specifically for the Chinese Bible. (“To Add or not to Add? The British and Foreign Bible Society’s Defence of the ‘Without Note or Comment’ Principle in Late Qing China”, 229).

\(^{32}\) The early date suggests it was most likely Lassar’s Matthew, also because in the 1810 report the Serampore missionaries mentioned “a newly revised copy of Matthew”, which should be the version by Marshman and Lassar.

\(^{33}\) “Of the Gospel in the Chinese character, a specimen has been received by your Committee; and the execution of it appears to be much superior to any, that, under present circumstances, could be made in this country. It was not to be expected that works of such magnitude (not to mention the expectation of a further extension of them) could be undertaken without a very considerable and increasing expense. Your Committee, on receiving the above intelligence, immediately resolved to appropriate, for three successive years, an annual sum of 1,000l.” The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, v.5 (1809), 214 (On the “State of the Society’s Fund” list issued on 31 Mar 1809, the amount was included as being approved). The same report was found in The Panoplist, and Missionary Magazine United for the Year Ending June 1, 1810 (Boston: Farrand, Mallory, and Co., 1810), 89.

\(^{34}\) Except in the annual report of 1810 (v.7), when it was directed “To India”. The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, v.7 (1811), under “Abstract of the Forgoing Account".
The Serampore Mission in fact received more than that sum from the BFBS, as there was another entry of £1,546 paid to the Mission under “invested in Bibles and Testaments on Account of the Grants of 2,000l. per Annum.” The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, v.8 (1812).

Starting from 1811, the grant was issued to the “Corresponding Committee in Bengal”. It should be noted that the grants covered the various expenses in association with the translating and printing of the Scriptures in different “Oriental Languages”, not just Chinese.

The first amount ever granted to the Serampore Mission, named “To India, in Aid of Translating the Scriptures into the Oriental Languages”, was approved in the 1808 budget for £2,000. Since in 1809 financial report the amount paid for 1808 would be called “the 3rd donation” and for just £1,000, the budgeted amount of £2,000 might also include retrospective support for the previous two years (1806 and 1807), as well.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Grants made out to the Serampore translators</th>
<th>Submission made by the Serampore Baptists</th>
<th>Grants made out to Robert Morrison</th>
<th>Submission made by Morrison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1809</td>
<td>£1,000 (&quot;4th donation&quot;)</td>
<td>Lassar’s Matthew^40</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>£1,000 (&quot;5th donation&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>£2,000 (&quot;6th donation&quot;)</td>
<td>Marshman’s Dissertation on the Characters and Sounds of the Chinese Language (1809);^41 Gospel of Matthew (1810); Gospel of Mark (1810)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>£2,000 (&quot;7th donation&quot;)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>£500</td>
<td>Acts of the Apostles (1810)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>£2,000 (&quot;8th donation&quot;)^42</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>£500</td>
<td>Gospel of Luke (1811); “A Summary of the Divine Doctrine respecting the Redemption and Salvation of the World”(1811)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1814</td>
<td>£2,000</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
<td>A Catechism on the Christian Truth (1812); Pauline Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians in Chinese (1813)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>£2,000</td>
<td>Gospel of John, “printed with moveable metal types” (1814)</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
<td>Complete New Testament in Chinese (1815)^43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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39 Starting from 1811, the grant was issued to the “Corresponding Committee in Bengal”. It should be noted that the grants covered the various expenses in association with the translating and printing of the Scriptures in different “Oriental Languages”, not just Chinese.

40 It is not clear when exactly the BFBS received a copy of Lassar’s Chinese Matthew, since it was not included among the “List of Versions and Copies of the Scriptures presented to the Society since the last General Meeting”. But because it was reported in the 1809 annual report, and that the donation to Serampore was approved in the 1808 budget, it was likely submitted in 1808 to the Society.

41 The year on the table refers to the year of the annual report in which the contributions were recorded, so the Society could have received them months before; the date in brackets is the supposed completion year or the year of printing for the item.

42 An additional £6,181 was granted towards the Corresponding Committee in Bengal for investing in “Bibles, Testaments, and Printing Paper, including 2000 Reams, voted as an additional Grant on account of the loss sustained by the fire at Serampore.”

43 “Which Mr. Morrison presents ‘as a mark of gratitude’ for the liberal assistance he has received from the Society in the prosecution of that important work.”
Little progress in translation was made between 1809 and 1810, as Marshman and Lassar worked hard to collaborate with the translation effort. Possibly concerned that the BFBS Committee would frown on the lack of progress made on the Chinese Bible, the Serampore translators were eager to paint a very encouraging picture and keep their patrons excited. In an 1810 report, not only did they tell the BFBS that they had begun printing “a newly revised copy of Matthew” (the Marshman/Lassar version), they also claimed that they were at work on the translation of the Epistle to the Ephesians – a claim that cannot possibly be substantiated by any existing evidence. Along with the positive reporting, the Mission went on to request another 5000 rupees (roughly £600) of grant money from the Society, for preparing an estimated 700 blocks, each containing about 300 Chinese characters, for printing purposes. The high point of the Serampore translators came when they successfully printed Marshman’s “Dissertation on the Characters and Sounds of the Chinese Language”, along with the Marshman and Lassar

44 “Some months ago we began printing a newly revised copy of the gospel by Matthew, to the middle of which we are nearly advanced. The difficulty of afterwards correcting the blocks causes us to advance with slow and careful circumspection … In the translation of the New Testament we are advanced to the epistle to the Ephesians.” The Missionary Magazine for 1810 (Edinburgh: Andrew and James Aikman, 1810), 367-368.

45 “From calculating how many pages of the original the blocks of the Chinese already cut have occupied, the probability is, that 700 of them will nearly complete the New Testament. These, although they contain each nearly 300 characters, we are able to get engraved for seven Rupees each. Seven hundred multiplied by this number gives 4900 Rupees: so that it is quite probable that 5000 Rupees, or a little more than £600 sterling will complete the engraving of the whole New Testament in this language. When this is done, any number can be thrown off at pleasure. We cannot certainly say how many copies one block will bear to have taken off. It is not impossible that the number may be 10,000. If however it be only half that number, at so moderate a price can Chinese paper be obtained in Calcutta, that considering the number of copies, the version will be cheaper, notwithstanding its being the first, than any version of the New Testament which we have hitherto been enabled to print.” The Missionary Magazine for 1810, 370.

46 More commonly known as The Works of Confucius – The original text with a translation, a massive 700+ pages work mainly written in English, with the original Chinese text included alongside. The translation samples provided are not of the highest standard or fluency (e.g. for the common saying 食
Matthew and Mark in Chinese by 1811, and sent copies to the Society. The reception of the Chinese translations was filled with great excitement, and the reward for the Serampore Mission was immediate – the annual support for the translators was doubled from £1,000 to £2,000, and a commitment for three years was made, assuring them the generous support till 1813.

Soon after this triumphant achievement, however, the spotlight on the Chinese translation of the Bible began to shift. With the successful production, printing and distributing of the Book of Acts by Morrison in 1811, the Serampore translators no longer had a comfortable lead in the field. The BFBS was well informed of Morrison’s mission to China, and was instrumental in securing the Basset Manuscript for his use a few years before (see Chapter 3). Starting from 1811 the Committee began to take notice of his rapid progress and China mission approach, and became increasingly impressed. An annual grant of £500 was provided for Morrison starting 1812, and even though the amount was just a quarter of that committed to the Serampore Mission, it was assigned for Morrison alone, and specifically for the purpose of “translating and printing the Scriptures in Chinese”.47 The fact that Morrison had become the forerunner in completing

不語寢不言 – “Don’t converse while you eat; and don’t speak while you sleep” – Marshman translates as “In eating he conversed not: while reposing he spoke not”, p.694), however it was not minor work either. For Marshman to have produced and printed a translation as early as 1809 was quite an achievement, but unfortunately the work did not seem to have attracted a great deal of attention. (Serampore: The Mission Press, 1809).

There have been some discrepancies as to when Morrison began receiving this grant from the BFBS, with Zetzsche (The Bible in China) claiming it began in 1811, and George Kam Wah Mak agreeing with him at one point (“To Add or not to Add? The British and Foreign Bible Society’s Defence of the ‘Without Note or Comment’ Principle in Late Qing China”, 330), but finding more support for 1812 in another (“The Colportage of the Protestant Bible in Late Qing China: The Example of the British and Foreign Bible Society”, in Philip Clart and Gregory Scott (eds.) Religious Publishing and Print Culture in Modern China: 1800-2012 (Boston and Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015) n.37). But from the Society’s own record, the strong evidence coming from both the report and the budget suggests the
the Chinese translation of the Bible was becoming obvious with the affirmative comments BFBS attached to the translation deliveries he made for the Society – for example his Gospel of Luke was referred to as “translated by himself”, and the Summary of the Divine Doctrine as “written by himself in Chinese”, which were specific comments of recognition not used on the Serampore translators ever (usually the granting of funds just said to be made to the “Bengal Committee” or for the works in “Oriental Languages”). And when he finally submitted the entire Chinese New Testament in 1814 (claimed to be completed in 1813), the Society made an effort to include Morrison’s words on his presentation “as a mark of gratitude for the liberal assistance he has received from the Society in the prosecution of that important work”, a rare gesture of appreciation in that section of the Annual Report. From a financial support point of view the Serampore Mission continued to enjoy the upper hand, even after Morrison’s grant was doubled in 1814, but Morrison was obviously gaining more and more attention from 1811 onward.

Perhaps because the rivalry had intensified, the tactic of positive reporting employed by the Serampore missionaries also seemed to shift into an even higher gear

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48 The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, v.9 (1813), 97.

after 1811 – to the point of blatant exaggeration. In a report dated 31 August 1811, the translators wrote to the BFBS claiming that the entire New Testament had been completed “nearly two years ago”, with both Matthew and Mark printed, and the translation of the Pentateuch completed to the fourth chapter of Numbers. At this point Marshman and Lassar had only just wrapped up the Gospel of Mark, and the printing of the Gospel of John was still two years away, let alone that of the whole New Testament – which would only happen in 1815, more than a year after Robert Morrison published the New Testament translation in its entirety. In addition, if we compare it to the 1810 report they filed to the BFBS, the time line of completion had actually been moved up – from “up to the Book of Ephesians” in 1810, to an “already completed” New Testament in 1809! A similar tone was struck in another report dated 31 Aug 1812, when the Baptists once again claimed that “The greatest progress that has been made in Translation, has been made in Chinese, Sungskrit [Sanskrit], and Cashmire [Kashmiri]. In the Chinese we have advanced from the beginning of Numbers to the First Book of Samuel; (the New Testament was completed nearly two years ago).” By a detailed textual examination, it is possible to tell that the Serampore translators were still nowhere near completing the NT in 1812, as they began to revise their Gospel of John after getting

50 The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, v.2 (1811-13), 506; reprinted some years later in the Chinese Repository 4 (1835) 252.

51 Jean Debernardi gives a less-than-accurate account of the situation, possibly misled by this type of Serampore missionaries’ “positive reporting”, by affirming their completion of the whole New Testament in 1810: “(The) Baptist missionaries at Serampore, India, were independently at work on a new translation of the New Testament at Fort William, which they completed in 1810 with a £500 grant from the BFBS. They printed this edition with movable metal type – an innovation introduced and refined by agents of the BFBS – but also used the more traditional wooden block printing.” In “Moses's Rod: The Bible as a Commodity in Southeast Asia and China”, Eric Tagliacozzo and Wen-Chin Chang (eds.) Chinese Circulations – Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia (Durham: Duke University, 2011) 384-385.

52 The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, v.9 (1813) 87.
hold of the Basset Manuscript. On the other hand, we do not know of the response of the BFBS Committee after getting promising reports repeatedly but receiving no more than just a copy of John’s Gospel in 1814, and at least no signs of disappointment can be detected in their continual financial support to Serampore. It is however very logical that the BFBS would value Morrison’s work and contribution more and more as time passed, given his greater ability to deliver actual works and results.

The tactic of impressing patrons and positively impacting supporters was also used by Morrison. From the voluminous archives of Morrison’s letters and journals kept in the SOAS library in London, it is easy to see how meticulous Morrison was when it came to detailing and reporting his works and ministries in China, and one can easily see his readiness and eagerness to impress his patrons, be it the LMS or the BFBS, working hard to gain support for his work in Canton and to continue the printing of the Scriptures. For example, just one month after printing and distributing the transcribed copy of Acts in 1810 (Basset’s copy), Morrison was already writing to the LMS, promising the imminent completion of a gospel book and the book of Genesis:

I should wish to print, before I can hear from you again, one of the Gospels and the book of Genesis. By reference to these the most

53 A more detailed analysis will be given later this chapter. But from the dramatic change in language style of Marshman’s and Lassar’s John, as compared to their earlier versions of Matthew and Mark, and the remarkable similarity in terminology between their John and that of Morrison and Basset, it is quite conclusive that the Baptist missionaries had a chance to use the Basset Manuscript before their completion of John. It is thus highly likely that their translation of the New Testament was far from complete in 1811, contrary to their claims made to the BFBS; also possible is that after they read the Basset version some time between 1811 and 1813, they felt the great necessity to revise their whole translation approach, hence taking a few more years before starting to print the rest of the New Testament. For whatever reasons, their translation of the NT would not be nearly complete by this early date.
important truths of divine revelation will be confirmed: and this groundwork I find extremely desirable in addressing the heathen.\textsuperscript{54}

Though he managed to publish Luke in November of the same year, the book of Genesis would not be completed until a few years later, after the entire New Testament was.\textsuperscript{55} Although Morrison might have got ahead of himself by promising the imminent completion of the gospel book (which turned out to be Luke), there is little evidence that he was close to finishing Genesis at this point in time, as it would require him to come up with a completely new translation with no help from the Basset copy. And with the completion of the NT still a few years away (though still considered to have proceeded at an extraordinary speed), this assertion about printing a gospel AND Genesis BEFORE he would get a reply from the Society (in a few months time) was likely an exaggeration intended to stir up excitement at home. The key difference between Morrison and the Serampore translators, however, was his greater ability to deliver his “promises”, even if just part of them. Though Genesis wouldn’t appear until a few years later, he was able to print and deliver Luke in 1811, and a number of other books (Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians) around 1812 and 1813.\textsuperscript{56} In comparison, it took the Serampore translators twice as long just to deliver one more gospel book (John) after completing Matthew and Mark, despite all the promises and positive reports they were giving.

\textsuperscript{54} Morrison’s letter to LMS on 18 Jan 1811 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

\textsuperscript{55} When Milne was distributing the Morrison New Testament in Southeast Asia in 1814, he was said to distribute also “a number of copies of the first chapter of Genesis, among the Chinese inhabiting (at Batavia)” (George Browne, \textit{The British and Foreign Bible Society, from its institution in 1804, to the close of its Jubilee in 1854}, vol. II (London: BFBS, 1859) 196. If only copies of the first chapter were distributed, it is highly unlikely that Genesis was complete anytime before 1814.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society}, v.10 (1814) 211.
This leads us to an important observation about Morrison as a promoter and planner – he understood the importance of showing continued results and making deliveries. In a letter dated 22 Dec 1812, still a year before the eventual submission of the complete New Testament, Morrison wrote: “I have now in the press most of the Epistles, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus – also those by Peter and James. And a second converted edition of the Acts with the verses annexed.”57 Thanks to this piece of encouraging news and his re-submission of Acts, the BFBS immediately donated £1,000, and then he received an additional £250 from the president of the East India Company’s Canton operations, demonstrating how important this type of positive reporting was.58 It is not to be forgotten that although Morrison might have used exaggeration now and then to keep expectation high at home, he was mostly capable of delivering what he had announced before with just slight delays, even if it meant sacrificing the quality of his translation. From our textual analysis in Chapter 3 we know that Morrison had tried to come up with a version of Luke without being overly dependent on Basset’s in 1811, but as the Serampore translators were successful in completing and sending copies of Marshman’s Dissertation and Matthew and Mark earlier, he likely felt the need of keeping up with the pace and decided against continuing with that lengthy approach of translation. This can be postulated from what Morrison wrote to the LMS on 9 March 1811, confirming that he was well aware of Marshman’s progress, yet continued to sound skeptical and tried to promote his own ongoing work:59

57 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 22 Dec 1812 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
58 Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 136.
59 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 09 March 1811 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B). Milne has also testified that Morrison “was not ignorant of the efforts that were making in Bengal by
I have seen Mr. Marshman’s translation & dissertation. Sir George Staunton thinks it by far a too hasty production. If health continues I shall have written out a fair copy of the Grammar, which I have already mentioned to you, in the course of a month or two.

That decision led to a return to heavy reliance on the Basset Manuscript, and a rapid succession of completing (and delivering) three Pauline epistles to the LMS and BFBS in 1812, even though it meant the sentence style of those books would once again revert to something very similar to the Basset copy. By the time the Serampore translators finished revising their John Gospel according to the Basset copy they had received, Morrison had already finished the whole NT, which was a revised edition of the Basset Manuscript to a varying degree. On top of real genius and exceedingly hard work, Morrison’s success had much to do with his excellent sense as a promoter – he was keenly aware of the importance of being timely and being ready to meet heightened expectation, and was able to override his literary preferences to come up with his own translation.

Another important trait of Morrison the promoter was his emphasis on the distribution of the Chinese Scriptures – a vital and deciding factor in putting the Morrison and Milne team on top at the end. Being the first-ever protestant missionary who operated in China, Morrison had the advantage of living among his target audience, hence fulfilling a crucial goal of the Protestant mission – to put the Scriptures into the hands of the people of China. In an early report in 1811, Morrison was already showing his

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the members of the Baptist Mission.” See Milne, William, A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission in China (Malacca: Anglo-Chinese Press, 1820) 89-90.
intuitive understanding that the preparation of literature and the application of it must be carried out at a comparative pace:

“My chief work, this year, is a Translation of the Gospel by St. Luke, which is now printing. I have also printed a thousand copies of a religious Tract, which I composed in Chinese. I have also formed a Chinese Catechism, a copy of which I purpose to send to the Society this season. On the Lord's day, I have preached to the Chinese in my own house. They attend with decency and seriousness, and, I think, feel in some degree the influence of the truths which I state; but I have not yet to rejoice over them as converted to God.”

It is hence not surprising that when the BFBS offered Morrison a grant of £500 in the following year, they also emphasized not just the translation but the “application” of the Chinese Bible, hence making it to “Rev. Robert Morrison, at Canton, for promoting the translation and printing of the Scriptures in the Chinese Language … to encourage all exertions that are made to cultivate a field, wherein the harvest is so great, and the labourers are so few.” It is obvious that to many of the patrons of the missionaries, language learning and Bible translation were just one part – though nonetheless a very important and monumental part – of the whole ordeal. Allowing the Chinese a chance to read the Bible in their own language must be the next big objective. Unfortunately for Morrison, soon after he completed and printed Luke’s Gospel, the Chinese government passed an edict in 1812 to make printing books on the Christian religion in Chinese a “capital crime”. Though the edict was primarily issued against the Roman Catholic missionaries, it obviously had implications for Morrison too. So if Morrison and his

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61 *The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, v.8 (1812) 212.
assistants had been operating in secrecy and in danger, the new law just made it even more difficult and life endangering. It was still a few decades before the BFBS would use local corresponding committees, with foreign supervisors managing a network of native colporteurs for Bible distribution, as in the case of William Muirhead operating in Shanghai in the early 1860s. In Morrison’s days he had to rely on local acquaintances such as Liang A-Fa (a wood-block cutter hired by Morrison to work at the Malacca mission press, who was subsequently baptized by Milne in 1816, and ordained by Morrison in 1823) to help, but even that approach proved dangerous. When Liang traveled back to Canton to visit his family in 1819 and brought with him Christian tracts, he was arrested by the Chinese officials and severely beaten, with his tracts and some printing blocks confiscated and destroyed.

62 Morrison saw just a translation of the edict made by Dr. Pearson of the English Factory, who translated from a Spanish copy obtained from a Catholic missionary in Macau (Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013) 226, n.150). Morrison has included the edict in his letter on 2 April 1812 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B), which was also reproduced in the Missionary Sketches produced by the London Missionary Society (No. IX, April 1820): “This edict was directed against the Roman Catholic Missionaries in China. Those in Pekin were silenced, and some of them imprisoned, until an opportunity occurred of sending them to Europe. Mr. Morrison, undismayed, proceeded on his labours, though with his usual caution and prudence.”

63 Muirhead reporting about his works to the BFBS: “The best of (the Colporteurs) require the sympathy, aid, and surveillance of a foreigner, to whom at the same time they are indispensable for the carrying on of the undertaking … Meanwhile, four native Colporteurs have been employed for the past six weeks, in connection with the Committee. They have been engaged inside and outside the neighbouring city, visiting the different shops and places of concourse, specially under my own superintendence. Their journals we revised, and I meet them several times a week for prayer, reading of the Scriptures, and conversation about their work. As occasion offers, I accompany them with a view to encourage and direct them how to act. Numbers gather round us at public places, and furnish a fine opportunity for declaring to them the truth and excellence of God's Holy Word.” The Fifty-Ninth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society (1863) 179-180.


65 Liang A-Fa would have greater successes in later years, and during the summer of 1833 distributed a large number of books in and around Canton, including many copies of the Scriptures and his own
When Milne was asked to leave Macao it was a blow to Morrison’s longtime search for a coadjutor in mission works, yet Milne’s physical sojourn away from China allowed him unexpected freedom and flexibility in taking the products of their translation to Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. With the Chinese New Testament completed and printed, Milne took upon himself to distribute the Scriptures in 1814 and 1815, traveling to Java, Malacca, and Penang. Encouraging reports such as the successful distribution of 300 Chinese New Testaments to the Chinese inhabitants in Batavia started coming in, and scarce but exceptional stories such as the positive response of a Chinese recipient of the Bible in Java were circulated and used to great effect in publicizing and promoting the fruitful mission of Morrison and Milne:

Further interesting facts were reported by the Rev. Mr. Supper, as having fallen under his own observation, or been conveyed to him through authentic channels; from which the most encouraging conclusions might be drawn, with regard to the effect of that light which seemed to have dawned on the minds of the Chinese, through their acquaintance with the truths of Divine revelation. “I have read” (said a wealthy Chinese) “Mr. Morrison’s New Testament with pleasure: it is very fine, and it would be well if every one led such a life as Jesus Christ has taught them to lead.”

The same Rev. Mr. Supper, Secretary to the Java Bible Society, also wrote later in 1816 about “Chinese parents reading to their families in the morning out of the New Testament”, and that after he gave “a portion of the Old Testament in Chinese to tracts. But a crackdown in 1834 by the government had some of his assistants arrested and beaten, with Liang himself fleeing to Singapore (Samuel Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Literature, Social Life, Arts, and Chinese Empire and its Inhabitants*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900) 328.

several”, one merchant “pressed it to his bosom, and kissed it!” These various accounts do sound a little suspiciously encouraging, but understandable since Bible Societies at these remote locations would naturally want to present a rosier side of things to order to receive more support, and they were also under pressure from those like Morrison, who was eager to receive good news about his Bibles. What this distribution campaign and occasional mission reports did was to give the Morrison/Milne translations an even greater impression of success – something in which the Serampore translators were truly falling behind, as they continued to work hard to catch up to Morrison in their Scriptures translation. Hence, even though the distribution of these early bibles was done mostly outside of China, the LMS and BFBS were still very impressed because some of the books did end up in the hands of the Chinese people. And because there were robust trade activities happening between China and Southeast Asia, this strategy was also expected to help reach Chinese merchants, who would eventually bring the Bibles back within

67 The Missionary Register for 1816, containing the Principal Transactions of the various Institutions for Propagating the Gospels: with the Proceedings, at large, of the Church Missionary Society (London: L.B. Seeley, 1816) 263.

68 Fascinating reports were certainly not uncommon as the translated Scriptures reached those remote areas. Another report was filed by a Rev. Mr. Kam, the Vice-President of the Amboyna Bible Society, regarding the recent distribution of thousands of the Malay Scriptures: “The work of the Lord still prospers … in this remarkable part of the world. The large supply of the New Testament, in the Malay language, has already proved the instrument in the hand of God, of bringing many benighted sinners from the greatest darkness, to the marvelous light of the truth, as it is in Jesus. A cheering proof of this I had lately, in traveling along the southern coast of the Island of Seram, inhabited by a people called Alvoer. A man pointed out to me the place by the sea shore, where he had burnt a great number of idols in the presence of many witnesses.” The Eighteenth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society (1822) 76.

69 “I am grieved,” says Mr. Morrison, “that I cannot obtain particulars respecting the effects of the Divine Book sent into China. They are but a drop thrown into the ocean: we must commit them to the care of Providence, hoping that they will produce a certain though a silent effect.” The Missionary Register for 1816, 262.
Chinese territories. In a 1815 report the BFBS praised Milne for the strategy and pledged an additional grant of £1,000 for its purposes, saying that:

“Your Committee add, with great satisfaction, that a practical and sure mode of circulating the New Testament has been adopted by the Rev. William Milne, Mr. Morrison’s colleague, among the numerous Chinese settlers in Java, Malacca, and Penang.”

For the decades before the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin (Tianjin) in 1856, when the clause on Christian toleration was added to the Treaty thanks to Samuel Wells Williams, missionaries were allowed very limited means to reach out to the Chinese, hence this method of printing and distributing the bibles and Christian tracts, regardless of what the real effects were, would remain a key strategy of the Bible Societies’ Chinese mission. Hence when the news of the completion of the entire Bible reached the BFBS, the Committee members were much thrilled, its Foreign Assistant Secretary, an E. F. Ronneberg, wrote on 26 Jan 1821 to inform Morrison and Milne of the approval of further grants for them to print the Chinese Bibles, and with great enthusiasm told them of:

…the incalculable good that may be done to the Chinese nation, by a complete version of the Scriptures in their native tongue, the production of copies of your translation has already gained for our Institution many friends, and even fellow labourers, from among those who formerly were entirely indifferent on the subject of Scripture dissemination, if not hostile to the object itself. … I am led to this reflection by the

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70 The report went on to describe how Milne did it: “He distributed nearly 750 copies of the New Testament, among the Chinese at Java; together with 500 copies of the Book of Genesis, and very judiciously supplied eight Chinese Schools with Testaments for the Schoolmasters, by whom they were used as School-books.” The Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, v.11 (1815), 279.

71 Frederick Wells Williams, The life and letters of Samuel Wells Williams, LL.D.: Missionary, Diplomatist, Sinologue (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1889) 412.
circumstance you mention, that this man found more edification in his own compositions than in the Scriptures themselves, or Tracts of your composition. Standing here, as it were, on an eminence from which the progress of the word of God in the whole world may be observed, I have not unfrequently perceived that the simple distribution of the Scriptures, with the absence of all attempts at proselytism, has met with less obstruction, and ultimately been more effectual in enlightening those who were involved in the darkness of superstition, idolatry, and infidelity, than attempts made…  

By situating themselves to meet the language and mission goals of their patrons, the team of Morrison and Milne were already securing for themselves a lead in promoting the China Mission, and enjoying the increasing support of patronage – in financial terms and more importantly, in acceptance and recognition.

4.3 THE COMPETITOR

It was a well-known fact that Morrison and Marshman/Lassar were working separately at producing the first New Testament in Chinese, and for the most part patrons such as the BFBS had been diplomatically appropriate in dealing with them, trying to show support to both while displaying no favoritism. In retrospect many would paint a picture of civil and respectful partnership between the two teams, though in reality the


73 BFBS’s support for Marshman and Lassar would last from 1806 to 1822, until the completion of their Chinese Bible. To the Serampore Mission as a whole, BFBS would provide up to £27,000 in total amount of grants, until the year 1824 (*Proceedings of the General Conference on Foreign Missions* (London: John F. Shaw & Co., Paternoster Row, 1879), 422). Zetzsche somehow got the date 1827 for the termination of BFBS’s support. (Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 54 n.136).
two camps were engaged in a competition almost from the very beginning,\textsuperscript{74} scrambling for more resources and recognition to continue and expand their works of translation. Without carefully establishing their rivalry and the race to completion, it would be difficult to understand why Lassar’s name quickly passed into obscurity soon after his triumphant feat in 1807, and justify the way Morrison would choose to sacrifice the style and semantic integrity of his translations, in favor of getting ahead of his rivals.

On the surface everything seemed civil and courteous. Late in 1820, Milne would try to depict a picture of harmony and mutual respect between Morrison and the Serampore translators, between workers who worked separately and selflessly towards the great good of a better Chinese translation of the Bible:\textsuperscript{75}

Mr. M. was not ignorant of the efforts that were making in Bengal by the members of the Baptist Mission, in the same cause; nor is any thing here said with a view to disparage, or throw a veil over, the highly useful labors of so meritorious a body of men. On the contrary, Mr. M. from the beginning, thought that the labors of several individuals, instructed by different native teachers, would ultimately contribute to the progressive perfection of a translation of the divine oracles into Chinese. He hoped that the harmony of the Gospels (by the Catholic Missionaries) and several of the epistles, as well as a Chinese teacher, all of which he had before procured for and sent to them, would contribute in some degree to the progress and perfection of their version.

In fact, even the decision of the LMS sending Morrison to Canton was enough to be a source of annoyance to the Serampore Baptists very early on. Such sentiment was

\textsuperscript{74} Marshall Broomhall, \textit{The Bible in China}, 50, as quoted at the beginning of this work.

\textsuperscript{75} William Milne, \textit{A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission in China} (Malacca: Anglo-Chinese Press, 1820) 89-90.
revealed when Marshman recalled the event in a letter addressing the BMS in April 1817, asking rhetorically:76

Why so constantly follow up your Baptist brethren wherever they go, and then seek to “build on another man’s foundation,” instead of imitating their example, and exploring new regions, “till the name of Christ be at length known in every land?”

This is interesting because the Baptist missionaries had not set foot in China yet, but they still considered that since Lassar had been working on his Chinese translation and had the translation of Matthew completed by then, there should be little reason for the LMS to initiate another Chinese Scriptures translation project. On the other hand, at least according to John Marshman, the antagonistic feeling was mutual, as some from the LMS apparently felt that since the LMS had taken charge of the China mission and sent Morrison to the country, there would not be a need for the Serampore Baptists to continue their work on the Chinese translations.77

But the efforts made by Mr. Marshman, at the same time in another locality, to open the language of China to his own countrymen, and to enrich it with the Oracles of Divine Truth, excited a feeling of jealousy in the minds of some of the Directors of that Society (i.e. LMS). Mr. Burder, the secretary, in a letter written at this time to Dr. Carey, animadverted in severe terms on the continued persecution of these labours after the Missionary Society had announced their intention to take charge of the version. He sneered at a translation made, as he observed, through the spectacles of an Armenian.

76 Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 53.
77 The life and times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward. Embracing the Serampore mission, 396.
John Marshman’s accusation was blunt and serious, calling the Society’s attitude an expression of “jealousy”, with a display of contempt towards Lassar. It is difficult to verify how widespread was this sentiment of “antagonism” within the LMS board, or was it more a passionate recollection of John Marshman regarding one of his father’s and the Serampore Mission’s opponents? The LMS certainly did encourage Morrison to make contact with the Serampore translators during his early days of translating the Chinese Scriptures.\(^78\) However, the feeling towards Lassar and skepticism surrounding his nationality might truly be a concern for the Baptists, because Lassar really did cease to be a prominent figure in the Serampore Chinese Mission, with Marshman – his student and a latecomer in Chinese learning – becoming the name that became associated with it from 1807 onward.\(^79\)

From some of the responses found in Morrison’s early correspondences sent from China, we can see that this rivalry with Serampore was not too far from his mind. Even as early as 1807, just two months after landing in Canton, Robert Morrison was already questioning the qualification of the Serampore Baptists in the translation of the Chinese Bible. In a correspondence to Joseph Hardcastle dated 4 Nov 1807, Morrison’s clear disdain towards the abilities of Lassar is beyond doubt.\(^80\)

\(^78\) Morrison’s letter to LMS on 21 June 1809 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

\(^79\) For example a recent account of the episode reads: “Marshman went on to publish his Chinese version of Matthew’s Gospel in 1810 and the first full translation of the Bible into Chinese in 1822 … This Chinese Bible was the work of Marshman and his sons, Lasser, and a number of ‘Chinese assistants’.” Not only is Lassar’s name spelt incorrectly, it was put after Marshman’s sons too – who were also Lassar’s students. This impression that Lassar was a mere sidekick prevails. Peter J. Kitson, *Forging Romantic China – Sino-British Cultural Exchange, 1760-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 62.

I fear that our brethren in India are imposed upon by Joannes Lassar, the Armenian gentleman. I think there is much reason to fear that his knowledge of the Chinese is very superficial, and his knowledge of the Scriptures more so. I have mentioned in my journal how I was imposed on by the person who says he taught Johannes. His professed teacher is a talkative, but ignorant and dishonest, man.

Although Morrison might be voicing a genuine concern in the letter, even Marshall Broomhall, author of a biography on Morrison and a great admirer of the man, believed the sentiment was rivalry-spurn, writing that “Morrison, he was, not unnaturally, somewhat jealous of a work which seemed more rightly to fall to his lot being undertaken by another so far away.”81 By 1809 the LMS had been asking him to get in touch with the Serampore translators, possibly advising some kind of collaboration between them over the translation activities. Morrison’s replies were less than enthusiastic, often with a sarcastic tone that were bordering a sheer complaint, such as when he told the Society on 21 Jun 1809 that: “I had written once & again to the Missionaries at Serampore; they have however thought proper to decline answering me.”82 A much longer and more condemning letter was written on 04 Dec 1809, as Morrison continued to lay blame on the attitude of the Serampore missionaries for ignoring him.83

The brethren who take the leading part there are my seniors (if me not mistaken) in years, as well as in application to the Chinese language for the purpose of translating the S.S. into it. They have never said one

81 Marshall Broomhall, Robert Morrison: A Master-Build, 70. (Italicized by this author).
82 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 21 Jun 1809 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
83 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 04 Dec 1809 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
word to me about it & I do not approve of their proceedings – hence it is easily seen that for me to correspond freely is a very delicate thing.

Not only did Morrison put the attitude and collaborative spirit of the Serampore Baptists in question, his evaluation of the translation done by the Serampore translators were far from flattering too, such as suspicioning Marshman of receiving language training from someone coming from the countryside – implying the inadequacies of their training:  

I see proposals in the Bengal papers for an edition of one of the “four books” of Kung-fu-zie, viz Lun-yu by Mr. Marshman. From the spelling of the Chinese words which they give, I perceive that their (teachers) teach them what’s not only the provincial dialect but the vulgar pronunciation of a country [folk]. Hence the word that in the City of Canton & throughout the Empire in the Mandarin tongue is “yu” they spell “ngee”.

Morrison’s criticism was thinly based and quite harsh, indicating that Marshman was learning a dialect not just less official than the Mandarin dialect, but even inferior to the Canton dialect (Cantonese) – one that was spoken by a country bumpkin. Morrison also cited others who supposedly questioned the ability of the Serampore translators as well, such as the Catholic priest Father Rodrigues who, having “a very considerable

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84 The double underline was added by Morrison himself to emphasize – as he quoted that the LMS had wished him to contact the Serampore translators “to correspond freely with them about translating the S.S. into Chinese”. Morrison’s letter to LMS on 04 Dec 1809 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

85 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 21 Jun 1809 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

86 Rodrigues, a native of Brazil, having spent 10 years in mission in Peking, visited the Serampore missionaries for nine months in 1809 and 1810 (Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 49).
acquaintance with Chinese from the years (of) residence in Pekin”, reputedly informed Lord Minto that “Mr. Lassar was very imperfect.”

Morrison was especially unhappy about the “successes” that had been claimed for the Baptists, going at length to question the feasibility of achieving success with the Chinese language in just a short time, and the absurdity of believing it was possible:

“They have achieved a very correct & extensive (underlined by Morrison) acquaintance with the written language of China” according to Lord Minto. If you believe it, I am sure you will be deceived. Because I know persons of more than a mediocrity of talent who have for many years employed nearly the whole of their time in learning Chinese & who after all have but a very incorrect & partial knowledge of it. I allow the lads talent & labour, but I have not heard of their having miraculous powers. I am grieved that they should with so little means make so much show. This I think is very wrong. Where after all, that in which they are said to be “perfect”, is not more than the A, B, C of Chinese literature.

Morrison’s strong-worded disapproval and accusation of the “pretense” of the Serampore Baptists were direct and unforgiving, fully demonstrating the presence and intensity of the rivalry, which undoubtedly provided a strong incentive for him to speed up his own translation process – such as by printing straight from the Basset Manuscript, in the form of the (Low Heen’s) transcribed copy of Acts of 1810. As seen earlier in this Chapter, after seeing that Marshman had successfully published his Dissertation on the Characters and Sounds of the Chinese Language and the translations of Matthew and of Mark, Morrison wrote to the LMS once again in a dismissive tone, stating that “Sir

87 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 04 Dec 1809 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
88 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 04 Dec 1809 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
George Staunton thinks (the Dissertation) by far a too hasty production.89 It was likely at this point that he started to abandon his plan of a detailed revision of the Manuscript, and went back to relying more on Basset’s Manuscript, publishing the Pauline epistles of Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians within the next year, and rushing out the rest of the N.T. by 1813. Ironically, thanks to the rivalry, Morrison himself would be the one who arguably spent the shortest time to “master” the very difficult language of Chinese, completing not just the Chinese Scriptures, but the first section of a Chinese English dictionary by 1814.90

It is uncertain what the immediate responses of Marshman and his “gentlemen” were, following Morrison’s rapid completion and publication of the New Testament from 1811 to 1813. In later letters to the Baptist Mission Society (BMS) Marshman had complained about Morrison not sending his works to him, and revealed that they were only passed to him “by various friends as Chinese books”.91 So by 1816 the Baptist translators definitely had Morrison’s translations in front of them. Zetzsche writes that Marshman and Lassar had received the Basset Manuscript from Morrison as early as 1810, but judging from the “extreme divergence between Marshman/Lassar’s 1813 edition of John and the translation by Basset and Morrison/Milne clearly shows,

89 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 09 Mar 1811 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

90 Daily takes some of Morrison’s writings at face value and believes he “finished the biblical dictionary in 1811, but never distributed it widely since there were other texts that took priority.” (Christopher Daily, Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China, 151) The early date looks highly suspicious, and the deliberate act of keeping an important, ready publication out of circulation would be an unlikely practice of Morrison in those early years.

91 Marshman’s letter to the BMS on 13 Dec 1816, quoted in Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 49 n.124.
Marshman and Lassar did not make any use of these translations until after 1813. This study reaches a different conclusion, as Zetzsche’s analysis focuses on the overall similarity among the three versions, but in fact a mere comparison of people and place names is sufficient to see if Marshman and Lassar had used the Basset Manuscript before the completion of their John in 1813:

Table 4.2  A Comparison of translated Chinese place and people names, as found in Lassar and Marshman, Basset, and Morrison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Marshman/Lassar Matthew (1810) and Mark (1811)</th>
<th>Marshman/Lassar John (1813)</th>
<th>Basset (~1700)</th>
<th>Morrison (1813)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Jesus”</td>
<td>意囌 Yisu</td>
<td>耶穌 Yesu</td>
<td>耶穌 Yesu</td>
<td>耶穌 Yesu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Jerusalem”</td>
<td>意(口路)呰呔 Yilushalin</td>
<td>柔撒冷 Rousaleng</td>
<td>柔撒冷 Rousaleng</td>
<td>耶路撒冷 Yelusaleng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Galilee”</td>
<td>架利哩 Jialili</td>
<td>加里辣 Jialila</td>
<td>加里辣 Jialila</td>
<td>加利利 Jialili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Jew”</td>
<td>(口玉)呰亞人 Yudiyaren</td>
<td>如達人 Rudaren</td>
<td>如達人 Rudaren</td>
<td>如大人 Rudaren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Israel”</td>
<td>意沙罅意呐 Yishaxiayilu</td>
<td>依臘爾 Yilaer</td>
<td>依臘爾 Yilaer</td>
<td>以色耳以勒 Yiseer yile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Isaiah”</td>
<td>意喇亞 Yiliya</td>
<td>依賽 Yisai</td>
<td>依賽 Yisai</td>
<td>以賽亞 Yisiaiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“John”</td>
<td>(口玉)(口晏) Yuyan</td>
<td>若翰 Ruohan</td>
<td>若翰 Ruohan</td>
<td>若翰 Ruohan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Jordan”</td>
<td>(口欲)啞 Yukuo</td>
<td>玉頓 Yudun</td>
<td>若丹 Ruodan</td>
<td>若耳但 Ruoerdan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Abraham”</td>
<td>亞巴罅龕 Yabaxiakan</td>
<td>阿巴郎 Abalang</td>
<td>阿巴郎 Abalang</td>
<td>亞百拉罕 Yabailahan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Moses”</td>
<td>磨此 Moci</td>
<td>每瑟 Meise</td>
<td>每瑟 Meise</td>
<td>摩西 Moxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Passover”</td>
<td>巴(口土)咖 Bashika</td>
<td>巴斯卦 Basigua</td>
<td>巴斯卦 Basigua</td>
<td>巴(口所)(口瓦) Basuowa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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92 Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 49.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marshman/Lassar Matthew (1810) and Mark (1811)</th>
<th>Marshman/Lassar John (1811)</th>
<th>Basset (~1700)</th>
<th>Morrison (1813)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Pharisee”</td>
<td>為哩啐 Hualisu</td>
<td>化例素 Hualisu</td>
<td>法吏叟 Falisou</td>
<td>(□法)(喇啞 Fali)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Peter”</td>
<td>啤哩(□路) Pidulu</td>
<td>伯多羅 Baiduolu</td>
<td>伯多羅 Baiduolu</td>
<td>彼多羅 Biduolu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Satan”</td>
<td>沙頓 Shadun</td>
<td>撒探 Satan</td>
<td>撒探 Satan</td>
<td>(□撤) (□但) Sadan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Thomas”</td>
<td>嘟(□駡) Duma</td>
<td>堽麻 Duoma</td>
<td>多默 Duomo</td>
<td>多馬士 Duomashe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Synagogue”</td>
<td>廟 Miao</td>
<td>會堂 Huitang</td>
<td>會堂 Huitang</td>
<td>公所 Gongsuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sabbath”</td>
<td>紗嘅嘅 Shabuduri</td>
<td>撒罷 Saba</td>
<td>撒罷 Saba</td>
<td>(□撤)唔日 Sabairi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Andrew”</td>
<td>晏地盧 Yandelu</td>
<td>安德肋 Andelei</td>
<td>安德肋 Andelei</td>
<td>安得路 Andelu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Holy Spirit”</td>
<td>神魂 Shenhun</td>
<td>聖風 Shengfeng</td>
<td>聖風 Shengfeng</td>
<td>聖風 Shengfeng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
<td>Shengfeng / 神風 Shengfeng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Christ”</td>
<td>(□記)喇(□時)喱 Jilishidu</td>
<td>記利斯督 Jilisidu</td>
<td>基利士督 Jilishidu</td>
<td>基利士督 Jidu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Messiah”</td>
<td>(□記)喱(□士)喱 Jilishidu</td>
<td>麥士亞 Maishiya</td>
<td>默契 Moqi</td>
<td>彌賽亞 Misaiya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

93 Morrison has “Pharisee” as 法利西 in Luke however (see chapter 3).

94 Zetzsche claims that Basset uses Shengshen 聖神 (“Holy God”) instead of Shengfeng 聖風 (“Holy Wind”) as Morrison and Marshman/Lassar do. In fact Basset uses Shengfeng too (e.g. in John 3:7-8). Rather, Morrison uses another term too, Shengfeng 神風 (“Godly Wind”).

95 The first version is in chapter 1:33 but the second in chapter 3:7-8.

96 See discussion of the significance of the variations in Chapter 2.

97 “Messiah” is translated as “Christ”, but the translation is slightly different from “Christ” in another place in the Gospel. An interesting feature of Marshman’s and Lassar’s translation of names is that they are often not consistent, even within the same book.
Out of the 23 commonly used terms selected for comparison, the Marshman/Lassar translations of 1810 (Matthew) and 1811 (Mark) use vastly different translations for every single one of them. But by their 1813 John all but 6 of them are exactly the same as Basset’s, though not Morrison’s, except when Morrison uses the same translations as Basset (such as “Jesus” and “John”). So the evidence clearly shows that Marshman and Lassar had the Basset copy with them by 1813, and began referring to it for their translation of John. As authors like Zetzsche, Foley, and Choi have pointed out, the 1822 New Testament translation by Marshman and Lassar is more similar to Morrison’s, evident that the Serampore team eventually used more than just the Basset copy in preparing their translations. However, no open complaint was ever raised by Morrison regarding that, perhaps because Morrison himself did something very similar and had used Basset considerably himself; on the other hand, Marshman had been saying all the right things when it came to perfecting their translations. Marshman

98 John Wherry also knew that Morrison and Marshman/Lassar must have both used the Basset copy, though he did not know of the source: “The verbal coincidences between this version and Morrison’s, at least in the New Testament, are so numerous and striking as to compel the assumption of a common basis, which was no doubt the manuscript in the British Museum … though I have not seen the fact thus accounted for.” John Wherry, “Historical Summary of the Different Versions of the Scriptures”, Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China held at Shanghai, May 7-20, 1890, 48.


100 Contrary to Peng Kuo-Wei, who thinks the similarity of their bible translations led to the mutual accusation of plagiarism. It was in fact the dictionary that sparked the open argument. “The Influence of the KJV in Protestant Chinese Bible Translation Work”, in David G. Burke, John F. Kutsko, and Philip H. Towner (eds.) The King James Version at 400 – Accessing its Genius as Bible Translation and Its Literary Influence (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 298.
sounded very proper and diplomatic when explaining why he felt no wrong in improving their translations by consulting Morrison’s and other’s (Basset’s), in a letter he wrote to BMS on 09 January 1817:101

It is also proper to add that a copy of Brother Morrison’s printed edition, was presented to us by a friend while we were printing the Epistles; and this also we thought it our duty to consult, as often as it appeared desirable; nor did we think it right to reject any amendment when it appeared to us to be really such. In a work so important as that translating the Sacred Scriptures, all improvements must be despaired of, and every hope of securing a perfectly correct version of the Scriptures given up, if those engaged therein, from a vain and silly ideal of appearing original.

With this outward expression of favoring the general good for Christendom over the pretense of personal vanity, Marshman and the Serampore team had effectively silenced any criticisms towards their use of other translations,102 including Morrison’s.103 No such “cross-referencing”, however, was carried out for the OT translation. Zhao Xiaoyang believed it’s because of the two men’s “public dispute” over the plagiarism of Morrison’s grammar book (see below).104 So although the rivalry between Morrison and Marshman/Lassar had been going on since 1807, a relative calm had been maintained at

101 Quoted in Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 50.
102 The same approach was mentioned by Milne, as we have discussed earlier. William Milne, A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission in China (Malacca: Anglo-Chinese Press, 1820) 89-90.
103 Of course Morrison had his own share of “borrowing” too, so it would be difficult for him to complain loudly about Marshman’s use of his translations. But his distaste for it can be easily seen in his correspondence.
least on the surface, allowing patrons like the BFBS, which emphasized a pan-denominational approach, to support both groups at the same time. The uneasy peace was finally disrupted a few years later in 1814, when Morrison learned of Marshman’s publication of his Chinese grammar and accused Marshman of plagiarizing his own grammar book, *A Grammar of the Chinese Language* (*Tongyong Hanyan Zhifa*, 通用漢言之法). In a 7-page letter on 11 Oct 1815, Morrison uttered harsh words against his “specious rival at Serampore”, whose “zeal for their party, has at least as much influence on their conduct as zeal for the truth of the gospel”. Morrison writes that the first attempt of Marshman and Lassar at translating the Bible was “very rude”, and things only got better after “seeing & imitating” his Acts of the Apostles and the Manuscript (i.e. Basset’s) he sent them. But Morrison’s harshest criticisms were reserved for Marshman’s Chinese grammar, at which he lashes out:  

He & the Bengal Government (the late Lord Minto) together, have treated me most shamefully with respect to my Grammar. They have kept it three years in their hands & in the meantime Dr Marshman has composed & printed a Grammar like mine. With such alterations & emendations as a man would make use of who wished to avoid the King’s Patent. His “Clavis Sinica” was begun as a second edition of his verbose and useless dissertation, till I believe he saw my Grammar & then the thought struck him, he had better do something in the same way, & he forthwith made a similar work. How many hints he took from my MS. I cannot ascertain. (Underlined by Morrison)

Not only was Morrison accusing Marshman of plagiarism, he was essentially suggesting that the government and the Serampore Mission collaborated in keeping his

105 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 11 Oct 1815 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
Grammar from being printed, so that Marshman had time to publish his version before him. The rivalry at this point had turned blatantly fierce and hostile, and gave a strong indication of the strong sense of ownership Morrison felt towards his Grammar, unlike his New Testament translations. There is also some confusion about how long Morrison’s Grammar was kept from being printed too, because the preface of the 1815 edition was dated on “02 April 1811”. Some later sources also have 1811 as the date Morrison completed the Grammar, with Mrs. Morrison quoting a letter from Staunton stating that he had reportedly seen a copy of the work, as well as a number of contemporary sources reporting it. Milne some years later would give testimony to the 1811 date too, although he could not account for or explain why the first copy was only printed a few years later in Serampore. Given the ongoing rivalry between Morrison and the Serampore missionaries during that time, it is quite inexplicable how the former would allow a precious work of Chinese Grammar – the first of its kind in English and important in educating future missionaries - to just sit in a Bengal warehouse for that

106 Yet the report of the existence of the books probably came from Morrison himself. For example Eleazar Lord quoted from a Directors Report dated May 1811 stating: “By Morrison’s Journal it appears that he continues to apply himself with the most commendable assiduity, and with considerable success, at Canton, and occasionally at Macao, to the study of the extremely difficult language of China. From the grammar and dictionary which he has with immense labor composed, the most valuable assistance will be derived by any Missionaries who may hereafter be sent to that Empire, as well as by others of our countrymen, who, from their peculiar pursuits, may be induced to study the language.” (Eleazar Lord, A Compendious History of the Principal Protestant Missions to the Heathen, selected and compiled from the best authorities, vol. II (Boston:1813) 206) Note that the report reads “the grammar and dictionary which he has with immense labor composed”, which could not be accurate because even if the grammar was completed, the dictionary would still not be ready until much later, showing the existence of inaccuracies and discrepancies in these early reports.

107 “From the first, Mr. M. had been collecting materials for a Chinese Grammar, with the view of facilitating the acquisition of the language to his countrymen. In 1811, the Grammar was completed; and afterwards sent to the Bengal Government, by the Select Committee, that is might be printed. Through some means unknown to the author, the MS. was kept nearly three years in Bengal before it made its appearance. At length, however, it was printed at Serampore, in 1815, at the expense of the H. E. I. Company, and is now before the public.” William Milne, A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China, 84.
many years without being more vocal. On the other hand, with Morrison busy working on
the Gospel of Luke in 1811, it may be questionable if he could have the expertise and
time to finish the Chinese Grammar this early in 1811. However, what makes this date
most unlikely is the presence of contradictory evidence. Judging from what Morrison
described as “three years (from 1815)”, it would mean that he only had it completed
around 1812-13. More direct evidence actually came from Milne himself, who after
sending out the books of Morrison to “different parts of India for publication” along with
a notice, made a copy of it and attached it to a letter he addressed to the LMS on 10
September 1813, which begins with:  

It is understood … that Mr. Rev. Robert Morrison, protestant
missionary at Canton, and who has for a few years acted as Chinese
Translator to the Honorable East India Company’s Factory there, **has
now ready for the press, A Chinese Grammar**, to which is added a
volume of **Dialogues**, Chinese and English. (Underlined by Milne;
italicized by this author)

Given that we have seen how the missionaries were behaving like promoters, and
that the topic of the sending of the draft of the Chinese Grammar didn’t come up once in
any of Morrison’s letters to the LMS in 1811, the evidence strongly suggests that the true
completion (i.e. press ready) year of it was some time in 1813. The date matches with the
year the College of Fort William issued a recommendation for Morrison’s Chinese
Grammar to be printed, as well as that suggested by Marshman. Perhaps the earliest

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108 Milne’s letter to LMS on 10 Sep 1813 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
109 *The Literary Panorama and National Register* (London: 1815) 276. In the record it calls Morrison’s
work “likely to prove one of the most valuable results of European application and ability, which has
yet opened a path to the acquirement of the difficult, and almost unknown Language of which it
treats.”
copy had been sent to Bengal and Sir Staunton as a draft that was not quite ready for publication, as Staunton’s words seem to have implied. The attempt to move the completion date earlier was probably a result of the plagiarism controversy, in which it made the delay of the printing of Morrison’s Grammar look more unacceptable, and the likelihood of Marshman’s copying Morrison’s more likely. From a textual comparison point of view the two works are really quite different, and it is really difficult to pinpoint how Marshman could have plagiarized Morrison’s, other than the possible use of the latter’s as a reference. The lack of clear evidence is also reflected in Morrison’s own words, when he admits: “(Marshman) forthwith made a similar work. How many hints he took from my MS. I cannot ascertain.” Apparently Morrison’s frustration had more to do with the timing of the publication of Marshman’s grammar book, and the fact that it was printed before his Grammar, which was sent out earlier.

Marshman’s response was strong and unreserved. Though his letter of explanation for the BMS still reads with a sense of reserve and politeness, his letter addressing the LMS was much more direct and strong-worded, not only refuting Morrison’s accusations of plagiarism, but also countering with his own evidence that Morrison had totally relied on the Basset Manuscript. Marshman even went as far as listing the number of characters that were different between the two versions, and how many on each page, excluding the

110 As discussed in You Zi Ling, Pingmin Jieji de Yingxiong – Ma Li Xun 《平民階級的英雄 馬禮遜》 (Robert Morrison – A hero among the common folks) (Taipei: 2006) 86.

111 Zetzsche believes Morrison sent his grammar to the printing press of the Baptist mission in Serampore “in 1814 and 1815”, though he does not provide a source for such a claim (Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 51). Toshikazu S. Foley, however, believes that Morrison did send the grammar to the press in the spring of 1811, based on the preface evidence and that provided by other reports, such as that by Morrison’s widow. Biblical Translation in Chinese and Greek – Verbal Aspect in Theory and Practice, 76 n.64.

112 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 11 Oct 1815 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).
proper names, in order to demonstrate Morrison’s reliance on the Manuscript for Acts and the Pauline epistles.\footnote{Marshman’s letter to LMS on 13 Dec 1816, copied on 16 Jun 1817 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).}

**Table 4.3** Marshman’s Analysis of Morrison’s reliance on the Basset Manuscript.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Total number of pages</th>
<th>Total number of characters altered</th>
<th>Above number of characters altered per page$^{114}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acts</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>1,113</td>
<td>More than 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Corinthians</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galatians</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippians</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>16 1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephesians</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>10 or a little more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colossians</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thessalonians</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Thessalonians</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Timothy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>Less than 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Timothy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titus</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philemon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obviously Morrison had long confessed his using of the Manuscript over these books, so Marshman’s point was that if what Morrison did could not be considered

\footnote{The smaller this number is, the more similar the two versions are supposed to be.}
plagiarism, even if there were similarities between his Grammar and Morrison’s, charges of plagiarism still could not be established:\textsuperscript{115}

“These variations, however differ much in No.; in some pp. a whole verse supplied, which had been previously omitted, render them more numerous; but there are some pp. that have not more than 2 characters altered, some that have only one, and a few in which not even one is altered … Now whether or not, the alteration of 7 or 10 or even of 16 words in a large 800 page of any work be making that work really a man’s own, is a point too difficult for me to decide, (I fear however that if many pp. in the \textit{Clavis Sinica} were found the same with those in Mr. Morrison’s Grammar with the exception of even fifty words in each page, the case will soon be decided against me)"

After this major feud, things quickly quieted down from that point on temporarily, with neither side saying much more about the topic in the next few years, probably realizing that it was of no benefit to either party and certainly not to the Chinese mission in general. A more reconciliatory tone was struck, like that by the non-denominational and mediating BFBS. In 1820 the Society would report on the progress of the two camps, heaping praises for the labours of the “indefatigable translators” of Morrison and Milne, while recognizing the “equal success on the same object” of Marshman.\textsuperscript{116} Two years later Marshman and Lassar would publish their entire Bible in the Chinese language, a year ahead of Morrison. As discussed earlier, the New Testament portions of the two versions would be very similar, as Marshman and Lassar had further modified their New Testament translation according to Morrison’s version after 1813. The textual similarity,

\textsuperscript{115} Marshman’s letter to LMS on 13 Dec 1816, copied on 16 Jun 1817 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B).

\textsuperscript{116} The 16\textsuperscript{th} Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society with an Appendix, containing Extracts of Correspondence (1820) lxix.
however, did not translate into similar reception for the two versions. Very soon, it became clear that the Morrison Bible was much better accepted and esteemed among missionaries of different denominations, showing that the reasons that set them apart likely lie somewhere outside of the texts also.
Fig. 4.1 Robert Morrison’s letter to the LMS on 21 Jun 1809, critiquing Marshman’s and Lassar’s translation (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B), reprinted with permission of the SOAS Library, University of London.
Fig. 4.2 Copy of Marshman’s letter to the LMS on 13 Dec 1816, accusing Morrison of heavy reliance on the Basset Manuscript (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1B), reprinted with permission of the SOAS Library, University of London.
Fig. 4.3 Joshua Marshman’s and Johannes Lassar’s *Genesis*, from their Bible translation of 1822, reprinted with permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.
Fig. 4.4 *Genesis 1*, from the Morrison/Milne 1823 Bible translation, reprinted with permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Notice the notes on top, which were supposed to be forbidden by the BFBS (see Chapter 5). The note on the far left reads: “The beginning was about 4000 years before Jesus …”
5. THE POWER OF PATRONAGE AND FAME

As mentioned, Lefevere defines a patron of translation as someone who can and would exert ideological control, economic provision, and the granting of social status to translators, in order to promote one’s own ideology. The BFBS has been a major sponsor of Bible translation and distribution since 1804, and its role as a patron of translation over the *Union Version* has been discussed in the past.¹ The society also played a similar role towards the Marshman/Lassar and Morrison/Milne teams during their time of completing the earliest Chinese Bibles. As shown earlier, the BFBS had committed to support both Chinese translation versions and provided thousands of pounds in grants to both camps over a number of years.² In terms of economical provision and financial support, one can argue that the BFBS provided patronage fairly to both teams, even though the Baptists felt that because of the need to print and distribute the Morrison/Milne version also, funds that were rightfully theirs had been diverted by this demand.³ However, when it concerns patronage with regard to granting honor and endorsement, the situation appeared a little different. This chapter examines the way patronage of translation activities and the way

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² From 1804 to 1827, the BFBS had given out “not less than £27,000 in paper and money” to the Baptists translators in Serampore. *Proceedings of the Committee of the British & Foreign Bible Society, Relative to a Memorial presented to them by the Committee of the Baptist Union* (London: Richard Clay, Bread Street Hill, 1840) 3.

³ It was put in a less direct way in a Baptist report: “As the circulation of (the Morrison/Milne) version absorbed nearly all of the funds appropriated in England and America for the distribution of the Scriptures in China, attention was naturally drawn to an examination of its merits.” Edward Bean Underhill, *The Baptist Record and Biblical Repository, vol. 2* (London: Aylott and Jones, 1845) 326.
fame and legacy influenced the reception of the earliest versions of the Chinese Bible, taking account of the multiple roles of the Protestant missionaries and the complex world they operated in.

5.1 INITIAL RECEPTION OF THE FIRST CHINESE BIBLES

During the time when the earliest versions of the Chinese Bible were being completed, the BFBS played their diplomatic hands fairly and outwardly praised and endorsed both groups. The Society quoted Marshman regarding the justification of supporting two groups of translators on one language at the same time, saying that “in a language, so extensive in its circulation as the Chinese, two versions, perfectly independent of each other, do not appear to us a waste of labour”. These versions were obviously far from being “perfectly independent of each other”, whether in terms of the products or the process of translation, but the BFBS seemed very willing to support this version of the events, saying that:

Your Committee are so convinced of the truth of this remark (of Marshman), and so well satisfied with the abilities and fidelity of the conductors of the two translations, that they have granted them severally, from time to time, such assistance as their circumstances appeared respectively to require.

Yet, when the two teams finished their Chinese Bibles and presented to their sponsors in England, there seems to be quite a difference when it came to reception and

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4 *The 16th Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society with an Appendix, containing Extracts of Correspondence* (1820), lxix; the same report was published in the Fifth Report of the American Bible Society (1821) 218.

5 *The 16th Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society with an Appendix, containing Extracts of Correspondence* (1820) lxix.v.
responses. On 7 May 1823, Joshua Marshman’s son John Clark Marshman brought a copy of the Marshman/Lassar Bible completed the previous year to the annual meeting of the BFBS. The future Baptist historian would write of the occasion:⁶

… Lord Teignmouth, who was in the chair, remarked, that the presentation of the first complete translation of the sacred Scriptures in the Chinese language was one of the most interesting events in the history of the Society. Mr. Wilberforce, who had nobly vindicated the character and conduct of the Serampore missionaries in Parliament ten years before, was among the foremost to offer his congratulations on the completion of this undertaking.

When George Browne describes the event together with Morrison’s presentation of his translation of the Chinese Bible, it is difficult not to notice the comparison and the apparent greater esteem Morrison was already enjoying:⁷

At the Annual Meeting of the Parent Society in May 1823, Mr. John Marshman, the eldest son of the Rev. Dr. Marshman, of Serampore, was introduced, and presented, on behalf of his father, a complete copy of the Old and New Testament in Chinese, printed at Serampore, with moveable metallic characters, the labour of sixteen years.

And at the following Anniversary, the Rev. Dr. Morrison himself presented a copy of the entire Bible in Chinese, the results of his labours carried on at Canton during a period of seventeen years, with the assistance of the Rev. Dr. Milne, of Malacca, then deceased. The sight of this important version, the second in a language spoken by

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⁷ George Browne, *The British and Foreign Bible Society, from its institution in 1804, to the close of its Jubilee in 1854*, vol. II (London: BFBS, 1859) 202. Such a difference in comparison of the two can be witnessed in Marshall Broomhall’s later account too, in which he wrote: “At the Annual Meetings of the British and Foreign Bible Society in May 1823, John Marshman, on behalf of his father, placed a complete copy of the Bible in Chinese on the table. In the following May, Dr. Morrison himself presented his translation to the same Society’s Annual Meeting. It was hailed with great demonstrations of satisfaction by all friends of the Society, and King George IV graciously accepted a copy and received the translator.” *The Bible in China*, 56-7.
upwards of three hundred millions of people (a copy of which had been most graciously received by His Majesty George IV) was hailed with demonstrations of the most lively satisfaction by the members and friends of the Society present.

The accounts paint an unmistakable picture of a different reception of the two Chinese Bibles, even though the Marshman/Lassar copy was presented an entire year before the Morrison/Milne translation was. The BFBS Report of 1825 resounds with the excitement associated with Morrison’s presentation at the Annual Meeting of 1824, described as “not easily be forgotten by those who were present”, and that the Committee arranged several interviews with Morrison, in order to consider “suggestions which he (had) offered on the best means of circulating the Scriptures, now prepared for the use of those who speak the Chinese language.”\(^8\) The display of much great attention and enthusiasm, as well as the granting of an audience with King George IV\(^9\) (the wording of George Browne suggests that the BFBS had a role in securing the arrangement), can all be considered a form of recognition and granting of honor to Morrison by his patron the BFBS. Overall Morrison’s homecoming trip from 1824 to 1826 can be considered a great success, as he was received as a celebrity, being in great demand as a speaker.\(^10\) He was also honored by another one of his patrons of translation, the LMS, and was elected to the Board of Directors during his stay, despite their ongoing disagreement about the Anglo-

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\(^8\) *Twenty-first report of the British and Foreign Bible Society: 1825 with An Appendix* (London: August Applegate, 1825) 50.


Chinese College.\textsuperscript{11} The work of Morrison and Milne in setting up an education centre in Malacca certainly did not go unrecognized either, as he received major support in England for the college’s library, and he was able to set up the Language Institute in 1825 in London, which was a philological society for the study of Chinese and other languages.\textsuperscript{12} This achievement not only cemented his position as an authority in the Chinese language, but he was also made a fellow of the Royal Society because of this contribution. Marshman, on the other hand, never got received by the British monarchy, though he had gained an audience with the Dutch king in 1826, was able to thank him and his country for the protectorate at Serampore, and presented a copy of his Chinese Bible.\textsuperscript{13} It is as if Marshman’s labor and achievement in translating the entire Scriptures in Chinese, even though being a year ahead of Morrison, was already conceived as being second in importance by the Britain Christian circles.

What led to these differing opinions, even before the users and readers had sufficient chance to read the Bibles and make their decisions based on translation and

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{11} The establishing of the Anglo-Chinese College in Malacca began in 1818, and although the LMS approved Morrison’s and Milne’s proposal in general, they were eager to keep it a missionary school, and asked Morrison to “exercise the greatest caution and circumspection with regard to the character of those young men whom they may receive as pupils, who are not intended to become Missionaries, and with regard to the influence which such pupils may exercise on the minds of the missionary students.” But Morrison was also adamant about enrolling secular students into the College. By the time Morrison arrived at London there were talks about a compromise of transferring the College to Singapore, making it a 3-school institute that could house both missionary and secular students, separately. So Morrison arrived at a time when the LMS saw the promising development and granted him the board chair for recognition and encouragement. The Singapore Institute plan would fall through at the end. Christopher Daily, \textit{Robert Morrison and the Protestant Plan for China}, 167-172, 178-185.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{12} Morrison received £1,520 and 300 volumes of books from Lord Kingsborough for his work in the Anglo-Chinese College. And although the Language Institution would be closed down in 3 years, it did little to diminish Morrison’s reputation. Ibid.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{13} John Clark Marshman, \textit{The life and times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward. Embracing the Serampore mission}, Vol.2, 323.}
textual merits? Certainly the NT portions and individual books of the Bibles had been made available before the completion of the final products, but equally notable was that much of Morrison’ popularity and esteem had a lot to do with his OTHER roles – being a distributor of the Chinese Bible and an authority in the understanding and learning of the Chinese language. Morrison’s successes had a lot to do with his ability to carry out the various duties required of a translation facilitator: he and Milne not only were effective in completing bible translations in a timely manner, they were able to put in place a primitive but trailblazing way of printing and distributing Christian materials, thanks to the advantage of their location. With the keen sense of a good promoter, they never failed to excite their patrons and supporters with story after story of mission advances and tales of conversion opportunities. During his 1825 visit Morrison would claim that “all the Chinese who live in the islands of the Malayan Archipelago, are capable of receiving the Sacred Scriptures without difficulty.” Morrison continued to say that if the correct agent was employed, these Chinese, numbered in “two to three hundred thousand”, would be instrumental in bringing the Bibles into China. Upon hearing that, the Society immediately set it in motion to explore the feasibility of such a plan. To the various societies and sponsors of missionary works in London, Morrison’s resourcefulness must be hard to ignore – having gained considerable fame as a translator, missionary, Bible distributor, as well as an educator. Comparatively, the Serampore translators were not

14 “Being the first missionary to China, (Morrison) was held in great reverence, so naturally was his translation too.” Chan Sin-Wai and David E. Pollard (eds.) An Encyclopaedia of Translation (Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong, 2001) 55.

15 Twenty-first report of the British and Foreign Bible Society; 1825 with An Appendix (London: August Applegate, 1825) 50-51.

16 When Morrison presented his Bible to the American Bible Society, the committee referred to it as “a work of astonishing diligence, toil, and perseverance, … a work, the benefit of which will doubtless be
nearly as effective as translation agents in comparison to Morrison and Milne, despite their translations being ready slightly earlier, more stylistically cohesive as they were made available all at once, and innovative by being the first to use movable metal plates.\textsuperscript{17} Their Chinese Bible translation work, though spectacular in its own right, appeared inconsequential to the sponsors back home (in Britain), with their activities being so far away from the mission field and its targets in China. Hence, even before the 1830s, when the denominational controversies started to heat up, the Marshman/Milne Bible and the Morrison/Milne Bible were already going in different directions of recognition and circulation. What followed in the next round of denominational disputes over bible translation would further push the Marshman/Lassar version into irrelevancy.

5.2 THE \textit{baptizō} (βαπτίζω)-controversy

The complicated networking and interaction between the translators (agents) and the societies, denominations and other supporters (the patrons) would continue to play a major role in the acceptance of the early Chinese Bibles after their completion, and was often among the most crucial and decisive of various important factors. Following 1825 an increase in patronage influence took shape in two major ways: 1) An increasing

\textsuperscript{17} One of the long-held arguments that the Serampore Chinese translations were superior to those of Morrison and Milne is that: “(Marshman’s Chinese Bible) was also the first Chinese work ever printed from moveable metallic types. Dr. Morrison was slow to discover the superiority of the invention, but in 1836 his son, Mr. J. R. Morrison, and Mr. Gützlaff sent a manuscript New Testament from China to Serampore, that it might be printed from these improved types.” George Winfred Hervey, \textit{The Story of Baptist Missions in Foreign Lands – From the Time of Carey to the Present Date} (St. Louis: Chaney R. Barns, 1884) 501. The first Chinese work printed domestically was done a few years after the Marshman and Lassar New Testament. See Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之, \textit{Xixuedongjian yu wan Qing shehui} 《西學東漸與晚清社會》 (The Eastern Trend of Western Learning and Late Qing Society) (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1994) 121.
pressure on the BFBS to exert greater control and demand on the groups they were supporting, regarding the types and versions of bibles they would sponsor; and 2) The BFBS would become more selective in their own bible translation and publishing projects. In our case, we will examine two important developments soon after both the Marshman/Lassar version and the Morrison/Milne version were completed and published: a) How did the Baptist-Pædobaptist rivalry develop into the first major controversy (the *baptizô* (βαπτίζω) controversy\(^\text{18}\)) regarding the Protestant Chinese Bible, and how did it affect the acceptance and circulation of the Marshman/Lassar Bible among the Protestants? b) How did the reputation and legacy of Morrison play a key role in BFBS’s decisions with regard to the next group of Chinese Bibles?

The dispute over the different Protestant translations of the Greek word βαπτίζω had a major and long-lasting impact on the history of translating the Bible into Chinese and other Asian languages. The controversy lasted through much of the 19\(^{th}\) century, so much so that, as late as 1904, one biographer of the BFBS still wrote and wished that God would “in His own time remove the difficulties which have so long resisted the endeavours of good men.”\(^\text{19}\) The controversy began with the Baptists’ translation of the word “baptism” as *doob* in Bengali, meaning immersion. Although William Carey had started the Serampore Mission and translated the Bible into Indian languages before the BFBS’s founding in 1804, the patronage and support that later came from the

\(^{18}\) The Term Controversy which followed would be even more divisive and long-lasting, which was a debate over the translation of the word “God”.

interdenominational body helped the Serampore mission and press a great deal.\textsuperscript{20} The position of the BFBS was challenged when a group of non-Baptist Christian missionaries (21 of them) wrote to the Calcutta Corresponding Committee of the BFBS, complaining that in all of the Indian language versions done by the Baptist translators, the Greek word \textit{βαπτίζω} was always translated into \textit{doob}, which had restricted the meaning for “baptism” to just immersion, resulting in “injury done among their converts by this limitation of the sense of a Greek term, which they, and … the large majority of the Christian world, believed to be capable of a much wider interpretation.”\textsuperscript{21} One of the founding principles of the BFBS was to exclude any doctrinal and theological note or comment,\textsuperscript{22} in order to solicit support from all Protestant denominations and to avoid any sectarian rifts.\textsuperscript{23} But in the case of the dispute over \textit{βαπτίζω}, the ban on notes and comments made it impossible for the Baptist version to include a note on other alternative ways of translating the word, meaning that a compromise on the biblical term must be reached. Ironically, Robert Morrison had used notes as early as in 1813 (e.g. on the translation of the word “Messiah” in Luke chapter 2:11), and also included them in his 1823 Chinese Bible (\textit{Shentian Shengshu 《神天聖書》}, for example see Fig. 4e). This author is not aware of any complaints made against this Bible version by the BFBS.

\textsuperscript{20} Serampore letters: Being the unpublished correspondence of William Carey and others with John Williams, 1800–1816, ed. Leighton Williams and Morney Williams, with an introduction by Thomas Wright (London: Putnam’s Sons, 1892), 132.

\textsuperscript{21} George Browne, The History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, from its institution in 1804, to the close of its Jubilee in 1854, vol. I (London: BFBS, 1859) 167

\textsuperscript{22} “It was laid down as a primary and fundamental rule, from which there was in no instance to be the slightest deviation, that its sole and exclusive object should be the circulation of the Scriptures, and the Scriptures only, without note or comment (italicized by the original author).” John Owen, The History of the Origin and First Ten Years of the British and Foreign Society (London: Tilling and Hughes, 1816) 26.

\textsuperscript{23} George Kam Wah Mak, “To Add or not to Add? The British and Foreign Bible Society’s Defence of the ‘Without Note or Comment’ Principle in Late Qing China”, 330.
The initial suggestion of the BFBS was for the Baptists to transfer “the letters of the Greek word” – hence a transliteration – in their new versions, or changed it to “some term of neutral meaning” to which other denominations would consent. Carey strongly rejected that call in a “by no means favorable” letter in 1830, and the topic was dropped temporarily. But when the BMS applied for a grant on behalf of their Bengali version in 1835, the BFBS stood firm this time, issuing their reply:

This Committee would cheerfully afford assistance to the missionaries connected with the Baptist Missionary Society in their translation of the Bengali New Testament, provided that the Greek terms relating to baptism be rendered either according to the principle adopted by the translators of the authorized English Version, by a word derived from the original, or by such terms as may be considered unobjectionable by other denominations of Christians comprising the Bible Society.

It could be considered a new direction of the BFBS: to exert more influence on the translation, printing, and distribution of the Bibles as a major patron of the activities, by means of setting conditions for the mission societies to abide by before their financial support could be approved. The method was very effective, because of the financial needs the societies and missionaries always had. And because the BFBS was the biggest bible society of its kind, the decisions had great ripple effects. So when the Baptists approached the American Bible Society (ABS) for aid to print the Bengali New Testament, they were also told that the Society would not approve the version until the Board could settle on a principle in relation to the Greek word baptizo. Within a couple

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of months the ABS gave the same answer and the same option choices, while citing the BFBS’s and the Calcutta Corresponding Committee’s previous decisions to refuse to aid in printing and circulating the Bengali Bible. The Baptists were especially unhappy with the ABS, because the Society had approved $1,200 for Adoniram Judson’s Burmese Bible just a few years before in 1829, and would have appropriated $18,500 to that version as late as 1835, even though that version also has the word βαπτίζω translated with a word that means immersion. It has been argued that the BFBS disapproved of the Baptist translation because the Committee considered it a sacrifice of “basic translation principles in an effort to promote their own denominational agenda”, but the Baptists saw this as no more than a display of denominational rivalry and jealousy, especially since they had translated βαπτίζω as “immersion” in the oriental languages for many years.

The change in attitude of the BFBS and the ABS towards the Baptist translation of the word “βαπτίζω” was consistent with a trend that saw these major bible societies


27 By the close of the 19th century, when the BFBS attempted to produce a single version of the Burmese Bible based on Judson’s version but without his choice of “immersion” for βαπτίζω, it touched off another round of controversy. For a brief introduction see Joyce Chung-Yan Chan, William Dean and the Making of the First Chinese Study Bible (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2014) 194-195.

28 Annual Reports of the American Bible Society: with an Account of its Organization, vol. 1 (New York: American Bible Society, 1838) 478. Adoniram Judson, a Pædobaptist turned Baptist, was a vocal advocate for the Baptist position on the translation of “baptism”: “We have not been inquiring, how baptism must be performed in order to be valid; but simply, what baptism is. If the several considerations, which have been presented, are sufficient to shew [show], that baptism is immersion, it is equally clear that the terms baptism and immersion are equivalent and interchangeable, and that when Christ commanded his disciples to be baptized, he commanded them to be immersed.” Adoniram Judson, Christian Baptism – A Sermon Preached in the Lal Bazar Chapel, Calcutta, on Lord’s Day, September 27, 1812, Previous to the Administration of the Ordinance of Baptism, with many Questions from Pædobaptist Authors (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1818) 14.

becoming more agenda-minded in their patronage decisions. A parallel example can be seen with the printing of the Apocrypha in the English Bibles.\(^3^0\) Right from the beginning the BFBS committee did not agree that the Apocrypha should be part of the Holy Scriptures, hence refraining from issuing English Bibles with it. Yet the BFBS’s attitude towards other bible societies involving in the circulation of the Apocrypha was much more open, and it decided in 1813 to allow these societies to decide what constituted the “Holy Scriptures” on their own – a decision which W. Gundert thinks was taken in order to stay faithful to their nondenominational and all-inclusive platform, and to protect the “young Bible Society movement”.\(^3^1\) Yet the society was under increasing pressure from different parties,\(^3^2\) and after being strongly criticized by Scottish evangelist Robert Haldance, it reached a tougher but still compromising solution in 1824 – the BFBS would withdraw all support for the printing and the distribution of the Apocrypha, and its funds were to be used on canonical books only.\(^3^3\) Yet Haldance was not satisfied, and threatened a Scottish exodus if more was not done. At the end the BFBS gave in, discontinuing aids and support for any society engaged in the printing and circulation of


\(^{32}\) What triggered the conflict was the society’s decision to provide £500 to Leander Van Ess, principal Catholic agent of the BFBS in Germany, for his Old Testament translation. The society was under such attacks from people like Haldane, that it withdrew its grant to Van Ess on 6 September 1824. See Wayne Detzler, “Robert Pinkerton: Principal Agent of the BFBS in the Kingdoms of Germany” in Stephen Batalden, Kathleen Cann and John Dean (eds.), *Sowing the Word – The Cultural Impact of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1804-2004* (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2006) 277.

\(^{33}\) Wayne Detzler, “Robert Pinkerton: Principal Agent of the BFBS in the Kingdoms of Germany”, 277.
the Apocrypha in 1827.\textsuperscript{34} The sectarian voices prevailed, and it also signaled the increasing power of the BFBS, which was becoming more and more comfortable using their patronage power to push forward a certain agenda. The American Bible Society, following the BFBS’s lead, adopted a similar policy of restrictions in 1828, and would only reverse it in 1964, more than a 130 years later.\textsuperscript{35}

In all appearances, the controversy surrounding the translation of $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\zeta\omega$ was very similar to that of the Bengali Bible and of the Apocrypha – that it took a number of years to develop, with the driving force being denominational discontent and struggle. Even though the translation of the term existed as early as in 1807 in Lassar’s Matthew, and that both Morrison’s and Marshman/Lassar’s versions were available by 1815, it wasn’t until the late 1830s and 1840s that concerns about the term for $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\zeta\omega$ were raised. To look at the matter more carefully, the early Protestant translators had used a number of terms for the Greek word, beginning with Lassar’s $xiashui$ (下水), which means “going into the water”, in his 1807 Matthew. Although the translation is very straightforward, the phrase must be used as a verb, hence the reading becomes awkward when Lassar tries to use it as a title for the phrase “John the Baptist” (Matthew 3:1) too, without the necessary rewording. The resulting $yan\\ xiashui$ 咽下水 reads like “John going into the water” rather than “John the Baptist”. To complicate matters further, $yan$ 咽, the word used for “John”, also means “throat” in Chinese. So even though Lassar

\textsuperscript{34} Andrew Hill, “The King James Bible Apocrypha”, David Burke, John Kutsko, Philip Towner (eds.) \textit{The King James Version at 400: Assessing its Genius as Bible Translation and its Literary Influence}, 353.

\textsuperscript{35} Jack P. Lewis “Some Aspects of the Problem of Inclusion of the Apocrypha”, in Siegfried Meurer, \textit{Apocryphal in Ecumenical Perspective} (United Bible Societies, 1991) 163.
intended this word as a phonetic constructed character (notice the phonetic kou 口 side), with no proper preposition added the reading is highly confusing. Lassar and Marshman continued to use yan for “John” in their 1810 Matthew, but used another translation xiashui zhiyan 下水之咽 (“the John who is going into the water”) for “John the Baptist”, which is an improvement over the 1807 version. Bigger changes were improvised for the 1811 Mark, as presumably both Lassar and Marshman got better with the Chinese language and had an improved command of the language. First of all they replace the confusing monosyllabic yan 吼 by the bi-syllabic yuyan (口玉)呪. Not only does the new translation sound closer to “John”, it is far less confusing too, because while the yan word chosen by Lassar can mean “throat”, yuyan doesn’t have any meaning in particular, and the presence of the phonetic kou on both words clearly indicates that it is a name. For βαπτίζω the translators now switched to the word zhan 蘵, which was a less commonly used word (and still is) that means “soaking in” or “dipping into”, more often referring to soaking or dipping a smaller object into liquid (e.g. water, ink), but not a whole person immersing oneself in. As for “John the Baptist,” the translators use yuyan zhi zhanzhe (口玉)呪之蘸者, with zhanzhe 蘁者 meaning “the person who soaks”. The translation was revised again two years later. After having a chance to consult the Basset copy, the translators decided to use Basset’s translation ruohan 若翰 instead for the name “John”, as part of a big conversion to simplify and standardize the names of their previous

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36 See Chapter 2 for the detailed discussion.
37 That word will be jin 浸, and will only be used in the 1830s in Karl Gützlaff’s Bible.
translation. From 1815 to 1822 the Serampore translators would go on to complete the translation and print the whole Chinese Bible, and kept the word zhan for \( \beta \alpha \pi \tau \iota \zeta \omega \). It is not until Karl Gützlaff’s New Testament of 1839 that the translation was changed to jin, a word that truly means “immerse” in Chinese. The word would remain in use, as it is still today, with the very name “Baptist Church” of the denomination being jinxinhui 浸信會. It is also fair to say that the word jin was more commonly used at the time, hence it was a considerable improvement over the verb xiashui from the past.

When it comes to Robert Morrison, he simply followed Basset and used xi 洗 in his translation for \( \beta \alpha \pi \tau \iota \zeta \omega \) - not just for Acts, where he followed the Manuscript closely, but also later in Luke. It is quite clear that Morrison saw little need to change the previous translation, which actually had been used by the Jesuit translators since the 17\textsuperscript{th} century. The eventual controversy regarding the translation of \( \beta \alpha \pi \tau \iota \zeta \omega \) in Chinese started with a debate over whether zhan/jin or xi should be considered the accurate and accepted translation. The Baptists preferred the former because it describes an action liturgically in line with what they believed \( \beta \alpha \pi \tau \iota \zeta \omega \) meant in the original Greek language – immersion. Most of the non-Baptists, however, preferred Morrison’s version of xi. One theological

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38 One comparison of such changes has been demonstrated in Chapter 4. The changes make good sense because many of the names the Serampore translators used were phonetically created words which were complicated and confusing. Not only did Lassar and Marshman adopt the names, they also followed Basset in using typographical markers to signify the nature of the words – using an underline to denote a proper name (of person, people or a title), and a box to denote a place name.

39 Unlike Morrison and Milne, the Serampore translators were more committed to finishing the entire Bible than printing and distributing individual books as they became ready, so there is less information about the order of books in which they finished their translations after 1813. The process likely took place from 1815 to 1822, as they had the words “The New Testament in Chinese – Printed at Serampore with Metallic, Movable Characters. 1815-22” printed on the cover of their completed Chinese Bible in 1822.

40 Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 50.
reason given for such support was provided by J. Wherry, who argued that although $x_i$ does not quite convey the meaning of “immersion”, it is a better term to convey the theological meaning of “cleansing”, which is the most important concept when it comes to $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\varsigma\omega$.\textsuperscript{41}

Despite the later-time textual justification of the case against “immersion” (Wherry was writing in late 19th century), the controversy over the Chinese translation must be considered an afterthought, coming up only decades after the translations were done. The Chinese translation of the word for $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\varsigma\omega$ was never an issue among the earliest Chinese Bible users before late 1830s, even given the dispute over the Bengali translation. But as the discussion of revising the Morrison/Milne Bible began to surface in the early 1840s (the conversation actually began a few years earlier too, see later), the Society’s desire to have a committee to revise the Morrison/Milne Bible and to come up with a single, unified Chinese version became clear. Samuel Wells Williams’ description of the scene of such a meeting tells a great deal:\textsuperscript{42}

The greatest harmony existed at this meeting, and the books of the New Testament were distributed in various portions among the missionaries at the several stations without regard to denomination. The only point on which any discussion arose was the best word for baptism; and after considerable friendly discussion, it was agreed that the version should be made and then accepted by all parties at a subsequent general meeting, and the Baptists afterwards use what word they pleased in their version, while the two should be in other respects alike. The term $si\ li\ (xi\ li)$, which had been in use to denote this rite since the days of

\textsuperscript{41} Jost Oliver Zetzsche, \textit{The Bible in China}, 55.

\textsuperscript{42} Samuel Wells Williams, \textit{The Middle Kingdom}, 373.
Ricci, by Romanists of all opinions, had been taken by Morrison and Medhurst, and by those associated with them. Marshman preferred another word, tsan (zhan), which was so unusual that it would almost always require explanation; and in fact, could only be fully explained by the ceremony itself. … The adjustment of this question on the plan agreed upon in 1843 cannot fail to satisfy all, while the greater point of having a uniform text for the Chinese is nearly or quite attained; for whatever word or term is used, its explanation will be given in its practice by all parties. The Baptist Bible Society in the United States has, however, refused to cooperate in this arrangement, and requires its funds to be devoted to a separate version. It is expected that some parts of the new version will soon be agreed upon by those engaged in it, and before many years all the Bible be given to the Chinese as the only guide of their faith and practice.

Although Williams tried to sound positive (e.g. “after considerable friendly discussion”) and impartial in his description of the situation, it is not difficult to detect traces of his displeasure towards the Baptists, saying that Marshman’s choice of zhan “unusual” towards unrecognizable (though the assessment was accurate, the Baptists did have another word for it – Gützlaff’s jin, which Williams omitted to mention), and putting the blame on the US Baptist Bible Society for refusing to cooperate in the “compromise” arrangement – which was essentially using Morrison/Milne’s term of xi, a compromise that was only to be made by the Baptists and no others. So even though the basis of the debate was translation and textually related, it must be viewed within a context of ongoing denominational and societies rivalry and hostilities in the 1830s.43

43 Another source of such conflicts, in addition to the Apocrypha, was the attitude towards slavery. See Hans J. Hillerbrand (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Protestantism, vol.1-4, 395-397.
When it came down to suggesting a compromise for the Chinese translation of \(\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\zeta\omicron\omega\), the BFBS’ criteria established in 1835 (for the Bengali version) proved to be unhelpful. The first-mentioned preferable option was to translate according to “the principle adopted by the translators of the authorized English Version, (i.e.) by a word derived from the original”, which basically refers to a transliteration. Before that time such a translation approach was never used for the word \(\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\zeta\omicron\omega\) in Chinese, including the Nestorian translators/writers many centuries ago. One of the Nestorian authors uses \(xi\) (“washing”) in one of the oldest Chinese sutras written on Christianity, the *Xuting mishisuo*jing《序廳迷詩所經》of early 7\(^{th}\) century AD, even though he uses transliteration a lot elsewhere in his translation.\(^{44}\) Only during the preparation for the *Union Version* in the early 20\(^{th}\) century was there a suggestion to use a transliterated translation for \(\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\zeta\omicron\omega\) to resolve the differences, such as one similar to the Japanese version of *baputesuma* バプテスマ.\(^{45}\) The suggestion was quickly rejected by most, hence the BFBS’s recommendation was never really implemented in the Chinese translations.\(^{46}\) The second criterion was to use a term that “may be considered unobjectionable by other denominations of Christians comprising the Bible Society”. Such a decision could be as textually based as it was politically based, especially given the ongoing denominational rivalry and struggle such as that between the Baptists and the other denominations.

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\(^{44}\) One section of the ancient document, found in Dunhuang, recounts the virgin birth of Jesus, his early life, baptism, and gathering of the 12 disciples. The line 當即谷昏彌師訶入多難中洗 reads “Immediately John sent the Messiah into Jordan to be baptized (washed)”. The author uses transliteration for “John” (谷昏), “Messiah” (彌師訶), and “Jordan” (多難). See also Toshikazu S. Foley, *Biblical Translation in Chinese and Greek – Verbal Aspect in Theory and Practice*, 25.

\(^{45}\) The first to introduce this translation was likely Karl Gützlaff, who first translated the Scriptures into Japanese in 1835. He used a lot of katakana scripts though, making the whole translation look very foreign (the copy is currently kept at the Cambridge BFBS library).

\(^{46}\) See Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 55.
Available evidence shows that most of the people who argued for choosing *xi* over *jin* since the late 1830s did not have a strong textual concern against the Baptist term, but rather acted out of a preference for the more widely-circulated Morrison/Milne version, as well as a disdainful response toward the Baptists’ unwillingness to compromise. Even as the controversy over βαπτίζω lasted all the way into the *Union Version* preparation period, the textual aspect of the debate often seemed to have lesser importance than the social and cultural aspects. As Zetzsche remarks, during the whole debate “none of the missionaries argued that *xi* was the better translation for βαπτίζω (semantically); nevertheless, most of them were not willing to alter the term towards a more correct translation.”

What makes the whole debate ironic is that Morrison probably played very little part in the choice of the word *xi*. Being one of the terms used by Basset and already found in the earliest edition of Acts (1810), Morrison likely just adopted the term without much consideration about other alternatives, and he is not known to have ever commented on the controversies regarding the Chinese translation of βαπτίζω. Interestingly, the controversy that surrounded his choice of term actually had little to do with his translation approach, and more with interdenominational interactions. After some unfruitful negotiations the Baptists finally decided to set up a separate Bible

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48 The Baptists in fact harbored more negative feelings towards the use of *xi*. The Rev. Spencer H. Cone, President of the Baptist triennial convention in New York, would criticize the BFBS and ABS in 1838 for spending thousands of pounds sterling and thousands of dollars respectively, to “print and circulate these corrupt (the ones using *xi* 洗禮 for baptism) versions”. *The First Annual Report of the American and Foreign Bible Society, presented April 28th, 1838* (New York: The American and Foreign Bible Society, 1838) 11-12.

49 See Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 56.
Translation Society in 1840, as the BFBS continued to decline supporting Baptist translations in which βαπτίζω was made to signify “immersion” only. The failure to reach a compromise at the end meant that the Marshman/Lassar Bible would be limited to the Baptist circles mostly, and with the Baptist Mission in China proper only beginning in the 1840s, it had a crucial impact on its lack of circulation and relevance in the decades following its completion.

Perhaps not coincidentally, just one year after the BFBS issued the βαπτίζω translation directive and received the Baptists’ firm rejection, the leaders appeared to have finally made up their mind to throw their support behind one version. In December of 1836, the BFBS passed a resolution to request the LMS to carry out a revision of the Morrison/Milne Bible, as requested by Morrison. More importantly, the BFBS made a promise of “defraying all the reasonable expenses” of the revision work. Zetzsche believes that since BFBS never had a similar intent for the Marshman/Lassar version, it shows that the Society had always a higher estimation of the Morrison/Milne Bible, even though they didn’t make it overly official.

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51 The Baptist mission in China began in Macao and Hong Kong in early 1840s, led by missionaries such as J. L. Shuck and William Dean. The Baptists were able to enter Ningpo in 1843, after Britain’s first war with China. American Baptist Missionary Union, The Missionary Magazine, vol. 51 (Boston, 1871) 75.


53 “So, for example, they never considered a revision of Marshman/Lassar’s translation, but of Morrison/Milne’s – under Morrison’s own supervision.” Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 54.
5.3 FAME AND LEGACY

Within 20 years of the completion of his Chinese Bible, Robert Morrison was already widely regarded as being the “Father of China Mission” among the Protestants. How did it play a part in the recognition and appreciation of his bible version in comparison to newer versions? And how much was it a result of Morrison’s achievement as a biblical translator and a language expert? As mentioned in the previous pages, Robert Morrison himself was very vocal about his version needing revisions. Among those who wanted to take up the call was Walter Medhurst, probably one of the most knowledgeable and capable early Protestant translators in terms of his Chinese language skills and academics, and who would spearhead the revision of the Morrison/Milne Bible. According to Medhurst, after Morrison told them about how he would make it “his daily study to find out and correct errors in his and Milne’s Chinese Scriptures” in 1826, he actually sent a specimen of his translation of the first five chapters of Matthew to Morrison. Morrison, probably taken aback by Medhurst’ extensive revision of his works, replied sarcastically that “he merely wished the errors and omissions to be pointed out for the sake of perfecting a new edition; but if (Medhurst’s) suggestions and alterations were to be adopted, an entirely new and different translation would be

54 A Baptist report reads: “Mr. Medhurst, an English Pædobaptist missionary, was the principal translator (of the new Chinese NT translation), and of foreigners he is doubtless the most thorough Chinese scholar in the world. He began his translation after he had been reading, writing, and speaking the Chinese language, eighteen years (added by the author). The Baptist Magazine & Literary Review, vol. 38 (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1841) 184. It is very unusual for a Baptist report to have such high praises for a Pædobaptist translator at that time.

55 “Medhurst was a much more prolific writer in Chinese, Malay, and English than Milne and his predecessor” Peter J. Kitson, Forging Romantic China: Sino-British Cultural Exchange 1760-1840 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 86.

56 Walter Henry Medhurst, Memorial Addressed to the British & Foreign Bible Society on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures (1836), 4.
required.” Medhurst claimed he turned down the request at the time, citing that he still doubted “his own proficiency” and that “while Dr. Morrison lived he would be the fittest person to set about the work”. Zetzsche probably took these words of Medhurst at face value and called him “Morrison’s chosen successor”, but Su Jing was correct in disputing this assumption, pointing out that Medhurst never had Morrison’s blessings in revising his work, and Morrison was still quite critical of the younger upstart just 2 months before his death in 1834. Medhurst seemed to understand Morrison’s disapproval himself very well, and had already began working on a new translation of the Gospels in early 1834, calling it Fuyin Tiaohe (“A Harmony of the Gospels”). And within three months of Morrison passing away on August 1, 1834, Medhurst wrote to the LMS appealing for a major revision of the Morrison version, stating that “no inferior ideas of delicacy should be allowed to interfere with the superior consideration of rendering the Sacred Scriptures as intelligible and acceptable to the

57 Walter Henry Medhurst, Memorial Addressed to the British & Foreign Bible Society on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures (1836), 4, n.3. Zetzsche, like Medhurst, seems to have misunderstood what Morrison meant, suggests that “Morrison asked him to undertake a new translation” (The Bible in China, 56). In fact Morrison was implying that with the kind of revisions Medhurst was proposing for his translation, that he would be better off starting another version altogether.

58 Walter Henry Medhurst, Memorial Addressed to the British & Foreign Bible Society on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures (1836) 4, n.3.

59 Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 59.


61 In a journal entry dated 16 May 1834 Morrison wrote that Medhurst “wants to make the Bible palatable to the pagan Chinese. Entirely forgetting how much nominal Christians – and I fear all Christians – disrelish the Bible, he thinks that by his improved style, he can render it quite a parlor-book!” Eliza Morrison, Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison, Vol. 2, 517.

62 Seven editions were printed in Batavia (Java) and Malacca at the end, a total of more than 5000 copies. Su Jing 蘇精, “Zhongwen Shengjing Diyici Xiuding yu Zhengyi” 中文聖經第一次修訂與爭議, 13.
Chinese as possible". The “inferior ideas of delicacy”, obviously, were referring to the sensitivity surrounding revising the great Morrison’s work. Judging from how Medhurst, with the help of Karl Gützlaff, began the “revision” work of the Morrison/Milne Bible soon after Morrison’s death in 1834, and in just two years completed an entirely different New Testament translation, he probably had the thoughts of doing a new translation all along. If we consider the reasons Medhurst found it necessary to revise the Morrison/Milne in the first place – that it read like a book that was composed by foreigners, filled with expressions that the Chinese people found strange and difficult to understand – a team that was dominated by him would have the “revisions” read like an entirely new version.

5.3.1 LITERAL STYLE OF BASSET, MORRISON, AND MARSHMAN

The fundamental difference between Medhurst, a scholar with more local experience with the Chinese language, to his predecessors like Basset, Morrison, and Marshman, who approached the language like a foreign translator would, was in their

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63 Walter Medhurst’s report to LMS on 27 Oct 1834 (CWM archives, Batavia, Incoming letters).

64 The committee was supposed to comprise of Medhurst, Gützlaff, Elijah Bridgman, the first American Protestant missionary to China, and J. R. Morrison, the son of Robert Morrison. But Bridgman’s involvement was minimal, and J. R. Morrison became too busy to commit after assuming his father’s position as a translator for the Hong Kong government in 1834, after the latter’s death. (For a more detailed description of process of the “revisions”, see Su Jing, “Zhongwen Shengjing Diyici Xiuding yu Zhengyi” 中文聖經第一次修訂與爭議, 16-20; Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 59-62). There were also a number of reports casting doubts on Gützlaff’s knowledge of the Chinese language at that time, and Bridgman would write later that “(Gützlaff’s) acquaintance with the Chinese language consisted rather in knowing many characters than in an accurate knowledge of its idioms” (The Chinese Repository (1851) 512), thus making himself less well equipped for a more classical approach preferred by Medhurst. So even though it was a work done by both Medhurst and Gützlaff, the impression was that it was mainly Medhurst’s work after all.

65 Walter Henry Medhurst, Memorial Addressed to the British & Foreign Bible Society on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures (1836) 5.
approach to writing style. It was something Morrison quickly came to realize, soon after arriving Canton in 1807 – namely, which “Chinese” would it be when it came to a Chinese translation of the Bible. He wrote in one early letter: 66

There is a great difficulty that now occurs to me. Neither the Mandarin tongue, nor fine writing, is understood by the great bulk of the people. The number of poor people is immense; and the poor must have the gospel preached to, and written for, them.

What Morrison referred to above as “Mandarin” was the northern dialect, or what they would refer to as the “Court Language” or the “Language of the Officials” (guanghua 官話) – the dialect which was used widely in the north and especially in the capital. But since the capital city had changed from Nanking (modern name “Nanjing”) to Peking (modern name “Beijing”) following the succession of the Manchu Qing regime (mid-17th century), the court language had also switched from the Nanking dialect to Peking dialect over the years, so what was considered the “northern vernacular” in the late Ming period was in fact very different by the time of the Qing period. 67

In terms of written forms, Morrison also mentions “fine writing”, by which he would be referring to properly written classical Chinese writing. The classical writing is generally believed to have taken shape during the Zhou Dynasty (1045 – 256 B.C.E.), and had continued to exist as the only dominant form of written Chinese for the next two thousand years. Although the style of the writing itself did vary somewhat over the many centuries, it had a strong lineage in the past (so much so that the Confucian Four Books and Five Classics,

66 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 04 Nov 1807 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 1); also found in Eliza Morrison, Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison, Vol. 1, 163.

the *sishu wujing* (四書五經), would remain the standard texts of Chinese students for more than 2000 years: more than 3 times as long as modern English speakers would have to manage if they were to keep Chaucerian English as the standard for written English), and kept the gentry class – the only people who could use and manipulate this form of writing expertly – in power. By Morrison’s time this classical writing was still regarded as the only “official” form of Chinese writing, despite the fact that most people outside of the gentry class could not read or write it, and not even understand it even when a piece was read to them.  

Two more styles of Chinese writing also existed at that time: the second was the style associated with the genre of Chinese novels written and published during the Ming and Qing dynasties (mid-14\(^{th}\) century to late-19\(^{th}\) century), which includes well-known and popular works such as *Sanguo Yanyi* (“The Romance of the Three Kingdoms”), *Shuihuzhuan* (“The Water Margin”), and *Hongloumeng* (“Dream of the Red Chamber” or “The Story of the Stone”). In Chinese they are collectively referred to as *gudian xiaoshuo* (“classic novel”) or *chuantong xiaoshuo* (“traditional novel”) in Chinese, or more recently the “Chinese vernacular fiction”.  

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68 According to the estimate by David Johnson, only 5% of Chinese males were considered literate in 1800, based on the standards of the civil service examinations. David Johnson, “Communication, Class, and Consciousness in Late Imperial China,” in David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski (eds.) *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 59.

69 Authors writing in English have used a number of terms to refer to this group of writing, with “classic Chinese novel” and “traditional Chinese fiction” being a more popular choice among earlier writers (e.g. C.T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968) 1; W.D. Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction – The Formative Period* (Leiden: Brill, 1974) ix; Margaret Berry, *The Chinese classic novels: an annotated bibliography of chiefly English-language studies* (New York: Garland, 1988) vii), even though other variations such as “traditional short story in the vernacular”, “Chinese vernacular fiction”, and “Chinese colloquial fiction” were also in use occasionally and interchangeably. This ambiguity is well noted by Kenneth Kinslow in his biographic essay on the “Classic Chinese Novel”: “Our ‘classical Chinese novel’ generally does not utilize classical prose alone. If anything, the novel was a response to the increased demand for literature
considered a more vernacular version of classical Chinese, a middle or lower classical style, though the distinction is not as clear-cut as some suggest it to be. As Ge Liangyan argues: “While Shuihu zhuan (“The Water Margin”) appears in a language that is distinctly vernacular, Sanguo yanyi (“The Romance of the Three Kingdoms”) is called a vernacular novel only when the word vernacular is more generously defined, as it employs a linguistic medium that mingles baihua (vernacular) with simple wenyan (classical).”

Since this genre followed the VS (Vernacular Sinitic) writing tradition found in Chinese drama scripts and plays dated back to earlier dynasties (such as zaju and pinghua), it was mostly intended for performance and public citation, so even if the written form of some of these was not very much simpler than classical, the general public would mostly be able to understand it when read to. The third genre was the even simpler style, which was the Mandarin or northern colloquial style. Before the mid-19th

in the spoken language, ‘bai hua’ (literally, ‘plain talk’). The classical novel, then is inevitably a mixture of classical prose and the vernacular. Perhaps ‘traditional novel’ would be a more suitable, less ambiguous term; however, scholars both in the West and on Mainland China use the designation ‘Zhongguo Gudian Xiaoshuo’ – the ‘classical Chinese novel’ (“The Classic Chinese Novel – A Bibliographic Essay”, Journal of Library and Information Science (April 1991) 12). Partly because of this ambiguity associated with the use of “classical” and “traditional”, and partly because of the increase in scholarly interest of the vernacular written forms (aka VS, Vernacular Sinitic) found in this genre of literature, more and more modern writers are choosing to just call this genre of writing the “Chinese vernacular fiction”. The trend is becoming popular, with the term gaining popularity in more recent writings, such as those by Anne E. McLaren (Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 6); see Ge Liangyan (Out of the Margins (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2011) 3), and Matthew Miller (“Ming Dynasty Vernacular Fiction and Hu Shi’s Literary Revolution”, Columbia East Asia Review (2012) 39). This author is one of the few who are against using this term, and will refer to this genre of writing using the foreignized and phonetic translation gudian xiaoshuo. See Clement Tong, “Foreignized Translation and the Case against ‘Chinese Vernacular Fiction’”, MTM Journal, 6 (2014) 81-94


71 A wider use of VS in China only came in around the 14th century AD, during the late Yuan and early Ming period, as seen in the Northern zaju (雜劇, variety show) drama scripts and pinghua (平話, popularized history) genres, as well as the early form of huaben (話本, stories and novels) (Patrick Hanan, The Chinese Vernacular Story (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 3; Gang Zhou, Placing the Modern Chinese Vernacular in Transnational Literature (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 8-9). Calling this a steady process of general vernacularization is an overstatement though, because these vernacular forms of writing were sporadic, existed far apart, and showed little continuity (Patrick Hanan, The Chinese Vernacular Story, 9).
century this form of writing only existed in a kind of imperial works called *Shengyu* (the “Holy edicts”), which would include the Emperor’s edicts that were written in an even more vernacular style, and would be read to the people at the public halls throughout the country to ensure maximum exposure. Some other forms of *Shengyu* would depict stories of filial piety, such as those issued under the Kangxi Emperor, which were intended to remind the Chinese populace about traditional Chinese virtues. This form of writing was generally looked down upon by the gentry or even the moderately educated, and was considered to be Chinese written at the school-children level.

So as the Protestant translators began to enter into China, they faced the situation of having three forms of Chinese writing style – classical Chinese (the higher style), the *gudian xiaoshuo* novel style Chinese (the middle style), and the northern vernacular Chinese (the lower style), even though the last was not exactly in regular use. For Lassar there was really little choice – he might have received education from a Chinese teacher in Macao, but as a foreigner he was not expected to learn the higher style, and it is doubtful if he had enough Chinese training to determine what style to use, especially with him working from scratch. Judging from his translation, Lassar’s writing style was not very sophisticated, and would probably be classified as something in between the middle style and the lower style, and strongly influenced by the Canton dialect (see Chapter 2). In Morrison’s case he had a choice between Basset’s style, which was like a simple classical style, and his own, which was in between the *gudian xiaoshuo* style and the lower style, judging from the books that he translated himself (e.g. the Johannine Epistles).

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72 The Qing Court was keen to publish this type of stories because loyalty was a major theme among these traditional Chinese virtues. By reminding the Chinese (Han) populace that loyalty to the Emperor was a virtue honored over generations, the rulers were implying that even the Qing (Manchu) regime, a foreign throne, should receive loyalty.
and the Book of Revelation). Yet he was at the same time very limited in his choice for a writing style too, because he was so heavily indebted to the Basset copy for so many of the NT books (see Chapter 3). A great departure from the Jesuit’s writing style, even if achievable, was inadvisable, as the translation would read differently from book to book, in addition to the inconsistency that already existed. But when Milne was discussing the style of Chinese writing used in Morrison’s NT, he presented it as if there was a choice to be made, and tried to rationalize Morrison’s eventual decision:

(Morrison) at first inclined to the middle style; but afterwards on seeing an imperial work, called Shing-yu (Shengyu) 《聖諭》, designed to be read twice a month, in the Public Halls of the different provinces, for the instruction of the people in relative, and political duties, and which is paraphrased in a perfectly colloquial style, he resolved to imitate this work: 1) Because it is more easily understood by the bulk of the people; 2) Because it is intelligible when read in an audience, which the high classical style is not at all. The middle style is also intelligible when read in public, but not so easily understood as the lower style; 3) Because it can be quoted verbatim when preaching, and understood by the people without any paraphrastic explanation. However, on

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73 As Zetzsche correctly analyzes: “Considering all this, any decision for a style other than that of the version of Basset, which was in a low form of classical Chinese, would have meant a decision against the extensive use of this manuscript and a radical change in Morrison’s translation work, with a possible delay of the completion for several years.” Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 36.

74 William Milne, A Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission in China (Malacca: Anglo-Chinese Press, 1820), 89-90.

75 The Chinese characters are part of Milne’s original writing.

76 Milne’s wish to translate the Bible in the colloquial style was only realized after almost five decades, when the missionaries gained access to inner regions of China after the signing of the Treaty of Tianjin (Treaty of Tientsin) in 1858. William A. P. Martin would write jubilantly to the American Presbyterian Medical Mission in 1864 to announce the new “discovery”: “No argument is needed to prove that the S.S. (Sacred Scripture) ought to be enabled to deliver their message from God in the most extensive and cultivated of the dialects of China (Mandarin). As to the extent of the dialect I will merely remark that it prevails through all the provinces from the Great Wall to the banks of the Yangtsekiang (the Yangtze River), and as to cultivation, it has been written for centuries in the common character and contains a
reconsidering the subject, he decided on a middle style as in all respects best adapted for a book intended for general circulation. On the one hand, it possesses something of the gravity and dignity of the ancient classical books, without that extreme conciseness which renders them so hard to be understood. On the other hand, it is intelligible to all who can read to any tolerable extent, without sinking into colloquial coarseness. It is not above the illiterate, nor below the better educated. The Chinese whenever they speak seriously, affect to despise the colloquial works of fiction, while at the same time, they are obliged to acknowledge that the style of the ancient classical books is not adapted for general usefulness.

Though Milne gives us a thorough and valuable description of the various Chinese writing styles in use during the early 19th century, his reasoning is not convincing, given that we now know that Morrison’s use of Basset was very much driven by his wish to speed up the process, to keep announcing, promising, completing, printing, submitting, and getting support to continue his mission. With most of Morrison’s New Testament translation was a revision based on Basset’s, his options on the writing style were probably very limited from the very beginning; it’s likely that Morrison was fully aware of the differences, but never made it a deciding factor when he worked on the NT books. Since Milne’s words were meant to be a defense of their Bible translation works and mission, the apologetic tone is not unexpected. However, this impression that the
choice of writing style was reached after a long and thoughtful decision by Morrison was clearly untrue, and would inadvertently hinder the work of future translators, when they tried to use a different Chinese style for their new Bible translations. It happened as the next generation of Chinese translators such as Walter Henry Medhurst, Elijah Coleman Bridgman, and Karl Gützlaff began to come up with a new Chinese Bible translation. What Medhurst and Gützlaff did was to introduce, in the terminology of modern translation theories, the functional equivalence approach\(^{77}\) to Bible translation, rejecting phrases and terms which would sound very foreign to native Chinese speakers, and replacing them with Chinese idioms, phrases and sentences which carried the same or similar meaning. But since classical Chinese was still the standard, official writing style among the literate people at that time, their translations would also be associated with a switch from low classical/foreign Chinese to a more classic Chinese style. An important example is the replacement of \textit{xinpinzhe} 心貧者 (“those who are poor in heart”), Basset’s translation of \(\text{	extit{οἱ πτωχοὶ τῶν θεοῦ}}\), followed by Morrison with \textit{xuxinzhe} 虚心者 (“those who empty their hearts”) for the first beatitude in Matthew 5:3. Basset’s and Morrison’s translation is direct, but the terminological formation is foreign to Chinese

\[77\] Functional equivalence was proposed by Eugene Nida more than a decade following the first appearance of “dynamic equivalence” (“Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style”, Eugene Nida and C. R. Taber, \textit{The Theory and Practice of Translation} (Leiden: Brill, 1969) 12), after seeing the abuse of the latter at the hands of bible translators who would readily abandon its principle just to appeal to their audience.

\[78\] Found in Chapter 9 of the Harmony.
speakers; and though Medhurst uses a phrase familiar to native speakers, it is more a paraphrase and can be subject to various different interpretations.79

So not only were Medhurst and Gütlaff trying to remove the “foreign” elements from the Morrison/Milne Bible, they were also engaging in the first effort to make the Protestant Chinese Bible read more classically – hence “Chinese”. Zetzsche recognizes the significance of this new approach, and comments that “Medhurst portrayed for the first time a concept of Bible translation which was not bound to the letter of the basis text but to its meaning in a non-Christian culture”.80 In a certain way, Medhurst was probably the first Protestant Bible translator who had a better idea of what his audience readers were looking for, and tried to incorporate it into his translation style and method. Morrison and Marshman/Lassar were probably only able to translate the Bible into the type of Chinese language they were knowledgable of, and their main audience groups were more like the patrons and supporters back in Europe. Milne would probably have been capable of what Medhurst did, if he had lived for longer and was able to emerge from the shadow of Morrison.

5.3.2. LEGACY THREATENED

79 By selecting a “domesticated translation” – one that is familiar to the target audience - Medhurst has produced a translated term very different in meaning to the original, as the phrase 虛心 (“emptying your heart”) is commonly associated with the Taoist belief in minimalism. In addition, by totally removing the concept of “poor” from Matthew 5:3, the close parallel between this verse and Luke 6:20 (Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί – “Blessed are the poor”) is completely lost, because the Chinese translation for 6:20 remains as 貧者 (the poor). The outcome of this “ethnocentric violence” committed on Matthew 5:3 has resulted in an ongoing debate about the proper understanding of 虛心, and a failure on the part of the Chinese readers to recognize the textual closeness between Matthew 5:3 and Luke 6:20.

80 Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 64.
A more detailed examination of the translation style of Medhurst’s and Gützlaff’s version of the Scriptures would be far beyond the scope of the present work, as our focus is the response of a patron (the BFBS) towards the calls for a new translation, and how the factor of fame and reputation played a role in the way recognition was granted. Unfortunately for Medhurst, with the new NT version widely conceived as mainly a work of his, any decision by the BFBS to adopt it would inevitably become a decision to replace the great Dr. Morrison’s work with a young upstart’s untested version. Medhurst was obviously aware of the sensitivity of the issue, as he tried to strike a balance between criticizing Morrison’s style of translation, without implying an attack on the achievement and integrity of the man. In the *Memorial on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures*, a defense of the reasons and merits of his new version submitted to the BFBS in 1836, Medhurst began by reminding the Committee that Morrison did base the middle parts of his NT (Acts and the Pauline Epistles) on the British Museum Manuscript (Basset Manuscript), hence even though the revisions might sound like a disapproval of Morrison’s work, it was rather a verdict on the Manuscript: 81

The middle part of the volume, therefore, being founded on this manuscript, and the composition of the rest being in all probability conformed to the style of the prototype, we have more to do with the reputation of the unknown author, than with that of our beloved Morrison, when we enter upon a critical examination of his translation, or attempt to institute a comparison between it and a proposed new version. (Underline added by this author)

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Medhurst goes on to argue that even if Morrison should be considered responsible for his Chinese translation, whether or not it was translated by himself, or adapted by him from the Manuscript, his legacy should not be implicated because of the remarkable job he had done, given the conditions he was facing at the time: \(^{82}\)

(Morrison’s) subsequent reputation as the best European Sinologue will hardly be affected by his success or failure in his first efforts; for we must remember that when the first edition of the Chinese New Testament was published in 1814, Mr. Morrison had only been seven years engaged in the study of the language, without the enjoyment of those facilities which his own philological labours have placed within the reach of subsequent Missionaries; and that, therefore, he can hardly be supposed to have made that progress in Chinese lore which he afterwards attained, or to have acquired that proficiency which he himself enabled future labourers more expeditiously to acquire.

As mentioned, one of Medhurst’s main reasons for his desire to revise the Chinese Bible and follow a more classical approach came from his contact with native Chinese speakers. Strandenaes argues that Medhurst must have had at least one Chinese co-worker, Ju Di Lang, who worked as his Chinese teacher and secretary when he was working on his translation. \(^{83}\) The fact that there was no mention of natives’ involvement

\(^{82}\) Walter Henry Medhurst, *Memorial Addressed to the British & Foreign Bible Society on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures* (1836), 2-3. Interestingly, a similar racial sensitivity arose with Lassar’s involvement in the Serampore Chinese translation activities. Reviewing the western-dominated views of the early mission societies George Winfred Hervey, quoting from Eliza Morrison, comments on this issue too: “The meanness and malice of some sectarians is strikingly illustrated by a passage in one of Dr. Milne’s letters to Dr. Morrison, in 1820. It is as follows: ‘To the best of my information, the chief part, if not the whole, of the Serampore Chinese version, has been done by Lassar’s hands – ours by our own.” *The Story of Baptist Missions in Foreign Lands – From the Time of Carey to the Present Date*, 501.

\(^{83}\) Medhurst had high respect and praises for his Chinese helpers, such Liu Zichun, whom remarked “by his perfect acquaintance with the native language … is able to suggest idiomatical improvements” on the 1836 translation. Later on he would build a close relationship and receive much help from the father and son team of Wang Changgui and Wang Tao, when he worked on the Delegates Version. See Patrick
was likely “prompted by fear of negative reactions from the BFBS or the LMS for letting non-Christian or newly converted Chinese appear too dominant in the Bible translation work”.\textsuperscript{84} On the other hand, if Medhurst was able to send samples of his new translation to Morrison as early as 1826, he had probably begun working on his version years before 1836. The fact that he would only “begin” the revision process as soon as Morrison passed away, but be able to conclude it in 2 years, also indicated a translation process that had probably long been in the making. The reason for such a likely delaying tactic was to avoid challenging the old Bible version when the “Father of the Chinese Bible” was still alive.

What Medhurst probably did not realize was that, in order to persuade the BFBS to adopt his translation, he might have overplayed his cards by citing some damning criticisms against the Morrison Bible. It was most notable when he referenced some of the complaints made against his predecessor’s work by local Chinese converts like Leang-a-fah (Liang Fa) (“the present version of the Scriptures is very strange, and the reading of it disagreeable to a Chinese ear; no doubt the Translators did their best to give the sense of the originals, but they have sadly failed in point of style and idiom”\textsuperscript{85}), Lew Tse-chuen (“But the Chinese version exhibits a great number of redundancies and

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\textsuperscript{84} Thor Strandenaes, “Anonymous Bible Translators: Native Literati and the Translation of the Bible into Chinese” in Stephen Batalden, Kathleen Cann and John Dean (eds.) \textit{Sowing the Word – The Cultural Impact of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1804-2004}, 136. \\
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tautologies, which render the meaning obscure”\(^{86}\), and Choo Tih-lang\(^{87}\) (“I find (the Morrison Bible) exceedingly verbose, containing much foreign phraseology, so contrary to the usual style of our books, that the Chinese cannot thoroughly understand the meaning, and frequently refuse to look into it.”\(^{88}\) The criticism was obviously too hard for many to accept, as the widow of Morrison would include Samuel Kidd’s response to Medhurst’s account of the Chinese converts’ testimony in her biography of her late husband.\(^{89}\) Medhurst’s blunt approach might have done too much damage to his case - as can be speculated from some of the reactions he received when proposing the new bible translation to the BFBS. By as early as October of 1835, Medhurst had sent samples of his translation (Gospels and Acts) to the BFBS in 1835 for evaluation. Confident and eager to move forward, Medhurst would also start sending out copies of the New Testament to be printed in Batavia, Singapore, and Malacca by February of 1836, even before receiving all of the feedback.\(^{90}\) This proved to be a mistake, as when Samuel Dyer and John Evans of the Malacca Press sent back their very critical comments, the

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\(^{86}\) The quote is included in Walter Henry Medhurst, *China: Its State and Prospects* (London: John Snow, 1840), 559, though it must have been circulated before that time, as Samuel Kidd’s response was published in 1839.


\(^{89}\) “(The Chinese converts’) united testimony amounts to this – that there are in Dr. Morrison’s version of the Scriptures - redundant particles – inverted expressions – unidiomatic phrases, and tautologies, which render the meaning obscure. To whom it might be sufficient to reply, that many of what are styled “redundancies and tautologies,” are, probably, expressions which a faithful translator could not avoid.” Samuel Kidd, “Critical Notices of His Chinese Works by Samuel Kidd” in Eliza Morrison, *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison*, Vol. 2, 73.

\(^{90}\) The Batavia press had already printed 3000 copies of the New Testament by October of 1838, when they received the eventual order from the LMS to halt distribution of the version. Su Jing 蘇精, “Zhongwen Shengjing Diyici Xiuding yu Zhengyi” 中文聖經第一次修訂與爭議, 19-20.
situation quickly turned difficult for Medhurst.\textsuperscript{91} The two wrote to Joseph Jowett, the BFBS Editorial Superintendent, on 27 April 1836 to recommend against accepting the new version. The reasons they gave against the new version were very telling: 1) It was prepared too hastily, suggesting a lack of care (“the late worthy Dr. Morrison’s glorious effort may be vastly improved upon, for the benefit of China Proper. But let it be done by the most careful men; let it be done in the most deliberate manner”);\textsuperscript{92} to them, Medhurst’s work lacked “the care of Morrison and Milne”, and couldn’t even live up to the Serampore standard, “unless any would pretend to something beyond the gigantic mind of a Carey”;\textsuperscript{93} 2) It was a work of “paraphrase” and “ornament”, with a “human factor” serving as its motto, rather than one for the glory of God and the good of souls.\textsuperscript{94} Although Dyer and Evans tried to make their assessment mostly a matter of language, and gave a number of translation examples to illustrate their concerns about the paraphrasing, their tone betrayed a more cynical attitude towards Medhurst and his challenge.\textsuperscript{95} Ironically just months earlier in 1835, when Dyer was asked to review

\textsuperscript{91} Jost Oliver Zetzsche, \textit{The Bible in China}, 62-63.

\textsuperscript{92} Walter Henry Medhurst, \textit{Memorial Addressed to the British & Foreign Bible Society on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures}, 47.

\textsuperscript{93} Walter Henry Medhurst, \textit{Memorial Addressed to the British & Foreign Bible Society on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures}, 47. The fact that Medhurst’s edition, which is a more sophisticated piece of Chinese writing (compared to both Morrison’s and Marshman’s), was said to be not “even living up to the Serampore standard”, shows that the two reviewers were on a very different page with Medhurst regarding translation philosophy, or that they had a very low view of Medhurst to begin with, or perhaps they had a limited grasp of the Chinese language.

\textsuperscript{94} Walter Henry Medhurst, \textit{Memorial Addressed to the British & Foreign Bible Society on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures}, 45.

\textsuperscript{95} “Whatever Dr. Morrison’s faults as a translator of the Scriptures might have been, sure we are that the charge of want of ‘fidelity’ ought never to have been made by the authors of the “Revision” If ever there existed a translation professing to be faithful, and most unfaithful, it is the new Chinese translation of our brethren on the borders of China.” Walter Henry Medhurst, \textit{Memorial Addressed to the British & Foreign Bible Society on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures}, 45.
Medhurst’s *Harmony of the Gospels*, he gave it an emphatic endorsement, especially regarding the new translation style:96

> Mr. Medhurst is just publishing a Harmony of the four Gospels in Chinese, and that answers so much the purpose for which my revision is intended that I am inclined rather to delay its publication, but have not made up my mind. It is certainly desirable to have, as well as the Harmony, a faithful translation … How is it that Mr. Medhurst and myself have provided a work in the *same style*? Is it not that we both formed the same idea of what the emigrants required?” (Italicized by Davies)

How could someone so supportive of the new style totally switched position just in a matter of months? And the reversal was complete, as Dyer would become one of the dual who compared Medhurst to a heretic, saying “we are far, very far, from approving of Arius Montanus”!97 Their measuring of Medhurst to the “greats” like Morrison and Carey shows that it was a contest of a young translator against legendary leaders to begin with. A similar sentiment can be detected in the Jowett’s eventual verdict against patronizing the Medhurst version on behalf of the BFBS, first announced at the General Committee on 5 December 1836. Though the reasoning for his disapproval was said to be translation principles (i.e. Medhurst’s attempt to “substitute human paraphrase for the simple statements of the word of God”), the rejection was complete, even to the point of being

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97 Walter Henry Medhurst, *Memorial Addressed to the British & Foreign Bible Society on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures*, 48. J. R. Morrison would later admit that not giving enough time to seek the opinions of the Malacca brothers was a mistake, but he still could not accept the severity of the comments they would receive from them and from England (Su Jing 蘇精, “Zhongwen Shengjing Diyici Xiuding yu Zhengyi” 中文聖經第一次修訂與爭議, 33.)
harsh: the Society would continue to recommend the use of the Morrison/Milne Bible, the LMS (which Medhurst belonged to) had to pay for all the expenses associated with the new version, and that any copy printed at the expense of the BFBS must be withheld from publication – so basically the BFBS wanted nothing to do with the Medhurst/Gützlaff NT at all.\textsuperscript{98} Some years later Jowett seemed to have revealed in more details the reasons for the rejection at the time, when he wrote to the ABS on 01 March 1843:\textsuperscript{99}

1. That the Doctor (Morrison) had himself partially revised the successive editions of his works, and 2. That we as a Society were not competent to make any revision, or even to be judges at any that might be made – further than as the Reviser might exhibit to us the general principles on which he had proceeded, or intended to proceed. We found, 3. In the propositions and explanations of Mr. Medhurst, such a sweeping condemnation of what had been affected by Dr. Morrison – a man in the highest trust, both in his civil and missionary character – accompanied by a style of translation, which, on his own showing, appeared to us so rash and daring, that we could not but fear committing ourselves to the new Translator. (Underline added by this author)

From this letter it becomes very clear that the BFBS’s decision not to patronize Medhurst’s Bible had more to do with upholding their support and respect for the late

\textsuperscript{98} Walter Henry Medhurst, \textit{Memorial Addressed to the British & Foreign Bible Society on a New Version of the Chinese Scriptures}, 54-55. A sentiment of anger and betrayal was also displayed in Jowett’s letter to Medhurst detailing the Committee’s decision, sent on the next day (06 December 1836), in which Jowett said that the members felt “strongly” against some followers of Dr. Morrison taking advantage of his death, and turning the opportunity of revising his Bible into writing a new one, while using the resources of the LMS. (Quoted in Su Jing 蘇精, “Zhongwen Shengjing Diyici Xiuding yu Zhengyi” 中文聖經第一次修訂與爭議, 26.

\textsuperscript{99} Quoted in Jost Oliver Zetzsche, \textit{The Bible in China}, 65-66.
Robert Morrison and defending his legacy, and the policy of not supporting two versions of the Bible in a single language, much more than a decision reached upon a detailed analysis on the syntax, style and accuracy of the two texts, or other serious linguistic considerations. Zetzsche thinks Jowett sounds almost personally hurt, that Medhurst dared to criticize the “highly-esteemed Morrison”. So the objection of Dyer and Evans, fellow LMS missionaries of Medhurst, probably just helped the decision-making of the BFBS. The BFBS and Robert Morrison had built a trusted and respectful patron-agent relationship over the translation of the Chinese Bible, which would not be easily broken or shaken by the challenge of an upstart who based his argument mostly on translation merits. Had Medhurst been a little more patient and proceeded more slowly and carefully, or at least tried to present his work as the labour of the entire committee of four, or if only had J. R. Morrison had more of a contribution to the version that was to replace his father’s work, the outcome might have been very different.

5.3.3 IMPROVED APPROACH, BETTER RESULTS

Medhurst was so discouraged by the rejection that he gave up working on the Old Testament, but the more colorful and controversial Gützlaff took it upon himself to finish the translation of the whole Bible in 1839. Although Gützlaff was not nearly as learned

100 Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 66.
101 “(Gützlaff’s) critics insisted, with some justice, that (his) reports of multitudes of converts were greatly exaggerated and in many instances false. Gützlaff died during the controversy, and there have been few attempts to reevaluate (him) and his accomplishments from a longer perspective. Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Opening China: Karl F.A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852*, 159.
in classical Chinese as Medhurst, his shortcoming probably worked to his advantage when facing patrons such as the BFBS. Gützlaff never came across as being as forceful and argumentative as Medhurst (who was famous for writing long letters and articles justifying his translation approach and debating with critics), and was very willing to revise the NT he did with Medhurst over and over again. He was also a better lobbyist than Medhurst: although he continued to advocate making the Chinese Bible more idiomatic and legible to the Chinese, Sinicizing the style of writing - disregarding the very accusation of the BFBS for the use of a “human paraphrase” approach in 1836 - he also combined it with a new evangelistic approach, by creating the Chinese Union (福漢會 fuhanhui) which trained and provided funds for Chinese colporteurs to travel inland and deliver Bibles and tracts, so that “Chinese would win China for Christ”.

When coupled with such a strategy, Gützlaff’s argument that the Chinese Bible should read as pleasing to the Chinese ear as possible made better sense, and Gützlaff repeatedly wrote to the BFBS for aid, including in his reports testimonials after testimonials of successes, to back his case. After securing large grants from NZG and the Dutch Bible

102 Though highly talented and able to pick up a number of Chinese and Asian dialects, Gützlaff was trained to “write a straightforward Chinese, though not the high classical style with its many allusions and special syntax” Jessie Gregory Lutz, Opening China: Karl F.A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852, 40.

103 The 1836 Memorial was one example, as well as the long debate he engaged in during the Term Controversy during the 1840s.

104 In a letter to the LMS on 30 Jun 1849, Medhurst wrote that Gützlaff “calls the present (NT), I think, the fourteenth edition” (underline by Medhurst), quoted in Jost Oliver Zetzsche, The Bible in China, 69.

105 Jessie Gregory Lutz, Opening China: Karl F.A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852, 159.


107 Gützlaff proposed to Sinicize the work of evangelism by having native Chinese present the essence of Christianity in local dialects, compose tracts that were Chinese in tone and style, and serve as Chinese proselytizers. The resultant Chinese Union came to be seen by many as a failure or even a scandal. Jessie Gregory Lutz, Opening China: Karl F.A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 215-216.
and Tract Societies, Gützlaff finally received a grant from the BFBS in 1848 too – a £100 grant for printing his New Testament, Psalms, and some OT books.\(^\text{108}\) So after about a decade the BFBS finally did an about-turn in their policy, and judging from Gützlaff’s approach, the decision once again had less to do with translation and linguistic considerations, but came down to Gützlaff’s ability to establish a trusted patron-agent translational relationship.\(^\text{109}\)

Medhurst’s talents and reputation as one of the best Sinologists would not be denied forever either. In 1843 he was elected as the chairman of the Delegates Committee, which despite its own controversies (most notably the departure of the US delegates for the controversy over the translation of “God”), managed to complete the *Delegates Version* (DV) of the whole Bible in 1854,\(^\text{110}\) and this version would become one of the most widely circulated Chinese Bibles, especially in the south, until the publication of the *Union Versions* in the early 20\(^\text{th}\) century. Two years later Medhurst and another Delegates Committee member John Stronach would translate the first Chinese New Testament written in Mandarin too – the *Nanking Version*.\(^\text{111}\) Though it came more than half a century before the *baihua* (vernacular Chinese writing) movement swept China and forever turned Classical Chinese writing into a thing of the past, it was already more than


\(^{109}\) Since the Society was already supporting a new version of the Chinese Bible being prepared by the Delegates Committee, it also had to alter its practice of trying to endorse just one version, by saying that “no opportunity should be foregone” given the enormous size of China. Jessie Gregory Lutz, *Opening China: Karl F.A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827-1852*, 161.


four decades after Milne first thought of translating the Chinese Bible into Mandarin. Within the network of Christian Bible and missionary societies, fame and legacy were powerful things, and had a big impact and long reach during the first 50 years of Protestant Bible translation history in China.

This final chapter continues to look at factors other than textual considerations, that had likely played a role in influencing the circulation and use of the first Chinese Bibles. Using the patronage theory of translation, this study is able to examine the situation in terms of the religious and social network of the translators, in which societal and communal factors such as a patron’s agenda, interdenominational rivalry, fame and reputation played as important a role in the eventual acceptance of a translation version. This can be observed in the underlying irony of BFBS’s endorsement of the Morrison Bible, since Morrison’s version had a number of textual issues that otherwise should have been rejected by the BFBS (the Society had refused to print the Basset version in 1805 exactly because of its likely Catholic origin, yet said little about Morrison’s extensive borrowing of it; also, Morrison had included notes in his 1813 NT and 1823 Bible, which was a blatant violation of BFBS’s policy of no notes or comments). At the end, neither of these issues was regarded serious enough to deter the patrons and the missional communities from embracing the Morrison Bible, demonstrating the misguidedness of focusing too much on textual factors, when interpreting the reception history of the Chinese Christian Bible.
CONCLUSION

Between the publication of the Marshman and Lassar Bible in 1822 and the completion of the different editions of the *Union Version* in 1919, there had been more than 20 major versions of the Chinese Bible translated, whether it was on just the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible), the New Testament, or the entire Bible. The vibrant translation activities happening within the century were exceptional, not only showing a great desire on the part of the translators to produce more versions to serve their missional and other purposes, but revealing also a sense of dissatisfaction with the completed works among the users. The *Union Version* seemed to finally quench this urgent desire of translators and users to come up with a better copy, as the next Chinese translation of the whole Bible, *Lu Zhen Zhong Yiben* (The Translation by Lu Zhen Zhong), would only appear five decades later in 1970, and as a whole only 5 new versions were completed from 1919 to 1992. This adherence to the *Union Version* can be observed in many other ways, as one Chinese writer would proclaim in 1969 that “right now 99% of the Protestants are using (the *Union Version*),” although without

112 The final publication of the *Union Version* in 1919 had both the *Wenli* (classical Chinese) and the *Guanhua* (Mandarin vernacular Chinese) versions, and also came in *Shangdi* and *Shen* (different translation of the word “God”) versions, as well as the *Jin* and *Xi* (different translation of the word “baptism”) versions. An all-embracing approach to make sure the whole Christian community was satisfied.

113 Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 405-408.

providing any figures or data to support his claim.\textsuperscript{115} When more individuals began to voice the opinion of the need to revise the \textit{Union Version} or to come up with another new translation in the 1960s, the overall response was quite negative, and their reasoning was indicative of the factors behind the dominance of the \textit{Union Version}, as discussed by Jia Bao Luo.\textsuperscript{116}

Many people don’t think it should even be an issue (to have a new Chinese Bible translation), since they believe there is already an excellent translation of the Bible, and they have been reading it with great respect, treating it as a holy scripture; they believe it is the very Word of God, and should not be altered by human beings. Yet this is a very simplistic view, because if we take an overview of the long history of Chinese Bible translation, we can see that it has never been a straightforward task to make available a Chinese Bible for the Chinese churches.

The preference and adherence to the \textit{Union Version} almost sounded bibliolatrous, with another writer calling the completion of it “the most glorious page of the history of Chinese Bible translation, the apex of a century of translation works.”\textsuperscript{117} Liu Yi Ling argued that since the wording of the \textit{Union Version} fulfills the high translation standard

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{115} Yan Lu Yi 顏路裔, \textit{Shengjing Zhe Bensh} 《聖經這本書》 (This book - the Bible) (Hong Kong: Daosheng, 1968) 69.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Jia Bao Luo 賈保羅, “Zhongwen Shengjing Zhi Xiuding - Qiantu Ruhe?” 中文聖經之修訂 - 前途如何？(The Revision of the Chinese Bible – How do we go from here?) in \textit{Shengjing Hanyi Luwenji} 《聖經漢譯論文集》 (Articles on the Chinese Translation of the Bible) (Hong Kong: Jifu, 1965) 150-151.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Li Shi Yuan 李湜源, “Zhongwen Shengjing Fanyi Jianshi” 中文聖經翻譯簡史 (A Brief History of the Translation of the Chinese Bible) in \textit{Jingfeng} 《景風》 53 (1978) 9.
\end{itemize}
of “xin da ya”, and all its issues are minor and insignificant, when it comes to “translating the Bible again, the one essential principle is to make as few changes as possible” (italics added by this author). Still another writer traces back to the history of Chinese Bible translation and delivers a even more flattering portrayal:

As we look at the Union Version that is in circulation today, it carries on the tradition of all the Chinese Bible translations that came before it, and is the consummation of a century-long tradition of translation expertise, and the brilliant efforts of countless scholars from East and West. Many of its words were translated by Robert Morrison, such as tianguo (kingdom of heaven), dixiong (brother), fuyin (Gospel), shitu (apostle), qidao (pray), yi (righteousness), en (grace), dejiu (saved), zui (sin) etc.; let’s not forget, that these Chinese words, whether translated by sound or by meaning, are all basked in rich Chinese culture, incorporating thoughts of the three main philosophies of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, and which through the interpretation of the missionaries, have become a language that conveys God’s revelation and the Gospel truth.

An interesting observation can be made about the above statement: out of all the nine word examples provided by the author, none of them are among Morrison’s own

118 The famous translation “principle” of the Chinese translation Yan Fu, first mentioned in the Introduction of his translation of Thomas Henry Huxley’s Evolution and Ethics in 1898. Actually he did not lay it out as a translation principle, but rather presented it as the challenge and difficulty of having all three requirements met in a translation — xin (faithfulness to the text), da (comprehensiveness in its expression), and ya (eloquence in style).
translation, as all can be found in the Basset copy.121 So Morrison was simply adopting the translation of Basset when it comes to these nine words, and could hardly be credited with the thoughtfulness and brilliance in the choice of them. One can certainly argue that the mistake was made by just an individual writer unaware of the history of the Chinese Bible translation, but if we look at the statements of support in general and consider the persistent popularity of the Union Version,122 this writer’s sentiment is likely shared by many other Chinese Christian Bible users too. If not for the kind of textual studies this study has conducted, this “contribution” by Morrison would certainly continue to be (and probably still is) a strong justification to uphold the Union Version’s superiority and to continue its use among Chinese churches.

In a certain way, Liu Yi Ling’s advise to revise the Union Version “as little as possible” sounds very similar to the type of responses Walter Medhurst was receiving, when trying to revise or replace the Morrison Bible more than 100 years earlier. The acceptance of a particular Protestant Chinese Bible, whether it was during the days of Morrison and Marshman, or as recent as nowadays, has always seemed to have more to do with trust and reputation, than an objective evaluation of the linguistic and translational integrity of the text. Once a version is accepted and embraced by the general Christian community, the translated words and phrases underwent a kind of a transformation – taking on new importance and a certain degree of sanctity, even

121 The nine words in Chinese are 天國, 兄弟, 福音, 使徒, 祈禱, 義, 恩, 得救, 罪, respectively.
122 Since released, the Union Version has always outprinted and outsold other Chinese Bible versions. As recently as 1988-1997, the number of copies of the Union Version printed were six times as many as its two other biggest competitors combined. Chong Yau-yuk 莊柔玉, Jidujiao Shengjing Zhongwen Yiben Quanwei Xianxiang Yanjiu《基督教聖經中文譯本權威現象研究》(A Study of the Phenomenon of Authoritativeness in the Chinese Translations of the Protestant Bible) (Hong Kong: International Bible Society, 2000) 31.
becoming the very language of the revelation of God to some. For a translation like the *Union Version*, any attempts to revise it have usually met with fierce opposition and criticisms; to a lesser extent the same had happened to the Morrison Bible, and the results might have been very different, if not for Robert Morrison himself strongly advocating for a revision.

It should be realized that the completion, evaluation, selection, and the eventual acceptance and circulation of the Chinese Bible has always been far more complicated than just an individual pursuit and a linguistic decision. The translators did not work in “splendid isolation on a text”, but they operated within and as part of a network.\(^\text{123}\) The intertwined body of translators, users, critics, and patrons collectively has influence on every step of the process of the translation. When Zetzsche comments on the period of rivalry between the Morrison/Milne team and the Marshman/Lassar team, he remarks that a detailed study of the competition between the two would be “tedious” unless it formed “a pattern that had a significant effect on the continuation the history of Chinese Bible translation”.\(^\text{124}\) But as this study has argued, the rivalry between the first Protestant translators of the Chinese Bible was an integral part of the complex early 19\(^{\text{th}}\)-century network that saw the many different societies and missionaries, sponsors and workers, patrons and translators working and interacting with one another, guided by the grand narrative of bringing the Chinese people a Bible in their own language. What is usually perceived as a project of language acquisition and translating would inevitably be complicated by various issues such as financial needs, political interference,


\(^{124}\) Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China*, 53
denominational dispute, patron’s demands … all played a part in the overall scheme of translating the Bible.

It is also revealing to see that during the earliest period of Protestant Chinese Bible translation, the missionaries had apparently paid very little attention to their supposed audience groups, reflected in their lack of understanding of the types of written Chinese used in China, or the lack of commitment to tailor their translation style to meet the needs of their immediate audience groups. Morrison was hand-tied at the very beginning in terms of choosing his translation style, as he relied heavily on an 100-year old Jesuit copy composed in the Sichuan Province, even though his main contact group would be Cantonese living in South China and Southeast Asia. Lassar would have a good understanding of his native Macao and the residents there, but his team would be operating far from China in Serampore, and how they planned to distribute their translated Bibles and who they tried to reach at remained unclear. Only Milne, working in Malacca, was able to have a better understanding of his audience group and tried to meet their needs, such as starting the first mission magazines in Chinese, the *Chinese Monthly Magazine* 察世俗每月統記傳, as well as establishing the Anglo-Chinese College for both Chinese and European students.\(^{125}\) Yet because he worked as a helper to Morrison, he was not able to apply what he felt was an appropriate style to translating the Bible (Milne would probably have tried using a more colloquial written approach). Hence Medhurst was the first Protestant missionary who had carefully considered the issues of audience groups, and was able to implement in his Bible translation approach his

missional strategy. It does seem that the first generation of Protestant missionaries in China were quite preoccupied with pleasing and impressing patrons and sponsors back in the West, perhaps more so than how their Bible translations would be perceived by the different groups of Chinese readers.

This study has not tried to argue for or against a certain version, nor does it seek to criticize the ways in which Marshman and Morrison went about completing their bible translations, or their various techniques of textual adaptation, positive reporting, exaggeration and competitive criticisms. The study has simply presented the real-life struggles and extraordinary achievement of the earliest Protestant missionaries in China. Although the study has revealed some unglamorous reality of the first Protestant translators at work, and the earthly pragmatism that was prevalent in the decision-making of these individuals, it has done little to diminish the legacy of the early missionary translators like Morrison, Marshman, Lassar, and Milne. Within the first three to four decades of the launch of the China Mission, these individuals not only had succeeded in completing two versions of the entire Chinese Bible, they had also contributed greatly to the study of the Chinese language by publishing a number of grammar books and dictionaries, established printing presses and an education institute, and started a process of circulating Christian materials to Chinese living overseas and in China, that had been thought impossible just shortly before. With both Morrison and Marshman only starting to learn Chinese some time after 1805, what they managed to achieve deserves great admiration and respect.
Focusing on the religious, societal and political networking of the translators, along with an in-depth historical critical study of their works, this study model is providing a useful portrayal of the early Protestant missionaries to China, one that makes use of but does not overly rely on the biographical records of these individuals. This is especially important in the study of the Protestant missionary translators in China, because not only are their works and lives generally under-researched, the few biographical records available were often completed by relatives and acquaintances who were eager to defend their legacy. A heavy reliance on these biographies is in danger of producing accounts laden with inaccuracies or a strong hagiographical tone. The approach of the current study is also beneficial in uncovering materials long ignored in the selective schemes of scholarly focus on just the major Bible translations. For translations like those completed by the Serampore translators in the earlier years (before 1814), the lack of circulation means that these versions will likely not attract any

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126 A very telling example is Walter Medhurst, a major player in the scene of Chinese Bible translation after the first generation of translators (i.e. Morrison and Marshman); a key player, along with Karl Gützlaff, in pushing for a new Bible translation in replacement of Morrison’s; the lead translator of the next major version, the Delegates Version of 1852; the leader of the group of translators who preferred Shangdi for the word “God” in the serious Term Question dispute; the main architect of the first ever Chinese Bible translated into vernacular Mandarin Chinese, the Nanking Version of 1856; a prolific writer whose works also include a historical and cultural account of China (China: Its State and Prospects (London: John Snow, 1840)), a number of dictionaries (Chinese and English, Japanese and English, Hokkien dialect), even a resident’s guide in China for foreigners (A Foreigner in Far Cathay (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Company, 1873)). Yet till this day, not a single biographical piece on this major figure in the history of Chinese Bible translation has ever been published, save some brief dictionary entries (e.g. Sidney Lee (ed.), Dictionary of National Biography, vol. xxxvii (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1894) 203). An exception would be James Legge, who has been served by a few well-researched works in the recent years, such as Norman J. Girardot’s massive work The Victorian Translation of China – James Legge’s Oriental Pilgrimage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Yang Hui’s section on Legge in China, Christianity, and the Question of Culture (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014) 153-161; and Lauren Pfister, “The Legacy of James Legge”, International Bulletin of Missionary Research, 22:2, 1998, 77-82.

127 As seen, the Memoirs of the Life and Labours of Robert Morrison was written by his widow Eliza Morrison, and The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward was written by John Clark Marshman, the son of Joshua Marshman. Memoirs of the Rev. William Milne, Late Missionary to China was compiled by Robert Morrison, using mostly materials written by Milne himself.
scholarly attention, as can be seen with Lassar’s Matthew’s Gospel of 1807, which is only being discussed for the first time in this study, despite being the very first Protestant translation of a biblical book. A methodology that focuses on the translator’s network places emphasis on such “minor” translations too, because they are also important in the overall scheme of things, and had an influence on the writing and the usage of other better-known translations. The short-lived but unique Serampore tradition of Chinese Bible translation gets to be examined in this study, because of the research interest that focuses also on the interpersonal and societal dimensions of the translation activities, and that treats the missionary communities as an intrinsic network that the translators worked closely with and within. It is hoped that this study will pave the way for more comprehensive and critical examinations of a few other Chinese Bible versions that appeared after the Morrison version but arrived before the Union Version, such as the Delegates Version, the Bridgman/Culbertson version (the first one completed by American missionaries), and the Josiah Goddard version (the second Baptist attempt), as well as the early vernacular translations (the Nanking Version and the Griffith John version). All of them have received relatively little scholarly attention in the past, but promise to offer valuable insights to our understanding of the Chinese Bible translation processes leading up to the Union Version, and in turn, place us in a better position to critique and to appreciate the language of the Chinese Christian churches.
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APPENDIX

INFLUENCE OF THE FIRST BIBLE TRANSLATIONS ON LATER VERSIONS

Morrison once wrote in a letter addressing the LMS, recognizing the problems that his bible version might contain, but also highlighting the potential influences this very first Protestant version might have on future translations of the Bible:

If Morrison and Milne's Bible shall in China at some subsequent period hold such a place in reference to a better translation as Wickliff's [Wycliffe's] or Tyndale's now holds in reference to our present English version, many will for ever bless God for the attempt; and neither the Missionary Society nor the Bible Society will ever regret the funds they have expended, or shall yet expend, in aid of the object.

Morrison’s words proved insightful – with the Morrison/Milne Bible being the first widely circulated and distributed in China, it is widely accepted that it had a profound influence on the later Chinese versions, such as the Medhurst/Gützlaff/Bridgman New Testament, the Delegates Version, and perhaps most importantly, the Union Version, given its ongoing usage and authority among the Chinese churches. But how about the Marshman/Lassar Bible? It is easy to assume that because it was far less circulated and much less well accepted, the impact of the Baptist

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1 Morrison’s letter to LMS on 25 Nov 1819 (LMS, South China, Incoming Correspondence, Box 2).
translators’ work could be quite inconsequential. However, many have made similar speculations without providing the necessary textual examples and evidence. The section will look at two areas of impact of the first Chinese translations: diction and terminology.

One of the ways earlier bible translations can influence other latecomers in a major way is with terminology. Scholars have remarked how, for example with the English Bible, English Christian terminology tended to follow the glossary used first in the Tyndale Bible and then, the King James Version (KJV). Philip Goodwin has articulated it using the work of Jewish German thinker Franz Rosenzweig, who discussed something very similar with Luther’s translation of the Scriptures into German. Goodwin borrows Rosenzweig’s term the ἱερὸς γάμος, the “holy marriage”, which he elaborates:³

At a certain point in the development of a natural language, a text is encountered which is of such cultural importance that it becomes ‘the book everyone must have read.”… This text may be either a home-grown text (such as Dante, for Italian), or a translation – such as the Luther Bible, for Hochdeutsch … we might say that the ‘holy marriage’ text establishes a certain set of agreed and ‘authorised’ ‘equivalents’. Once Luther has decided that πίστις (pistis) ‘means’ Glaube (‘faith’), then it does so mean, and becomes embodied in the language.

Since many of the biblical terms and concepts were new to the Chinese audience, the Chinese translation of a certain Christian terminology, once “standardized” by the Protestant translators, would became the only way the terms would be translated and

represented. There is usually a process to it, a period of “sketchy, tentative attempts at translation” before finally, “text and language find each other”. To Goodwin, the KJV meets the requirement of being a “holy marriage” translation, which has enjoyed recognition and can be readily understood by a modern English reader. Since many of the terms used by the KJV came from the Tyndale Bible, they became important contributors to the eventual success of the “holy marriage”. In our case the Union Version can definitely be considered a ἡερὸς γάμος translation, which has simply emerged as the standard Chinese bible version in the modern era, with a translation that the translators of other newer versions hesitate to deviate too far away from. But how much of the Chinese terminology of the Union Version came from the earlier translations?

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4 “Most of what we read in it was written before 1604 … The KJV is the final form of the Reformation English translation, accomplished over more than eighty-five years. Its English genius is a collective creation.” David North, “The KJV at 400: Assessing Its Genius as Bible Translation and Its Literary Influence”, in David Burke, John Kutsko, Philip Towner (eds.) The King James Version at 400 – Accessing its Genius as Bible Translation and Its Literary Influence, 3.


6 “Tyndale was capable in both Greek and Hebrew, and it is his clever and winsome phrasings that were so substantively carried on through Coverdale into the Bishop’s Bible, which became the base text for the KJV translators.” David Burke, “Introduction” in David Burke (ed.) Translation That Openeth the Window – Reflections on the History and Legacy of the King James Bible (Atlanta: SBL, 2009) Burke, xx-xxi n.3.

7 See note 11 of the Conclusion.

8 “The fact that we Chinese Christians can articulate in a language of spirituality is because of the foundation built by missionaries, through years of translating the Bible; gradually the Union Version has become the standard text of the Christian language - the very language we believers communicate with one another.” Chinese New Version Committee (ed.), Zhongwen Shengjing Fanyi Xiaoshi 中文聖經翻譯小史 (A short history of Chinese Bible translation) (HK: Chinese New Version Committee, 1986), 364.
Table A.1 A Comparison of translated Chinese place and people names, as found in the Basset NT, Marshman/Lassar Luke and Bible, Morrison/Milne Bible, Gützlaff NT\(^9\), and the Union Version.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Jesus”</td>
<td>耶穌 Yesu</td>
<td>耶穌 Yesu</td>
<td>耶穌 Yesu</td>
<td>耶穌 Yesu</td>
<td>耶穌 Yesu</td>
<td>耶穌 Yesu</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Jerusalem”</td>
<td>柔撒冷 Rousaleng</td>
<td>柔撒冷 Rousaleng</td>
<td>耶路撒冷 Yelusaleng</td>
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<td>“Galilee”</td>
<td>加里辣 jialila</td>
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<td>加利利 jialili</td>
<td>加利利 jialili</td>
<td>加利利 jialili</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Isaiah”</td>
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<td>依賽 Yisai</td>
<td>以賽亞 Yisaiya</td>
<td>以賽亞 Yisaiya</td>
<td>以賽亞 Yisaiya</td>
<td>以賽亞 Yisaiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Moses”</td>
<td>每瑟 Meise</td>
<td>每瑟 Meise</td>
<td>摩西 Moxi</td>
<td>摩西 Moxi</td>
<td>摩西 Moxi</td>
<td>摩西 Moxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Abraham”</td>
<td>阿巴郎 Abalang</td>
<td>阿巴郎 Abalang</td>
<td>亞百拉罕 Yabailahan</td>
<td>亞百拉罕 Yabailahan</td>
<td>亞百拉罕 Yabailahan</td>
<td>亞百拉罕 Yabailahan</td>
</tr>
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</table>

A comparison of terminology between the 1822 Marshman/Lassar version and the 1823 Morrison/Milne version reveals further changes made by Marshman and Lassar, who had already modeled their translation of many names and places after Basset’s copy from the time of their translation of John in 1813 (see tables\(^{10}\)). By the time they completed the entire Bible in 1822, some of the terms replicated Morrison’s. These include: “Jerusalem” (from 柔撒冷 Rousaleng to 耶路撒冷 Yelusaleng), “Galilee” (加里辣 jialila to 加利利 jialili), “Abraham” (阿巴郎 Abalang to 亞百拉罕 Yabailahan), and also from the next table, terms like “Peter” (伯多羅 baduluo to 彼多羅 biduoluo) and

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\(^9\) This version should be very close to the 1836 New Testament translation collectively completed by Medhurst, Gützlaff and Bridgman. Since by 1839 both Medhurst and Bridgman had dropped out of the project, the current version is just named the Gützlaff NT.

\(^{10}\) The terms used in the 1813 Marshman/Lassar John are almost all identical to those of Basset’s terms, except for the word “Jordan”.

281
“Satan” (撒探 satan to (口撒) (口但) sadan). Since it is highly unlikely that translators can come up with the exact same translation for names, Marshman and Lassar almost definitely had used the Morrison/Milne version to revise their name translations further. In this set of tables, it is clear that many of the Chinese terms used by the Morrison/Milne Bible would be preserved in the *Union Version*, and hence remain in use till this day. Given its wider circulation, the Morrison/Milne Bible was the main cause for the successive preservation of a number of Chinese translated terms through the decades. However, since Marshman and Lassar eventually adopted many of those terms too, one can argue that part of the terminology of the first Christian Bibles has been passed down.

**Table A.1 (continued)**

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<td>&quot;Jordan&quot;</td>
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<td>玉頓 Yudun</td>
<td>若耳但 Ruoerdan</td>
<td>若耳但 Ruoerdan</td>
<td>約耳但 Yueerdan</td>
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<td>法吏叟 Falisou</td>
<td>(口法)唎哂 Falixi</td>
<td>(口法)唎哂 Falixi</td>
<td>法利西徒 Falixitu</td>
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<td>&quot;Peter&quot;</td>
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<td>伯多羅 Baduluo</td>
<td>彼多羅 Biduluo</td>
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<td>彼得羅 Bidelu</td>
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<td>撒探 Satan</td>
<td>(口撒) (口但) Sadan</td>
<td>(口撒) (口但) Sadan</td>
<td>魔鬼 Mogui</td>
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<td>聖神風 Shengshenfe ng</td>
<td>聖風 Shengfeng/神風 shenfeng</td>
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<td>若翰 Ruohan</td>
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<td>基利士督 Jilishidu</td>
<td>基利士督 Jilisidu</td>
<td>基利士督 Jilishidu /基督 Jidu</td>
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<td>“Israel”</td>
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<td>以色耳勒  Yiseerle</td>
<td>以色列耳以勒  Yiseerle yile</td>
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<td>多默  Duomo</td>
<td>墮麻  Duoma</td>
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<td>撒罷  Saba</td>
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<td>安息日  Anxiri</td>
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<td>巴斯卦  Basigua</td>
<td>吧(口所)(口瓦)  Basuowa</td>
<td>吧(口所)(口瓦)  Basuowa</td>
<td>逾越節  Yuyuejie</td>
<td>逾越節  Yuyuejie</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The second table of words shows an interesting development of the Chinese translation of biblical terms, in which the names used in the Morrison/Milne version and the Marshman/Lassar version did not get fully adopted by the *Union Version*; instead, these words were further revised first in the Gützlaff New Testament of 1839, with the Gützlaff version showing an intermediate form of the development, before the words became finalized in the *Union Version*. This demonstrates that the finalization of terms (i.e. as they would appear in the *Union Version*) often happened over a period of time. In a few cases, the choices made by Gützlaff were substantial, changing the terms from a sound-based translation to a meaning-based translation, such as “Sabbath” and “Passover”. The change is consistent with the “domesticating” approach of later translations by Gützlaff and Medhurst, who had tried to eliminate “foreignness” of the early Chinese Bibles.11

Still, we can conclude that the first Chinese bibles had an important impact on the Chinese vocabulary used in the later translations - not just by providing terms that are

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11 See the example of translating “poor in spirit” as *xuxin* 虚心 in Chapters 4 and 5.
still in use today, but also by playing an important part in the long evolving process of the translated terminology.