Making Books for God

Mission Printing in the Pacific Islands and Australia

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Making books for God in the Pacific was just a small part of a long tradition of Bible compilation and translation and subsequent centuries of copying of Scripture, patristic, service and other works in monastic and (from the twelfth century) commercial scriptoria. The invention of printing from moveable type supported the dissemination of the Word generally and the growth of vernacular translations, while both the Reformation and Counter-Reformation increased interest in the Bible in local tongues. The press was consciously utilised by Luther, who saw the study of the Bible as the key element in faith and salvation and printing as an instrument in the hands of the Reformation. The Congregation for Propagation of the Faith also set up its own press operations in 1626, printing for the mission field and developing types in many languages of Asia and Africa by end of eighteenth century (though work was then interrupted by the French Revolution). Most significantly for our own region and period, the British and Foreign Bible Society was established in 1804 with the exclusive object

> to diffuse the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, by circulating them in the different languages spoken throughout Great Britain and Ireland; and also, according to the extent of its funds, by promoting the printing of them in foreign languages, and the distribution of them in foreign countries.[1]

The Society saw printing as integral to this and encouraged use of stereotype printing (subsequently replaced largely by printing from standing or fixed type) to facilitate the production of subsequent editions.

Printing and publishing for the Pacific islands and Australasia, while part of this tradition, had some very specific characteristics: the enormous number and diversity of the languages of the region, none of which existed in a written form; the large proportion of localised publishing because of distance from commercial printers (though complete Bibles and Testaments were produced mainly in the mission parent country); and the inherent printing difficulties due

1. George Browne, *The History of the British and Foreign Bible Society from its Institution in 1804, to the Close of its Jubilee in 1854* (London, 1959) v.1 p.14.

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to limited local facilities and the peculiar climatic problems. Because the languages were reduced to writing very largely by outsiders (and for a very specific purpose) rather than by native speakers, there were all the attendant issues of imperfect comprehension, preconceptions about the languages (and the culture) and often a tendency to adopt particular languages for convenience and economy. On the other side of this odd culture contact were the varied and ambiguous responses *to* the written word by these traditionally oral cultures.

The impetus for the introduction of the printed word into the Pacific was the Evangelical revival or 'Great Awakening' of the late eighteenth century in Britain and America that convinced many that they and/or their church had a mission not only within their own country but throughout the world. The declared aim of the London Missionary Society formed in 1795 was 'for promoting the great work of introducing the Gospel and its ordinances to heathen and other unenlightened countries'.[2] This was to encompass populous countries like India and China with their own long-established religions but the Society's first missionary settlement was established in the small and remote Society Islands of Moorea and Tahiti in 1797, laying the foundation for what was to become a widespread and prolonged undertaking by missionaries to bring the Light to the 'heathens' of the South Seas. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (which had been established with the parallel object of 'propagation of the gospel in heathen lands') set up in Hawaii in 1820 and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in Tonga in 1822, while the Catholic missions made their entry into the Pacific from Wallis and Futuna Islands from 1827. Each expanded progressively westward, the American Board only as far as Micronesia but the others into the remotest areas of Melanesia. In addition Presbyterian missions from Nova Scotia took as their particular field the southern New Hebrides from 1848, while the New Zealand-based Melanesian Mission from 1849 ventured progressively north from the Loyalty Islands to the southern Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, and Lutheran missions, Australian Methodists and the Anglican New Guinea Mission established missions in various parts of Papua New Guinea from the 1880s. Other groups, including Seventh Day Adventists and the South Seas Evangelical Mission, entered various areas of Polynesia and Melanesia from the 1890s and in the mid twentieth century a whole new raft of evangelical movements took hold.

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2. Joseph King, *Ten Decades: The Australian Centenary Story of the London Missionary Society* (London, 1895) p.12.

Language Learning and Translation Work

For these missionaries, belief in Christ's injunction to *go ye therefore and teach all nations* [Matthew 28:19] was the core of their purpose. Language – in preaching, Bible translation or more metaphorically 'speaking in tongues' – would be central in achieving it. The Word itself was seen as a potent influence on 'civilising' the people to whom it was brought and most missions endorsed a philosophy of 'Christianise and civilise', though there was to be increasing debate about the language(s) most appropriate to advance the 'civilisation' cause. More prosaically, Bible translation was also a gauge of the success of the missionary effort, expected from missionaries as concrete evidence of their progress in the field and looked for by their supporting Church or Society; there are many examples of missionaries writing back disheartened accounts of the problems and lack of success of their efforts, only to have the least glimmer of hope or brave determination magnified into confidence of success in the official published reports.

Translators were commonly honoured (at least in their own circles) as 'distinguished instrument(s) in the hands of Providence'[3] and some in retrospect felt they had been divinely illuminated in acquiring tongues. Many worked in situations of constant personal danger and physical discomfort, while others (like the Melanesian Mission on Norfolk Island) enjoyed security and relative comfort, but for all the acquisition of languages and translation work was a demanding undertaking. William Bromilow, who went as the first missionary to the headhunters of Dobu Island off the coast of Papua in 1891, looked back on his time with enthusiasm:

> I went about with my constant questions and an equally constant notebook in which I entered, writing phonetically, each reply as I got it. The difficulty with objects was not great, adjectives were troublesome, grammatical construction was hard labour, requiring to be done over and over again, as one discovered his mistakes...But as I look back, it is not the mental toil that recurs to me so much as the zest of the pursuit of that tricky but fascinating language, and the joy of securing and nailing down new words and grasping new idioms, and all this in contact with real life of thrilling interest.[4]

Robert Codrington, headmaster of the Melanesian Mission school at Norfolk Island for many years and a renowned linguist, enjoyed the routine, writing

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3. N.L. Kentish of Rev. William Yate in *An Essay on Christian Fortitude under Trials and Disappointments* (Sydney, 1835).
4. William Bromilow *Twenty Years among Primitive Papuans* (London, 1929) pp. 79 and 81.

that he began 'at 6 with a Florida translation every morning and four nights in the week [had] a class or a translation to bedtime. The other two evenings [I used] to finish Mota translations for the Press'.[5]

But for the less linguistically gifted it could be hard going. The Rev. Richard Paley Wilson of the Melanesian Mission, who spent 22 years at Norfolk Island including ten in the mission field in San Cristoval in the Solomon Islands, was obliged during this time to learn Mota, the adopted Mission language, Wan(g)o and Bugotu and to preach and prepare translations in each. Not surprisingly he was never particularly good at any of the languages and his diaries reflect the constant trial of this work, his frequent despair and reliance on local assistance. Wilson was one of those greatly relieved when a new Bishop supported the use of English in the mission schools: when this decision was subsequently reversed, he made a black-bordered entry in his diary 'Used English in the Church for the last time, alas!'[6]

Like Wilson, most missionaries were indebted to the assistance of local pastors, teachers and even students, and many paid tribute to such assistance in their published translations and official reports. There were nonetheless some cultural differences that caused frustration and tension, like different attitudes to *how* one worked (islanders tended to be very social and also had a tendency not to want to give contrary opinions), to *how long* one worked at something (resulting in numerous complaints of lack of attention span, slipping off or not turning up) and tricky matters like differences in personal hygiene routines that could affect the necessarily close working relationship.

Printing for the Pacific Islands

Once a language had been mastered sufficiently to reduce it to writing and prepare some scripture translations, catechisms, prayers or basic teaching primers, the next step was to disseminate these. Printing was anticipated to play a vital role in this and mission ventures into publishing were part of the whole evangelical undertaking, missionaries commonly taking a press out to the field and some given training in printing before they left for the mission or recruited specifically as printers.

Thus there was a progressive introduction of printing into the Pacific islands, from the London Missionary Society's pioneering undertaking at Moorea

5. R.H. Codrington 'Journals and letters 1867-1882' (AJCP microfilm), journal entry for 31 January 1877.

6. R.P. Wilson diaries (National Library MS 6756), entry for 17 June 1913.

in 1817, paralleled by the establishment of facilities in New Zealand from 1835 for printing in Maori and, subsequently, the diverse languages of the Melanesian Mission field. These presses and printers initially undertook much of the printing that had first been done in Australia, London and America (except for the larger undertakings like complete New Testaments and Bibles which were beyond the capacity of the field printeries) and though commercial printers took over in most of the major centres of Polynesia later in the nineteenth century, this tradition of local self-sufficiency was maintained in much of Melanesia until the mid-twentieth century.

Some of the early ventures into publishing have been documented by those involved, and much of this information has been collected into the standard bibliographies and Richard Lingenfelter's excellent survey of the first 50 years of the Pacific Islands presses.[7] All make interesting reading, and reveal some fascinating (and contradictory) glimpses of the response to books and to the concept of communicating by marks on paper – a subject in itself that can't be encompassed in this paper. There was a wide range of operations. The Melanesian Mission printing was professional, extensive and peaceful, centralised at College headquarters, first in New Zealand, then on Norfolk Island from 1867 to 1920 and subsequently at Maravovo and Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. Their operations from 1880 were under trained printers, Henry Menges (who had been apprenticed on the *New York Herald*) and Fred Isom, trained in England, who each served for 40 years. Isom wrote a number of accounts of the work of the printing office, describing the equipment and the extensive printing program – almost 150 gospel and other Scripture translations, hymn, prayer and service books, lesson and reading sheets, annual almanacs and a twice-yearly newspaper were produced during the Norfolk Island years alone, many in Banks Island Mota (which as a practical measure was adopted effectively as the *lingua franca* of the Mission for services and teaching on Norfolk Island) but overall works in some thirty different languages and dialects.

A much smaller venture was that of William Watt who went to Tanna in the New Hebrides in 1869. He received in 1871 a press from the Foundry Boys Religious Society in his home Glasgow – something that had been solicited on the basis that it would be a great boon

> considering how far we are from the Colonies, and the length of time that elapses e'er we can receive our publications, for instance we had one book prepared for our people in the month of February and it was November

7. Richard Lingenfelter, *Presses of the Pacific Islands, 1817-1867: A History of the First Half Century of Printing in the Pacific islands* (Los Angeles, 1967).

> before it returned from the colony and thus many months were lost e'er we could put it into the people's hands. Another reason is, the diversity of language in these islands make it impossible for a missionary of one island to act as reviser of a book from another missionary on a different island to any advantage...Then printing in the colonies is very expensive and hence it would be a great boon to the church with which we are connected as well as to Tanna.[8]

He must have many times rued the success of his solicitation. The press arrived without a copy of the requested Timperley's guide, the essential manual for beginners.[9] Watt had problems with print-through and with obtaining the correct register, difficulties with type adjustment (no spaces having been sent) and getting the pages squared (the chases he had been sent having no crosses in the centre), insufficient type, so that he could only set up one page at a time, and many problems with the roller in hot weather. Like other island printers he needed more special sorts for the needs of the particular language (in this case accented types to indicate different sounds, as a and ā), and he also wanted to use as a standard a much larger type than was common, arguing that the people found most standard type sizes too small and that was important when they had no great desire to read to begin with and little patience.

Watts' letterbooks and his wife's published memoir of life on Tanna are wonderful sources for understanding the difficulties of the isolated and remote field printers, but the absolute prize account is one by a missionary printer who does not even appear in the official Society reports since he apparently committed some later indiscretion that took him beyond the pale – his diaries were only published by a descendant in 1988. This was the Rev. Thomas Jaggar, who joined the Methodist Mission in Fiji in 1838 and took on responsibility for their printing operations on Lakemba from 1839. His life as a missionary printer was fraught from the beginning. When unpacking the Mission press he found the (binding) glue and the compo (used for making rollers) had melted and run together in the cases and got mixed up with the packing sawdust. He had endless problems with rollers in the humid climate and was constantly making new ones or washing and warming them, resulting in last minute delays that in turn meant he had to re-wet the paper before starting printing again. He never had enough type and was constantly distributing before he could set up again. This was on

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8. 'Letters to the Glasgow Foundry Boys Religious Society by Agnes and William Watt 1869-1880' (National Library MS 8093), letter of William Watt to William Martin 7 December 1870.
9. C.H. Timperley, *The Printer's Manual: Containing Instructions to Learners...* first published in 1838 with a second edition 1842.

top of storms that more than once wrecked the printing house (or his own house, so he and his family had to camp in the printing house), thefts and other acts of hostility, and being in the midst of constantly warring groups who practised cannibalism, revenge killings and widow strangulation, not to mention a wife who was exceedingly fruitful but suffered terribly at each birth and the illnesses (and deaths) of their children. Yet Jaggar still found time to record words for a vocabulary and learn the language in formal sessions with local speakers, print extraordinary quantities of small books in a number of languages/dialects, fold, stitch and cover them, and teach others to use the press.[10]

As the accounts of Watt and Jaggar indicate, there were particular mechanical or technical problems associated with the printing in and for the Pacific, and there were also recurrent shortages of paper and type; one printer resorted to notepaper for printing some much needed reading books, and various substitutes from local materials were trialled – largely unsuccessful though some local materials were used successfully for covers. Type problems recur throughout: on Norfolk Island in the first decade many problems were experienced because of insufficient type to set up more than a few pages at a time and from the lack of an adequate supply of letters (like 'g') heavily used in some languages and dialects, while in printing the catechism of Ysabel Codrington had to space the chapters out enormously because there were so few question marks, prompting the hapless printer to lament 'it is miserable printing when your type runs out'.[11]

Because of the poor quality of many island press facilities and the intensive labour involved in the larger printing undertakings many missionaries took the opportunity to have work done when returning home or on leave in Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland and Canada. Then however there was the difficulty of proofing the texts: comments on the mistakes that occurred when there was no-one with knowledge of the language to revise the proofs recur from the earliest LMS Tahitian publications and Maori printings for the Church Missionary Society to W.V. Milne, writing to Ferguson in 1935, in relation to the new edition of the Erakor-Efate hymn book of 1934.

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10. T.J. Jaggar, *Unto the Perfect Day: The Journal of Thomas James Jaggar, Feejee, 1838-1845*, ed. Esther Keesing-Styles and William Keesing-Styles (Auckland, 1988).

11. One of the most delightful references in the manuscript sources to type problems is in letters of Codrington regarding Archdeacon Palmer's great mistake with type when on leave to England 1877. Palmer was supposed to acquire more heavily used letters like 'a' and a large number of italic 'g' of the same sorts that the SPCK had recently donated but had got another type, which meant Codrington still couldn't set up more than three pages at a time. Codrington wrote that the mistake was particularly surprising as Palmer was a practical printer (and had formerly been in charge of the Mission press) – 'but he was going to be married'...

The 'Marvels of the mission press' itself were often glowingly described. In his popular and much reprinted *Polynesian Researches*, William Ellis described the excitement that accompanied the first printing in Tahiti[12], and a similar account was given by John Williams on the introduction of the press at Nukualofa on Tonga in 1832: 'Little do the natives know of the inestimable value of that important & wonderful effort of human ingenuity that is now employed in printing the words of life for them'.[13] The press was 'our mighty engine' in the words of Jaggar, while a successor in the Fiji mission, James Calvert, soared in his description of '[that engine]... mightier far than their mightiest and most revered deities... In the midst of the barbarous people it stood, a fit representative of the high culture and triumphant skill of the land whence it came; and, blessed by the prayers of multitudes across the seas, and of the faithful ones who directed its might, that Mission press began, with silent power, its great and infallible work, which was destined to deliver beautiful Fiji from its old and galling bonds, to cleanse away its filthy stains of rime, to confer upon its many homes the blessings of civilization, and enrich its many hearts with the wealth of the Gospel of Jesus'.[14]

But though many extolled the virtues and necessity of a press, and those who were charged with the printing occasionally set down their problems as we have seen, few except the trained printers ever recorded much about the actual machinery. The Wesleyan Missionary Press used by Jaggar in Fiji was located in by his descendants in 1987 and can be identified from blurred photographs as an Albion from Hopkinson and Cope, and details of the presses and the type of the Melanesian Mission Press are provided in accounts by its first and subsequent printer, Henry Menges and F.R. Isom. Largely, however, we have to rely on the limited evidence of contemporary photographs found in the mission records and occasionally reproduced in their magazines, histories and later bibliographies. Such photographs also suggest the extent of the involvement of the local people in printing, though it is not clear at what level of expertise. Certainly at Dogura, in Papua New Guinea, Reginald Guise was in charge for a number of years (the press closed when Guise died in 1928); Ruteru was the head compositor at the Rongorongo Press on Beru in the Gilbert Islands for some thirty years, and Lui Vunibobo was a printer at the Loreto Press (of the Catholic Mission in Fiji) from 1916-54 and became 'expert in every stage' of the work. Many students

12. William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches, during a Residence of nearly Six Years in the South Seas* (London, 1967 – facsimile of first edition of 1829) v. 1 p. 392-4.

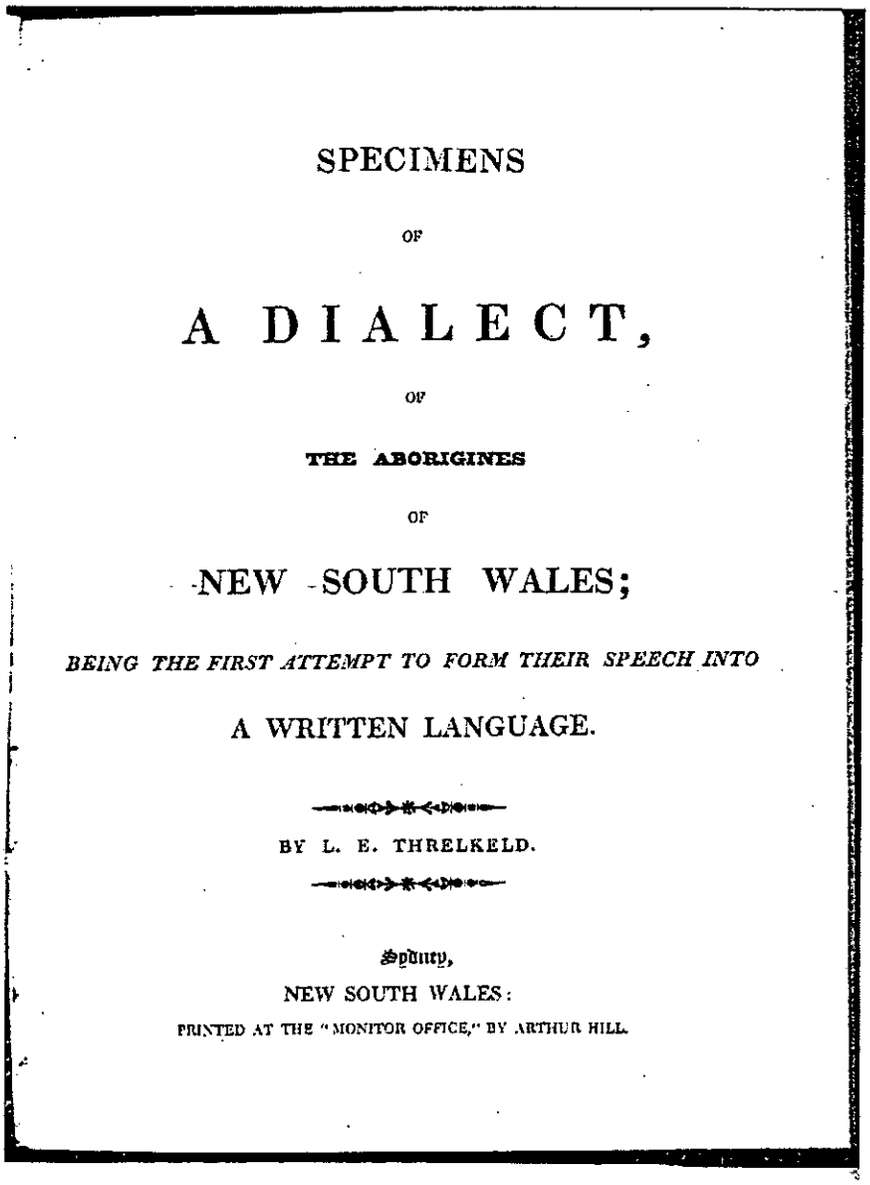
13. *The Samoan Journals of John Williams 1830 and 1832* ed. R.M. Moyle (Canberra, 1984) p. 208.

14. James Calvert, *Mission History*, v.2 of Thomas Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians* (London, 1858) p.222.

were involved in the operations of Melanesian Mission Press on Norfolk Island and the Sacred Heart Mission Press on Abaiang in the Gilbert Islands, and at the Kwato Mission in Papua New Guinea printing was taught as part of industrial training – though in these instances it would seem that most were employed in presswork and binding rather than as compositors.

Printing for Indigenous Australians

The efforts to evangelise among the indigenous Australians show up poorly by comparison with the investment in the Pacific Islands. This is reflected in the translation and printing work, though there were additional deterrents. The first 'mission' by Samuel Marsden in association with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel around Parramatta from 1795 and subsequent Wesleyan, Presbyterian and Church of England Missionary Society (CMS) efforts at various locations in New South Wales and Moreton Bay had little impact. Lancelot Threlkeld, who had been one of the early missionaries to Tahiti with the London Missionary Society, commenced work with the Aboriginal peoples of the Lake Macquarie district in 1825 and produced in 1827 *Specimens of a Dialect of the Aborigines of New South Wales* (Awabakal) – the first publication of any of the indigenous Australian languages – followed by a small spelling book in the same language, published in Sydney in 1836. One of Threlkeld's objects in publishing *Specimens* was 'to pave the way for the rendering into this tongue the sacred Scriptures' and he began a translation of St. Luke's gospel. His evangelical mission was, however, as unsuccessful as his predecessors and with no converts after 17 years the mission was abandoned. His gospel translation was not published until nearly 50 years later, long after his death. The CMS Mission to Wellington Vale begun in 1832 by William Watson and Johann Handt reported undertaking (separate and rival) translations in the local language(s) in 1836, but these were not published and the mission was relinquished in 1843. In South Australia the first German Lutheran missionaries H.A.E. Meyer, C.W. Schürmann and C.G.Tiechelman each prepared and had published in the 1840s vocabularies and grammars of the areas where they established their missions, but all of their stations also closed within a few years in the face of seemingly 'insurmountable difficulties'.



SPECIMENS

OF

A DIALECT,

OF

THE ABORIGINES

OF

NEW SOUTH WALES;

BEING THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO FORM THEIR SPEECH INTO

A WRITTEN LANGUAGE.

BY L. E. THRELKELD.

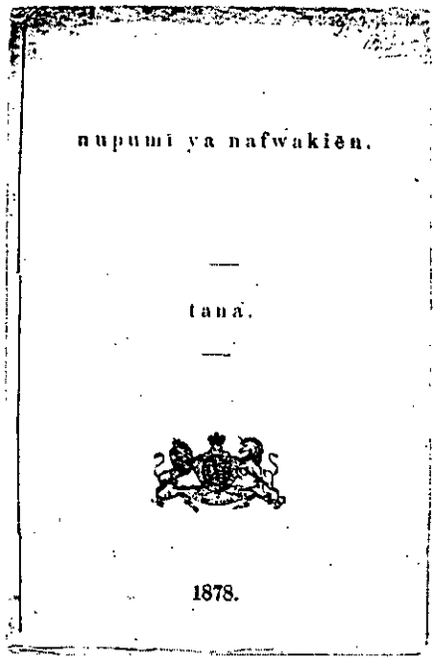
Sydney,

NEW SOUTH WALES:

PRINTED AT THE "MONITOR OFFICE," BY ARTHUR HILL.

L.E. Threlkeld, *Specimens of a Dialect of the Aborigines of New South Wales*
Sydney: Arthur Hill, [1827].
Special Collections, Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne

Nupumi ya Nafwakien
[Kwamera-language hymnal]
Tanna: Printed at the Glasgow Foundry Boys Society's Press, 1878.
Ferguson Collection, National Library of Australia



nupumi ya nafwakiēn.

—

tana.

—

1878.

nupumi ya nafwakiēn.

1 *old hundred.*

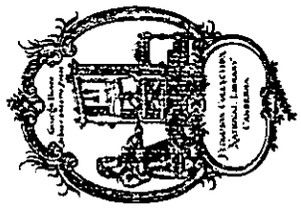
1 nērmaina pam ya tanamī,
mani nupu fe yihova,
mo tafaga fe atua,
magiēn ya nupu tī nokwan.

2 marukún pūrhiēn kimyaha,
atua in yērumanu,
in aba ro kitaha pam,
mīmi nari sanitaha.

3 mevēn ya nimwa savani,
magiēn 'sori ya nanimen,
mafwaki ya napinimi,
mokeke nahgēn savani.

4 yihova in ranasana,
in rokeke kitaha pam,
nokwan savani pūrhiēn
tī nēamaina nuk nukimi.

TANNA:
PRINTED AT THE
GLASGOW FOUNDRY BOY'S SOCIETY'S
PRESS.



Subsequently there were further efforts by missionaries, often in remote and harsh stations, to learn the local languages and begin the work of translating the scriptures and publishing some lesson books and Scripture extracts in them – the Rev. George Taplin at the (Methodist) Point Macleay Mission, Hermann Kempe at Hermannsburg and Johannes Flierl at the Killalpaninna among others. Possibly much more was done than was ever published, for references to translations never printed were made by various field missionaries and there are a number of manuscripts like Threlkeld's translation of St. Luke's gospel and Carl Schoknecht's Dieri dictionary that were unearthed only many years later, while the manuscript of Watson's Wiraduri grammar/vocabulary was allegedly sold as waste. However most of the nineteenth century publications, even those prepared by the Lutheran field missionaries in South Australia and by the Presbyterian William Ridley in the Darling Downs, Condamine River and Moreton Bay districts of Queensland and northern New South Wales, were vocabularies and grammars *about* the language, published with the aim of general communication (and often also from a scholarly interest in Aboriginal manners, customs and origins) rather than texts *in* the language for the people themselves. The first complete New Testament in an Aboriginal Australian language (the Dieri *Testamenta Marra*) was not published until 1897 and even after 1900, while there were important missionary contributions like John Love's Worrora (Worora) translations and grammar, and Carl and Theodor Strehlow's translations of the New Testament into Aranda, a revival of interest produced largely academic studies of languages perceived as on the way to extinction rather than translations that might support literacy in their own language for the remaining native speakers of those languages.

The indigenous Australian languages themselves were unlike any previously encountered and presented particular difficulties in representation and the translation process. There was the additional problem of regular contact with a traditionally nomadic population – missions were frequently disheartened by the scattered nature and 'vagrant' or 'erratic habits' of the people and the consequent difficulty of 'instructing them'. Missionaries also complained that the languages appeared to lack words for the concepts essential to Christian belief and their mission of salvation. None of this was unique to the Australian experience, similar observations being made by missionaries in Melanesia. More influential was the explicit belief of the local societies and colonial administrators in the role of English in the essential 'civilising' mission and the implicit assumption that English was most appropriate because Aboriginals would ultimately live as a minority in a largely English-speaking population – a different situation from most of the Pacific islands. While schools were set up on mission stations,

teaching was often Government-sponsored and mainly in English, and it was not until the 1930s that there was any real discussion as to the relative merits of mission teaching in the various 'native dialects' as a counter to the 'pidgin English problem'.

All of this had implication for translation and printing, for without the demand for teaching and preaching materials in the vernacular, printing in the field was rarely undertaken in Australia. Most of the works that did appear were privately published or, in the case of grammars and studies intended for a broader audience, were printed by the Government Printer or in the proceedings of the learned societies to which they were initially presented.[15]

Summary

What can we summarise regarding the output of these translation and printing efforts or suggest about their impact? D.G. Dance's *Oceanic Scriptures* has more than 700 entries but these do not include primers, catechisms, gospel selections, hymn books etc. in the vernacular and the work is based on just one collection, albeit the excellent one of the Bible Society Library.[16] Dance is concerned with discrete texts rather than printings, only briefly noting reprintings and later editions and revisions, and this is particularly significant in view of the many contemporary references to new editions being needed as previous ones were all worn out by use and the specific comment of one Catholic mission printer to Ferguson in 1919 that they 'never thought of keeping the old when got [the] new'. We can thus probably safely double or treble Dance's figure, making the Pacific language books a pretty substantial contribution to the long tradition of printing for God.

Within this output there was huge variation in edition sizes, with 5,000, 10,000 and even 20,000 copies of some island, London and New Zealand printings where comparatively large populations speaking a single language were be-

15. One interesting exception was at the Yarrabah mission (near Cairns) under Ernest Gribble (son of the founder), which for a time (1904-9) had a hand press and undertook printing of a local paper *The Aboriginal News* and other material (rules and regulations and a brief account of the Mission, a broadsheet for a concert), all done by four aboriginal men or boys of the mission (recorded only under their first names in the imprint). The paper, with its own masthead and colophon, was printed monthly in 400 copies and sent out widely. There are examples of the other occasional printing in the Ferguson papers. The printing of the Rules is very uneven, with a range of display fonts on the title page and type of various fonts and sizes in text, but nonetheless fascinating evidence of what seems to have been a remarkably rare mission venture in Australia.

16. D.G. Dance *Oceanic Scriptures: A Revision of the Oceanic Sections of the Darlow and Moule Historical Catalogue of Printed Bibles, with additions to 1962* (London, 1963).

ing provided for. The Melanesian Mission Press issued editions up to 4000 for its Mota hymnbooks and primers, and a few of the early Sydney publications were in editions of 3000 to 3500 (the 1833 Maori scripture selections and accompanying liturgy and hymns, the gospel of St. Mark in the language of Aneityum of 1857 and the Niué New Testament), but most editions produced in Australia and New Zealand and the Melanesian Mission press for the Melanesian mission fields were much smaller, between 300 and 1000 copies.

Many of these publications were less than 100 pages and most were plain and unpretentious in appearance. Title pages commonly appeared with an array of the printer's display fonts, and some island printers used (often rather inappropriately) small stocks of decorated letters and printer's ornaments, but the books were otherwise rarely illustrated, in spite of recognition by many missionaries that visual representation of the Bible stories would greatly aid understanding.[17] The island printers were conscious of their stylistic limitations, though Isom of the Melanesian Mission Press was proud of the work of his establishment, sent samples of his printing and binding to the trade journal *Wimble's Reminder* in 1922, and recorded that his 'head boy' Stephen Taharavin was a first class book binder.

As regards printing expenditures, the published accounts of the British and Foreign Bible Society show that the cost of printing a complete Bible in London could be more than £3000 for a large edition (as the Samoan Bible of 1860 in an edition of 10,000). More modest printings obviously cost less – £41 for 400 copies of the first Maori language translation of 1827, a 32 page octavo, £31 for Threlkeld's 1827 *Specimens of a Dialect of the Aborigines of New South Wales*, a 28 page quarto, in a small edition of 273 copies – but overall, from limited and scattered data, the unit costs seem to have remained remarkably consistent throughout the nineteenth century at around 2/- to 3/- for a substantial publication of 64 or more pages and less than 1/- for small primers and catechisms.[18] The missions' own presses, with low or no labour costs, could obviously print much more cheaply than commercial printers in Australia, England or elsewhere: the annual reports of the Melanesian Mission show printing expenditure from as low as £79

17. One exception seen is the 1864 prayer book published for the Fijian Catholic Mission, illustrated with woodcuts (unmodified for the Pacific) that were standard in Catholic religious publications printed in France: Johann Degotardi, who did the engraving, was unusual among Australian printers in being also a photographer and an early experimenter with photolithography.

18. By comparison, the initial estimate for 2000 copies of Howitt and Fison's *Kamilaroi and Kurnai* in 1879 by Mason and Firth was £225 – ie 2/3 a copy. The quote of George Robertson (who published it in 1880) was £138.15 for 1000 copies, which included £40 for the binding of 80 copies – ie 2/- a copy.

to almost £400 (exclusive of salaries) in the 1890s, its peak printing activity period of the nineteenth century. A major contributor to the funding of publications was the British and Foreign Bible Society, which not only subsidised the costs of commercial printing but also supplied paper to many mission printeries and occasionally supported the expenses of the translators in overseeing a work through publication. Occasionally missionary translators themselves contributed directly to the cost of printing, and in some areas, notably in the Cook Islands and New Hebrides, the contribution in local marketable produce like coconut oil, pigs, cotton or arrowroot was significant.

Reception

Later observers, especially linguists and anthropologists, have viewed the cultural impact of the missionary efforts and their related translation and publishing ventures critically, citing language corruption and loss of language diversity in addition to (or as part of) extensive cultural changes with the introduction of radically different material and spiritual value systems. Like the contemporary observations of the missionaries themselves on the impact of their labours, such criticism fails to take into account the variety and complexity of responses to these contacts or encounters. It tends to ignore the very significant role of the people themselves in the acculturation process as interpreters, translators, teachers, evangelists and printers, and the important agency of island pastors and teachers and of returned migrant labourers as ambassadors for both Christianity and English.

Nevertheless, it is true that from economic, strategic and sometimes political considerations, missions did deliberately limit the number of languages translated and printed, adopt a particular language or languages as the *lingua franca* of a Mission, or encouraged English (or French) or (reluctantly) accepted use of a pidgin language. Similarly it is clear that while missions played a vital role in encouraging literacy they saw secular education as only their secondary aim and concentrated their vernacular publishing efforts on liturgical books – scripture, catechisms, service books, hymn books, prayer books, Bible histories, sermons – with some basic readers/primers, geographies, arithmetic and spelling books as adjuncts to the missionary aim.[19]

19. The Anglican Mission in Papua in the 1940s had only four secular books in Wedau, which it had adopted as the Mission *lingua franca* (a geography book, a first reader, a reading book of stories and articles, and a book of fairy tales, mainly from the brothers Grimm), while the Methodist Mission had only some reading books and an illustrated quarterly magazine in its *lingua franca*, Dobu.

Thus although religion, basic literacy and stories were offered by the printing programs, people came to see that literacy in their own language commonly did not confer political or economic power or social status, and that these might only be achieved by adopting the language of the missions and colonisers. From an evangelical point of view the missions seemed ultimately to achieve their purpose – most Polynesians and many Melanesians ultimately adopted Christianity – and vernacular Bibles and hymn-books undoubtedly had and have a significant place in the lives of individuals and whole communities (though it should be noted that the text was often committed to memory). But there is much to suggest that the conversion process itself was as influenced by the language facility, oratory and personal example of individual missionaries and pastors as by the enormous investment in printing, and that the liturgical books were seen by those who received and seemed to desire them as the symbol or reward of conversion rather than the agency (in the New Hebrides conversions were commonly known as 'taking the Book'). In spite of the clear demand for books, William Ellis' hope, expressed soon after the establishment of the first press at Afareaitu in 1817, 'that the time is not far distant, when they will not only have standard works by native authors, but that their periodical literature will circulate widely, and spread knowledge and piety among all classes of the people',[20] would not be readily realised. And in the Pacific today, as in much of the world, language diversity, oral tradition, memory and traditional story-telling, poetry and songs are more at risk from television, video and films than from books.

20. *Polynesian Researches* p. 408.