

and reflect His glory is present, however buried, in all His children; that the task He has set before us is not, as it seems, impossible.

Various Technical Problems

There are, of course, in Taungthu translation work technical problems by the dozen: the complete lack of a passive voice is a nuisance; the nonchalant tossing about of tenses is apparently without any system whatever, and is difficult to reduce to any sort of harmony with the Greek; the courtesies, honorifics, and words "to sound nice" are a constant menace to clarity and accuracy. But there are problems far, far greater: the problem of the delicate situations arising from one's predecessor's work, and the extreme conservatism of one's colleagues in relation thereto; the problem which arises from seeming to deprive the people of something beautiful, and seeming to replace it only with something harsh and ugly; the problem of great gaps in the material with which one has to work. From problems of this kind, in our experience, solutions can come forth only by prayer.

Three Major Problems in Taungthu Translation

Professor Gordon H. Luce

(Readers will appreciate the following supplementary notes supplied by Professor Gordon H. Luce of Rangoon at the request of Marion S. Hackett about the difficulties involved in Bible translation work in the Taungthu language of Burma. — Ed.)

Judson Translation Conservatism

Judson did his translation in the decaying period of Burmese monarchy, when the Court made up for their lack of power by extravagant language, honorifics, etc., applicable primarily to the Court, secondarily (a fortiori) to the hierarchy of the Buddhist Order in Burma, and thirdly by courtesy to the hierarchy of other religions. A Burmese king never merely "goes"; he "royally does a going". Judson (wrongly, in my opinion) adopted this court-jargon. When Jesus goes into Capernaum, he "royally did a going". Even when "Jesus wept", his "tears royally did a falling". Honorifics, none of which are in the Greek, are commonly tacked on to pronouns. And this court-jargon has spread from the Burmese into the Shan Bible, and into some, at least, of the Gospels of the hill people. "In the beginning was the Word" has become in Burmese, "In the beginning was established the Royal Speechification"

— a mongrel term, half Pali (oral recitation) and half Burmese (snout, mouth). Even “the Holy Spirit”, “the Holy Breath”, has been given in Burmese and most other Burma languages a grandiose Pali name which bears no resemblance whatever to the meaning of the Greek. It was an unfortunate choice in any case, for in the *Paticcasamuppada* or Chain of Causation, which every Burma Buddhist knows, *vinnana* is the third step on the road which starts from *anjja* “ignorance” and ends in *marana* “death”.

Linguistic Snobbery

Apart from the instances given above (which all, I think, are outstanding instances of this), we have had to fight a continual battle against Burmese and Shan (the latter is the enemy scarcely less than the former) intrusions into Taungthu. Every time we accept a Burmese or a Shan word into our translations, we register a defeat. Of course snobbery is not the only cause of such intrusions, though it certainly is a powerful one. Sometimes the word we seek is really *not* in Taungthu, and we have to seek for it elsewhere, in a language which Taungthuss know. Such words include “witness, priest, book, to read, to write, carpenter, commandment, form, colour, grape, sin, permission, minister, sea, lake, yard, prison, reason, total, to govern, ruler, office, palace, parable, camel, regiment, crown, rebel, judge, olive, Sabbath, tax, temple, tomb, synagogue”. In general, abstract terms are difficult to render without recourse to Burmese, Shan, or Pali. There is also inevitably the drag of Buddhism and one is forced to adopt many Buddhist terms, e.g. “eve, Scripture, to observe, temple, chapter, to curse, Sabbath, sacrifice, miracle, sin, commandment, to practice, blessing, holy, hymn, to abstain from (fast)”.

Special Problems

We translated the five porticoes by the Burmese word for “porch”, literally “where the elephant enters”. Our worst anachronism or anapopism was at Mark 2 : 19, 20 where a “wedding” is “to eat tea and tobacco”, relating to a period long before tea or tobacco were known in Burma. In Mark 6 : 21 we use “to eat rice” for “supper”, when rice was unlikely as a course in Herod’s banquet. In Mark 2 : 23 we use “paddy” for wheat (AV “corn”), but the word may cover all kinds of cereals. In Mark 4 : 31 we use the Taungthu word for “mustard”, substituting the *Brassica* genus for the *Sinapi*. In Mark 1 : 6 we render “locusts” by “grasshoppers”, and in 1 : 4 “wilderness” is translated by “jungle”.¹

¹ This, however, does not indicate the Tarzan sort of jungle, but is merely the residuary term which excludes town, village, and tilled fields.