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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Adoniram Judson's Burmese Bible: Dependency and Development

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Abstract

Adoniram Judson is widely perceived as the pioneer Bible translator in Burma. His translation of the entire Bible into Burmese, however, built upon three centuries of Roman Catholic missionary outreach. Catholic priests had arrived as chaplains for Portuguese immigrants to Burma in the early sixteenth century, but an indigenous Burmese Catholic church was established within a generation through intermarriage. Barnabite missionaries arrived in the early eighteenth century and engaged in a dynamic hundred years of missionary work. These Catholic missionaries developed key Christian terminology and discourse that Judson drew upon in his translation work. British Baptists were also in Burma for several years before Judson arrived and made their own contribution to Burmese Bible translation. An analysis of the Burmese translations of the Lord's Prayer by Barnabite missionary Giovanni Maria Percoto (1776), British Baptist James Chater (1812), and Judson (1817 and 1832) demonstrates how Judson both drew upon and developed the work of his predecessors in his immense project of translating the entire Bible into Burmese (1840). The Judson Bible, still the most widely used and highly esteemed version in modern-day Myanmar, is an intertextual production. Literary and oral texts, all shaped by their historical settings, intersected multiple other texts over a period of three hundred years before flowing into Judson's translation.

Keywords: Burmese; Bible; translation; Barnabite; Judson; missions

Adoniram Judson's Burmese Bible: Dependency and Development

Anyone visiting a Protestant Burmese language church service will almost certainly hear the Bible being read from Adoniram Judson's 1840 Burmese Bible. Although nearly two hundred years old, the Judson Bible is still the most widely used version amongst Christians in modern-day Myanmar, as well as in diaspora Christian communities. Moreover, for many Myanmar Christians, the Judson Bible is the only acceptable translation of the Scriptures.[1]

[1]Even though other Bible translations in Burmese exist, including the *Burmese Common Language Bible* (UBS, 2005); *The Holy Bible in Myanmar BFBS* (1927, revised by UBS 2012); *New Testament, Psalms, Proverbs and Deuterocanonical Books* (Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, 2012). Most Christian ethnic minorities have the Bible in their own languages but default to the Judson Bible if using a Burmese translation. See further William A. Smalley, "Language and Culture in the Development of Bible Society Translation Theory and Practice," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19, no. 3 (1995): 61–71.

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Adoniram and Ann Judson, even during their own lifetimes, were idealized and romanticized and became the subjects of hagiographic biographies.[2] In recent years, this has been balanced with more critical studies, including the work of Myanmar scholars.[3] A widespread misconception, however, still needs to be addressed. Analogous to the colonial doctrine of *terra nullius*, Judson is seen as the pioneer in establishing Christianity and translating the Bible in Burma. Allen Yeh, for example, writes, "Adoniram Judson came to Christian-less Burma in 1813, and a century later the country had over 100,000 believers."[4] While the Judsons' role in Burmese Christian history cannot be overstated, nevertheless, by the time they arrived in Burma in 1813, Roman Catholic mission had been active in the country for three hundred years and a small but firmly established Burmese-speaking Catholic community existed.[5] The Judsons were not even the first Baptist missionaries in Burma but stepped into a mission station in Rangoon that had already been established five years earlier by the British Baptists from Serampore, Felix Carey and James Chater. Although Judson was the first person to translate the entire Bible into Burmese, he was far from being the first to translate portions of scripture into the language. In an important article

[2]William H. Brackney, "The Legacy of Adoniram Judson," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 22, no. 3 (1998): 125–126. "During his own lifetime, Adoniram Judson became a mythic figure, but even more so in his death" (125).

[3]For example, Anna Sui Hluan, *Silence in Translation: 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 in Myanmar and the Development of a Critical Hermeneutic* (Carlisle: Langham Monographs, 2022); David Thang Moe, "Adoniram Judson: A Dialectical Missionary Who Brought the Gospel (not God) and Gave the Bible to the Burmese," *Missiology* 45, no. 3 (2017): 264–282; K. M. Y. Khawsiama, "Phayālogy: A Study of Adoniram Judson's Naming God as Phayā from a Christian-Buddhist View in Myanmar Context," *The Asia Journal of Theology* 28, no. 1 (2014):16–34; May May Latt, "The Open and Hidden Legacy of Adoniram and Ann Judson: A Burmese Christian Woman's Perspective," in *Expect Great Things, Attempt Great Things*, ed. C. C. Allen Yeh (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 84–92; Khoi Lam Thang, "'Eagle' in the Myanmar Bible," *The Bible Translator* 60, no. 4 (2009): 195–200; La Seng Dingrin, "The Conflicting Legacy of Adoniram Judson: Appropriating and Polemicizing Against Burmese Buddhism," *Missiology* 37, no. 4 (2009): 485–497; John de Jong, "An Analysis of Adoniram Judson's Translation of Zephaniah," *The Bible Translator* 68, no. 1 (2017): 64–87; Todd A. Scacewater, "Adoniram Judson's Understanding and Appropriation of Buddhism," *Churchman* 130, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 201–211; Laura Rodgers Levens, "Reading the Judsons: Recovering the Literary Works of Ann, Sarah, Emily, and Adoniram Judson for a New Baptist Mission History," *American Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 37–73; Bill Leonard, "'Wild and Romantic in the Extreme': Ann Hasseltine Judson, (Her Husband), and a Duty to Go to the 'Distant and Benighted Heathen'," *American Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 74–95; C. C. Allen Yeh, ed., *Expect Great Things, Attempt Great Things: William Carey and Adoniram Judson, Missionary Pioneers*, Studies in World Christianity (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2013); Molly Truman Marshall, "Extending the Judson Legacy: Conquest, Conversation, and Contextualization," *American Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2013); Graham B. Walker, "Building a Christian Zayat in the Shade of the Bo Tree," *American Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 96–103; Phyllis Rodgerson Pleasants, "Beyond translation: the work of the Judsons in Burma," *Baptist History and Heritage* 42, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 19–35; Brackney, "The Legacy of Adoniram Judson."

[4]Allen Yeh, "Adoniram Judson and Orlando Costas: American Baptist Missions over Two Centuries," in *Expect Great Things, Attempt Great Things: William Carey and Adoniram Judson, Missionary Pioneers*, ed. C.C. Allen Yeh (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 70.

[5]Barnabite missionary Sangermano, in Burma from 1783 to 1806, wrote of "about 2000 Christians, who are scattered up and down the [Burmese] Empire." Father Sangermano, *A Description of the Burmese Empire, Compiled Chiefly from the Native Documents by the Rev. Father Sangermano*, trans. William Tandy (Rome: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1833), 86. https://www.burmalibrary.org/docs4/A_Description_of_the_Burmese_Empire-Sangermano.pdf (accessed February 24, 2022).

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in 2009, La Seng Dingrin brought this to attention, demonstrating how the earlier Catholic missionaries had developed key biblical and Christian terminology that Judson drew upon to produce his translation.[6]

Yet this was not a simple cut-and-paste approach, as Judson produced translations that were markedly different than those of his Catholic predecessors. The theory of intertextuality, stemming from Julia Kristeva's study of Mikhail Bakhtin's work, is helpful in understanding how the earlier Burmese Catholic texts contributed to Judson's translation of the Bible.[7] Kristeva describes the writer of a text as first a reader of texts, including literary texts, historical texts, social and political texts, and the texts of the reader-writer's own experience. These texts are "rewritten" to produce a new text, with the prior texts retaining a presence through their "fragments," which have become part of the new text. In this way, Judson's Burmese Bible represents a "rewriting" of texts that he received from his predecessors. While Judson was the driving force behind the translation and the entire work itself is indelibly stamped with his own translation style, like any and every text, the Judson Bible is, in Kristeva's famous words, "the absorption and transformation" of other texts.[8]

One of the key insights of intertextuality is that written texts constitute only a fraction of the intertextual web. The catch-22 for historical work such as this, however, is that the written texts are all that remain, and for the early Catholic Burmese tradition there are very few of even these. This article will first explore the development of the Burmese Catholic tradition and envision the different kinds of texts that tradition produced, beginning as it did three hundred years before the Judsons arrived. Fragments of these texts would eventually flow into Judson's translation. I will then analyze five extant early Burmese biblical texts that demonstrate the intertextual process that resulted in Adoniram Judson's Burmese Bible. These are Giovanni Maria Percoto's 1776 *Compendium Doctrinae Christianae Idiomate Barmano Sive Bomano*, James Chater's 1812 Gospel of Matthew, and Adoniram Judson's 1817, 1832, and 1840 translations of the Gospel of Matthew. Judson's 1817 Matthew was his first attempt at Bible translation, while his much-revised 1832 translation of Matthew was almost the same as the final 1840 edition, with some important exceptions.[9] A detailed examination of these written texts reveals Judson's developing expertise and changing relationship with his predecessors' texts over the extended period of his translation project.

I. Early Translations of Scripture and Christian Terminology into Burmese

The Burmese Roman Catholic Tradition

When Adoniram and Ann Judson arrived in Burma in 1813, Roman Catholic priests had already been active in the nation for three hundred years.[10] The early Portuguese

[6]La Seng Dingrin, "Is Buddhism Indispensible in the Cross-Cultural Appropriation of Christianity in Burma?," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 29 (2009): 3–22.

[7]Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 64–91.

[8]Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," 66.

[9]For an overview of Judson's Bible translation project, see John de Jong, "A Nineteenth Century New England Exegete Abroad: Adoniram Judson and the Burmese Bible," *Harvard Theological Review* 112, no. 3 (2019): 319–339.

[10]Aung Myo Tun, "Arrival of Early Catholic Chaplains in Myanmar before Nyaungyan Period," *University of Mandalay, Research Journal* 11 (2020), https://meral.edu.mm/records/5598?community=um (accessed February 15, 2022); Me Me Shwe, "History of Founding Roman Catholicism in Myanmar,"

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Catholic priests were chaplains rather than missionaries, but through intermarriage of Portuguese merchants and mercenaries with local women an indigenous Catholic church became established in the sixteenth century.[11] In 1721, Pope Clement XI sent Barnabite priest Sigismondo Maria Calchi of Milan, assisted by a secular priest named Vittoni, as missionaries to Ava and Pegu.[12] This was the beginning of a dynamic century of Barnabite missionary activity in Burma, a period in which Christian concepts, vocabulary, and phraseology would be developed in Burmese. Rather than undertaking a full Bible translation, the Barnabite missionaries translated portions of scripture and wrote prayers and catechisms in both Burmese and Mon languages, as well as compiling dictionaries and grammars. One of these Barnabite missionaries was Paul Marie Nerini, who arrived in Burma in 1743 and, entangled in the internecine conflict of the times, was beheaded as a Mon sympathizer by the Burmese in 1756.[13] Nerini gives an insight into the developing indigenous Catholic tradition, writing of the young men he was training: "Some copy our Scriptures in the Burmese language, others in the Peguan [Mon] language. The younger ones teach prayers to the catechumens and the elder ones teach the mysteries of our religion. All help me as interpreters, language teachers, singers, etc."[14] Nerini is describing the production of different kinds of Christian texts, fragments of which would flow into later Burmese Catholic writings and eventually into Judson's Burmese Bible.

Of the writings Vivian Ba traces to the early Barnabite missionaries, the following are relevant for our purpose of tracing a developing Catholic tradition in Burma (see Table 1).[15]

These eighteenth-century works were not written in a vacuum: they themselves would have drawn upon the Burmese and Mon Catholic discourse that had already developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The most brilliant of the Barnabite missionaries, Giovanni Maria Percoto of Venice, built upon this well-established Burmese Catholic tradition. Percoto arrived in Burma in 1761 and remained there until his death in 1776, at the age of forty-seven. He became bishop of Ava and Pegu in 1768 and was granted permission by the king to build a seminary in Monhla.[16] Percoto was renowned for his ability in both Pali, the language of the Buddhist Scriptures, and Burmese, and he was prodigious in his literary output. According to Ba, Perocoto translated Buddhist texts, some into Latin and some into

University of Mandalay, Research Journal 11 (2020), https://meral.edu.mm/record/5603/files/History%20of%20Founding%20Roman%20Catholicism%20in%20Myanmar.pdf (accessed February 15, 2022).

[11]Vivian Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma* (Rangoon: Guardian, 1964), 2. I thank the staff at Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (MEGST) for access to Ba's rare book.

[12]Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma*, 3. In this period, there was no such political entity as "Burma." The kingdom of the ethnic Burmese/Bama, known as Ava, was based in what is now called "Upper Burma," where the famous city of Mandalay is found. The southern areas of Burma were known as Pegu, the domain of the Mon ethnic group. In the period under review, these two kingdoms were rivals; and the Burmese eventually dominated the Mons, the region thus becoming known as "Burma," modern-day Myanmar ("Myanmar" is the original and correct pronunciation). Numerous other ethnic groups lived, and continue to live, in the wider region, namely the Rakhine, Karen, Kayah, Shan, Kachin, and Chin.

[13]Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma*, 6.

[14]Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma*, 5.

[15]Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma*, 3–7. All of these works were handwritten manuscripts that no longer exist.

[16]Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma*, 9. It is now unclear where Monhla was.

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Table 1. Burmese Writings of Eighteenth-Century Barnabite Missionaries

Missionary	Period in Burma	Written works (not printed)
Sigismondo Maria Calchi	1721–1728	Burmese dictionary
John del Conte	1743–1745	Burmese dictionary; Burmese Daily Prayers; Burmese Catechism
Alexander Mondelli	1743–1745	Burmese dictionary
Paul Marie Nerini	1743–1756	Burmese and Mon grammars and dictionaries; Burmese Prayer Book; Burmese Catechism; smaller spiritual treatises in Burmese
Pio Gallizia	1760–1763	Burmese Catechism

Italian, and with John of Yedena, a Burmese Christian, co-authored *A Dialogue Between a Phongyi and a Christian*.[17] John of Yedana deserves further mention for his contribution to the Catholic translation of Scripture and Christian concepts into Burmese. He was a prominent Burmese citizen of high standing, respected by the aristocracy and common people alike. Ba writes that he gave the missionaries "moral and literary help and encouragement in their studies and translations."[18] John was particularly close to Percoto, checking and editing his Burmese writing in preparation for publication.[19]

In the area of linguistics and language, Percoto wrote a Burmese Grammar and a Burmese-Latin-Portuguese dictionary and supplied the manuscript for a book on the Burmese alphabet, which was published in Rome in 1776. Percoto was also prolific in translating into Burmese. For liturgical and catechetical use, he wrote a compendium (an abridged catechism), a catechism, prayers of the missal, prayers in Burmese, and an explanation of the Commandments. Of scripture, including the deutero-canonical books, he translated Genesis, Tobit, the Gospel of Matthew—then, all the Gospels and all the New Testament epistles.[20]

The specific mention of the Gospel of Matthew is of particular interest, as Judson describes providentially coming across a translation of Matthew by a Catholic priest as he was undertaking his own translation of the same gospel in 1817:

> In regard to translating, I proceed with fear and trembling. I feel that I am not yet sufficiently versed in the language; and indeed should hardly have ventured to make the attempt at present with a view to publishing, had I not, by mere accident, discovered a copy of a translation of Matthew, on palm-leaf, by a Roman Catholic Padre. This affords me great assistance.[21]

The translation of Matthew was either by Percoto himself or perhaps by one his successors. Yet even if by one of Percoto's successors, it would almost certainly have been

[17]*Phongyi* [pronounced *pone-ji*] is the Burmese word for Buddhist monk.

[18]Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma*, 10.

[19]Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma*, 10.

[20]Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma*, 8–9.

[21]Adoniram Judson, "Letter from the Rev. Adoniram Judson, American Baptist Missionary in Burmah, to a Minister in London. Rangoon, March 30, 1817," *The Baptist Magazine* 10 (1818): 74–75, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129165&view=1up&seq=9&skin=2021 (accessed February 2, 2022).

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based upon Percoto's earlier translation, shown by the similarities between Judson's and Percoto's translations of the Lord's Prayer (see below). Judson's comments show his high regard for the Catholic translation and its impact on his own translation.

Percoto's Compendium *(1776)*

The *Compendium of Christian Doctrine* written by Percoto was published in 1776 in Rome (see Figure 1).[22] In terms of scripture, the *Compendium* contains the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. The *Compendium* also contains the Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed, the Five Precepts of the Church, and teachings about the sacraments and other Catholic doctrine. Although actual translation of Bible passages constitutes only a small part of the *Compendium*, Percoto, himself drawing on a Burmese Catholic tradition of more than two centuries, did important work in developing key Christian terms in Burmese.[23] More than this, Percoto's writing represents not only specific words that Judson would use, but also more general expressions and language style in the translation of biblical concepts into Burmese that would find their way into the Judson Bible.

Percoto, as his translation of the Lord's Prayer demonstrates, was a master of the Burmese language. According to Ba, Percoto spoke and wrote like a native Burmese and was recognized by Burmese scholars as an authority on Pali, the language of the Buddhist Scriptures.[24] Percoto's handwritten manuscript for the Compendium, along with other works, was entrusted to his colleague, Father Melchior Carpani, for publishing in Rome. Carpani left Burma in early 1774 and arrived in Rome in December 1776.[25] The numerous spelling and type-setting mistakes in the *Compendium* may reflect, in part as least, Carpani's lack of expertise in Burmese. Sometimes these mistakes are minor, such as in the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us today our daily bread," where အလါ (*a-la*) is written instead of အလို (*a-lo* "need"). But in other cases, the mistakes are more serious, such as the ninth commandment (in the Catholic tradition) where the negating particle မ (m^e) is omitted, and the reader is apparently commanded to commit adultery.[26] These mistakes are presumably the result of inadequate proofing by Carpani. Spelling mistakes, however, are to be distinguished from the era of non-standardized spelling in which Percoto wrote. For example, throughout the *Compendium*, "all" is spelt အားလုံးစုံ (*ar-lone-sone*), which is different than today's spelling of အလုံးစုံ (^{a}*-lone-sone*). Another example is the consistent spelling of ချင် (*chin* [low tone]), the particle that changes verbs into nouns, instead of ခြင်း (*chin* [high tone]), as it is spelt today. At the time Percoto was writing, Burmese orthography was less standardized than today, so these are not to be considered mistakes.

[22]Giovanni Maria Percoto, *Compendium Doctrinae Christianae Idiomate Barmano Sive Bomano*, (Rome: 1776), held at Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Bavarian State Library, https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/search?query=metadata%3Absb10397806. My thanks to Digitale.Bibliothek[at]bsb-muenchen.de. for providing me with high resolution images of the entire *Compendium* in June 2017.

[23]See Dingrin, "Is Buddhism Indispensible?" 7–8.

[24]Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma*, 7–8.

[25]Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma*, 10. See also Gracie Lee, "Early Printing in Myanmar and Thailand," *Biblioasia* 17, no. 5 (2020), https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/vol-16/issue-2/jul-sep-2020/earlyprinting, who has slightly different dates for Carpani's departure and arrival.

[26]Percoto, *Compendium*, 8. ၉ သူတပါး၏မယားကို နှစ်သက်တပ်စွန်းခြင်းကိုပြုလင့်။ Burmese negates verbs in a similar manner to the French "ne-VERB-pas," here မ-VERB-လင့်. Although the final လင့် is present, it is the မ that primarily signals negation in Burmese.

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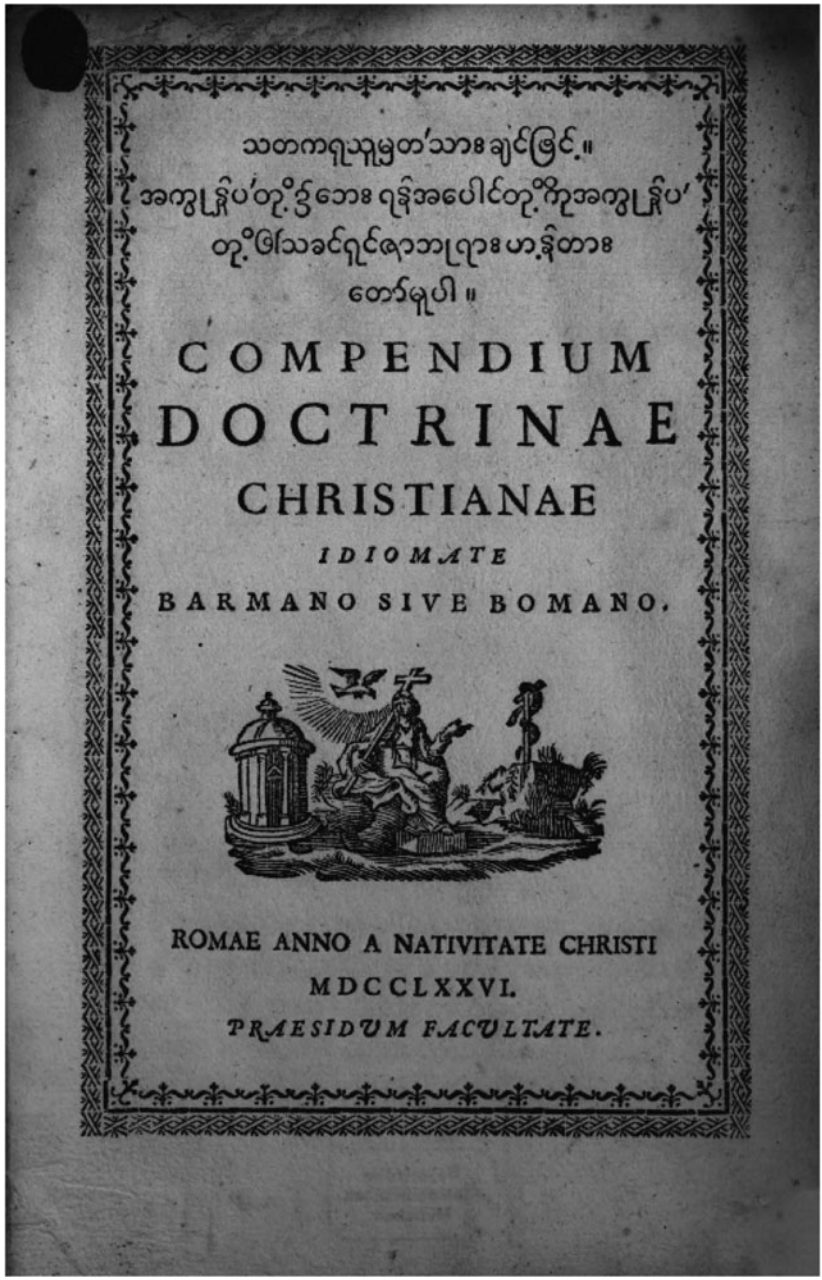


Figure 1. Percoto's Compendium of Christian Doctrine

The Book of Scripture Extracts

One Burmese Catholic text that we can be certain Judson made use of was the *Book of Scripture Extracts*. This volume came to Judson through his Baptist missionary

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predecessors, Felix Carey and James Chater (see below). Their contact with the Burmese Catholic tradition may have been facilitated through Carey's Burmese wife, whose Catholic heritage was evidently a delicate matter for the British Baptists. In mid-1809, Carey and Chater wrote, "We lately met with a book of scripture extracts which we find very useful. It was translated by an Italian missionary who resides at Ava, and has been in the country five and twenty years."[27] This fits the description of the Barnabite missionary priest, Giuseppe d'Amato, who was in Burma from 1784 until his death in 1832, and is remembered for Bible translation into Burmese.[28] Chater and Carey themselves prepared a publication of scripture portions based upon d'Amato's work: "At present we are preparing a pamphlet for printing, which will be taken chiefly from the Scripture-extracts just mentioned."[29] Chater mentions it being printed two years later: "We have printed two pamphlets in Burmese. One 20 pages of extracts from the New Testament, and the other 136 pages from the New and Old Testament."[30] Here then we see the Burmese Catholic tradition flowing into the scripture translation of the British Baptist missionaries, and subsequently into Judson's translation as he, in turn, received this text.

Judson referred to *Scripture Extracts* at the very outset of his own translation work, writing in January 1816,

> I am now beginning to translate a little. I am extremely anxious to get some parts of scripture into an intelligible state, fit to be read to Burmans that I meet with. I have nothing yet that I can venture to use. The Portuguese missionaries have left a version of some extracts of Scripture, not very badly executed, in regard to language, but full of Romish errors. This, however, will afford me some assistance.[31]

Judson's complaint about "Romish errors," from his strict Calvinist perspective, would be easily understood had Judson been referring to Percoto's *Compendium*, a largely doctrinal work containing little Scripture translation. Exactly what Judson meant with regard to a work composed only of Scripture translation is less clear. It likely refers to a much freer style of translation, bordering on the paraphrastic, that the Catholics employed in their translation. This translation style differed from Judson's Protestant commitment to maintaining the form of the biblical text as much as possible in the translation. The key comment, however, is Judson's assessment that the work was "not very badly executed, in regard to language." Begrudging as it may sound, this is high praise from the taciturn Judson, who would take that "language" and reuse it even as he produced a different style of translation.

[27]James Chater, "Letter from Mr. Chater and Mr. Felix Carey, Rangoon, July 31st, 1809," *The Baptist Magazine* 2 (1810): 584–586.

[28]Shwe, "History of Founding Roman Catholicism in Myanmar." 283. Ba, *The Early Catholic Missionaries in Burma*. 16

[29]Chater, "Letter from Mr. Chater and Mr. Felix Carey, Rangoon, July 31st, 1809."

[30]James Chater, "Letter from Mr. Chater, Missionary to the Burman Empire to Mr. I------ of London. Prince of Wales' Island, 4th July, 1811," *The Baptist Magazine* 4 (1812): 225–26, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129108&view=1up&seq=245&skin=2021 (accessed February 21, 2022).

[31]Adoniram Judson, "Letter from Mr. Judson to Mr. Ward. Rangoon, Jan. 18, 1816," *The American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer: New Series* 1 (1817): 28–29, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015039721751 (accessed February 21, 2022).

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British Baptists

The British Baptist mission in Serampore established a mission post in Rangoon in 1808, sending Felix Carey, eldest son of William Carey, and James Chater to live there.[32] The major focus of the mission was to translate the Bible into Burmese, and both Carey and Chater threw themselves into language learning. Carey's wife Margaret died while giving birth in Serampore in 1808 after Carey had moved to Rangoon. Carey remarried a Burmese woman of Portuguese descent, and by 1813 was working for the Burmese king in Ava, for whom, among other things, he was administering smallpox vaccinations.[33] Carey's life continued to be marked by misfortune and heartbreak. In August 1814, his Burmese wife and their children perished when the boat that was carrying them from Rangoon to Ava, to continue in the king's service, capsized. In 1815, Carey's deputation as an ambassador for the Burmese king was rejected by the British government in Calcutta. [34] Not daring to face the king after this failure, Carey "fled to the frontier regions between Burma and Assam."[35] In late 1818, he returned to Serampore where he helped prepare Bengali textbooks for the newly opened Serampore College, and even helped American Baptists heading for Rangoon to learn Burmese, before dying in 1822, at the age of thirty-seven.[36] Brilliant, mercurial, and tragic are all apt descriptions of Felix Carey.

James Chater, on the other hand, represents a rather more stolid and industrious figure. After arriving in in Rangoon, he raised funds, acquired land, and built a house for the mission.[37] Tragedy also struck the Chaters when their daughter, born in Rangoon in May 1810, died there in January 1811.[38] By this stage, Chater had apparently finished his translation of the Gospel of Matthew, and later in 1811, according to William Carey, Chater decided to leave Rangoon for the sake of health and security of his family.[39] The Chaters moved to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) where, under the protection of the British government, he was involved in church planting, Bible translation, and establishing schools. James Chater leaves the impression of a task-focused personality given to completing projects.

[32]D.G.E. Hall, "Felix Carey," *The Journal of Religion* 12, no. 4 (1932): 473–492 (477).

[33]Ann Judson, "Interesting Letter from Mrs. Judson. Rangoon, April 23, 1814," *The Baptist Magazine* 8 (1816): 35–37 (35), https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129140&view=1up&seq=50&skin=2021 (accessed February 18, 2022) .

Ann writes, "It is now almost a year since he [Carey] was first ordered up to Ava, which time has been wholly occupied in the king's business." For the smallpox vaccinations, see Hall, "Felix Carey," 481.

[34]Hall, "Felix Carey," 483–491.

[35]Hall, "Felix Carey," 491.

[36]James Colman, "Extract of a Letter from Mr. Colman, to One of the Editors. Serampore, June 25, 1818," *American Baptist Magazine* 2 (1819): 54–56 (54). https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015039721769&view=1up&seq=62&skin=2021 (accessed Janurary 24, 2022). "Mr. Felix Carey has lately arrived at Serampore, and has generously offered to instruct us in the Burman language until an opportunity offers for our conveyance to Rangoon." See also Hall, "Felix Carey," 492.

[37]James Chater, "Letter from Mr. Chater to the brethren at Serampore. Rangoon, Sep. 29, 1808," *The Baptist Magazine* 1 (1809): 504–505, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129074&view=1up&seq=519&skin=2021 (accessed January 26, 2022).

[38]Chater, "Letter from Mr. Chater, Missionary to the Burman Empire to Mr. I------ of London. Prince of Wales' Island, 4th July, 1811," 225.

[39]William Carey, "Missions in India. Review of the Mission at the Close of the Year 1811: The Burman Mission" *Panoplist and Missionary Magazine* 10 (1814): 40–41, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433068275191&view=1up&seq=61&skin=2021 (accessed March 1, 2022).

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The British Baptists sent one other missionary to Rangoon, Jonathan Brain. Brain arrived there in March 1810 but became sick and died in July the same year. American Baptists Adoniram and Ann Judson arrived in Rangoon in 1813, via Serampore, and with no personnel to continue the British Baptist mission in Burma, it was officially handed over to the American Baptists in 1816. The "Serampore Trio" of William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward, wrote to the US Baptist Board of Missions:

> The attempts of our Society in this empire, have ended in the transfer of the mission to brother Judson, and those from you who may join him; brother Felix Carey, our last missionary at Rangoon, having gone into the service of his Burman majesty. Something, however, has been done. A Mission-house has been built; the language has been opened; a grammar printed; materials for a dictionary formed; a small part of the New Testament printed, and a number of copies put into the hands of the natives.[40]

The "grammar printed" refers to the Burmese grammar Felix Carey published in 1814, and the "materials for a dictionary" were apparently brought together and published in 1826, after Felix's death.[41] Ann Judson mentions the manuscripts for the dictionary and grammar as being a great help to her and Adoniram in their first year in Rangoon.[42] The mention in the letter of "a small part of the New Testament," however, is vague and represents the uncertainty about what was being translated, and by whom, at the British Baptist mission in Rangoon. Letters from 1808 and 1809 show Chater and Carey applying themselves to studying Burmese. Chater found it hard going, writing of his study, "There are some sentences, all the words of which I understand, but can gather no idea from them."[43] Carey, already multilingual, found progress easier: "I do not wish to flatter myself, nor to boast; but I think I am now in a fair way of acquiring the language. I can understand my teacher, and get on with his assistance. I spend the whole day in reading, writing, or talking Burman."[44] Only a year earlier he could not understand any Burmese.[45] By early 1810, they had decided that Chater would translate Matthew and Carey would translate Mark.[46]

An American report on the British mission in Rangoon states on October 4, 1811, "Matthew and Mark translated," but this is almost certainly the result of faulty

[40]Joshua Marshman William Carey, William Ward, "Interesting Letter from Messrs. Carey, Marshman and Ward, to the U.S. Baptist Board of Missions, dated Serampore, June 25, 1816," *American Baptist Magazine* 1 (1817): 185–186, 189 (186), https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015039721751&view=1up&seq=188&skin=2021 (accessed March 3, 2022).

[41]Hall, "Felix Carey," 473.

[42]Ann Judson, "Interesting Letter from Mrs Judson," 35.

[43]Chater, "Letter from Mr. Chater to the brethren at Serampore," 504.

[44]Felix Carey, "Letter from Mr. Felix Carey to Mr. Ward; dated Rangoon, March 6, 1809," *The Baptist Magazine* 1 (1809): 584, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129074&view=1up&seq=519&skin=2021 (accessed January 17, 2022).

[45]Felix Carey, "Extracts of a letter from Mr. F. Carey to his brother William, dated Jan. 28, 1808," *The Baptist Magazine* 1 (1809): 250–251, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129074&view=1up&seq=267&skin=2021 (accessed January 26, 2022).

[46]James Chater, "Extract of a Letter from Mr. Chater to Mr.____ of London. Rangoon March 14th, 1810," *The Baptist Magazine* 3 (1811): 171–172, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129090&view=1up&seq=194&skin=2021 (accessed January 18, 2022).

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communication.[47] In a report to the end of 1811, Felix's father William Carey wrote, "He [Felix] has revised the Gospel by St. Matthew and prepared it for the press, and has by this time finished Mark, and probably another of the Gospels."[48] The vagueness surrounding the project is further exemplified by a note in the 1813 British *Baptist Magazine*, "The progress of this mission is at present confined to the translation of the scriptures. Mr. F. Carey had taken one or two of the Gospels with him to Serampore, purposing to have them printed, and to return with them, after having taken the advice of his brethren."[49] Yet nothing more is ever heard of Carey's translation of Mark. Judson never mentions it when he discusses the various resources at his disposal, so it appears Carey never completed the translation; nor is it clear how far he got.

Yet Chater, the less gifted but more stable of the two, did complete his translation of Matthew. Was this a case of the proverbial tortoise and the hare? In part, no doubt, but in this situation the tortoise was given a sizeable head start. A report on the translation of scripture in Asia reveals that translation of Matthew had almost been completed before Chater had even moved to Rangoon: "May 19, 1807. Nineteen chapters of Matthew translated by the native teacher,—types had been begun since the commencement of the year."[50] Who was this unnamed "native teacher"? Had he (presumably not "she" in this time and place) had any contact with the Burmese Catholic tradition before becoming a translator in Serampore? Analysis of "Chater's" translation of Matthew indicates that this was not the case and therefore constitutes yet another stream, different than the Catholic tradition, that would flow into the Judson Bible. The influence of this "native teacher" is even greater if he was also the nameless "Burman pundit" who supervised the creation of the Burmese printing types: "Under the direction of our Burman pundit we have cut a neat fount of Burman types; so that every thing is ready for printing as soon as our brethren feel warranted to send any part of the scriptures for the press."[51] These types would be used to print Chater's 1812 and lightly revised 1815 Gospel of Matthew, and Judson's 1817 Gospel of Matthew, as well as Ann Judson's catechism and Adoniram's tract.

In addition to the unnamed Burmese translator in Serampore, Chater also mentions his Armenian friend, Mr Babasheen, as being a significant help in his Burmese translation work,[52] and his Burmese teacher in Rangoon, a Buddhist scholar named Gownmeng.[53]

[47]"Translations of Scripture: XVI. Burman," *The Panoplist and Missionary Magazine* 5 (1813): 296–297, https://archive.org/details/panoplistandmis01unkngoog/page/n318/mode/2up (accessed April 5, 2022).

[48]Carey, "Missions in India," 40-41.

[49]"Religious Intelligence: Rangoon in Burmah," *The Baptist Magazine* 5 (1813): 349, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129116&view=1up&seq=419&skin=2021 (accessed March 23, 2022).

[50]"Translations of Scripture: XVI. Burman," 297.

[51]"Extracts from a Memoir of the State of the Translations, in a Letter to the Society: Relative to the Burman," *The Baptist Magazine* 2 (1810): 621, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129082&view=1up&seq=524&skin=2021 (accessed January 26, 2022).

[52]James Chater and Felix Carey, "Extract of a Letter from Brethren Chater and F. Carey at RANGOON," *The Baptist Magazine* 1 (1809): 338, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129074&view=1up&seq=11&skin=2021 (accessed January 13, 2022).

[53]"Religious Intelligence. Baptist Mission. Rangoon," *The Baptist Magazine* 1 (1809): 503–504, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129074&view=1up&seq=11&skin=2021 (accessed March 14, 2022).

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Chater's Gospel of Matthew (1812)

James Chater's translation of Matthew, much of the initial draft apparently done by the unnamed native teacher in Serampore, and likely revised and edited by Felix Carey, was published in Serampore in 1812 (see Figure 2).[54]

It was reprinted in 1815 at Serampore, with a light revision consisting only of some spelling corrections, which were inconsistently done, and slight formatting changes.[55] It is possible that Chater's 1812 translation of Matthew was first brought to Burma by Felix Carey in April 1814, as he was transiting via Rangoon to Ava to continue in the king's service. In the wake of Carey's tragic boat accident, the British *Baptist Magazine* reported, "His Burman Dictionary, which, it was supposed, was lost in the ship with his wife and children, has been providentially recovered; and the translation of the New Testament was left with Mr. Judson."[56] This "translation of the New Testament" must have been Chater's translation of Matthew.

It appears that Judson also had a previous iteration of Chater's 1812 publication of Matthew, as he wrote, "I derive some help, also, from a manuscript of Matthew, left here by Mr. Chater, which, with some revision by another hand, has been printed at Serampore."[57] It is likely the "revision by another hand" was Felix Carey, according to his father's report (see above). Revision notwithstanding, Judson had a low opinion of Chater's translation. He expressed this by omission, writing at the beginning of 1816, "I have nothing yet that I can venture to use," even though he had had Chater's translation for several years.[58] A year later, he explicitly stated, "[Chater's translation of Matthew] is quite unintelligible to Burmans, unless they are furnished with some previous ideas, which may serve as a key to open the meaning to their apprehension."[59]

Chater's translation of Matthew, as Judson's assessment indicates, was a typical product of the Serampore/William Carey Bible translation project. These translations were characterized by a commitment to translate as quickly as possible in order to get the Bible into the hands of the target language group. This was based on what could be described as an instrumental view of the Bible—namely, that by itself the Bible in the hands of local people would effect great spiritual and social change.[60]

[54]My thanks to Rare Books and Special Collections Librarian Dr Eric Johnson-DeBaufre of the Watkinson Library, Trinity College, Hartford, CT, for providing me with a digitized copy of their partial volume of Chater's 1812 Gospel of Matthew in Burmese, which consists of Matthew chapters 1–9.

[55]My thanks to Shelly Buring and Dalton Alves of the GWU Gelman Library's Special Collections Reference, for their assistance and providing me with a digitized copy of their volume of Chater's 1815 Gospel of Matthew in Burmese.

[56]"Missionary Retrospect and Foreign Intelligence: Baptist Mission," *The Baptist Magazine* 7 (1815): 519, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433069129132&view=1up&seq=4&skin=2021 (accessed February 22, 2022).

[57]Judson, "Letter from the Rev. Adoniram Judson, American Baptist Missionary in Burmah, to a Minister in London."

[58]Judson, "Letter from Mr. Judson to Mr. Ward. Rangoon, Jan. 18, 1816."

[59]Judson, "Letter from the Rev. Adoniram Judson, American Baptist Missionary in Burmah, to a Minister in London."

[60]E. D. Potts, *British Baptists in India: The History of Serampore and its Missions* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 79.

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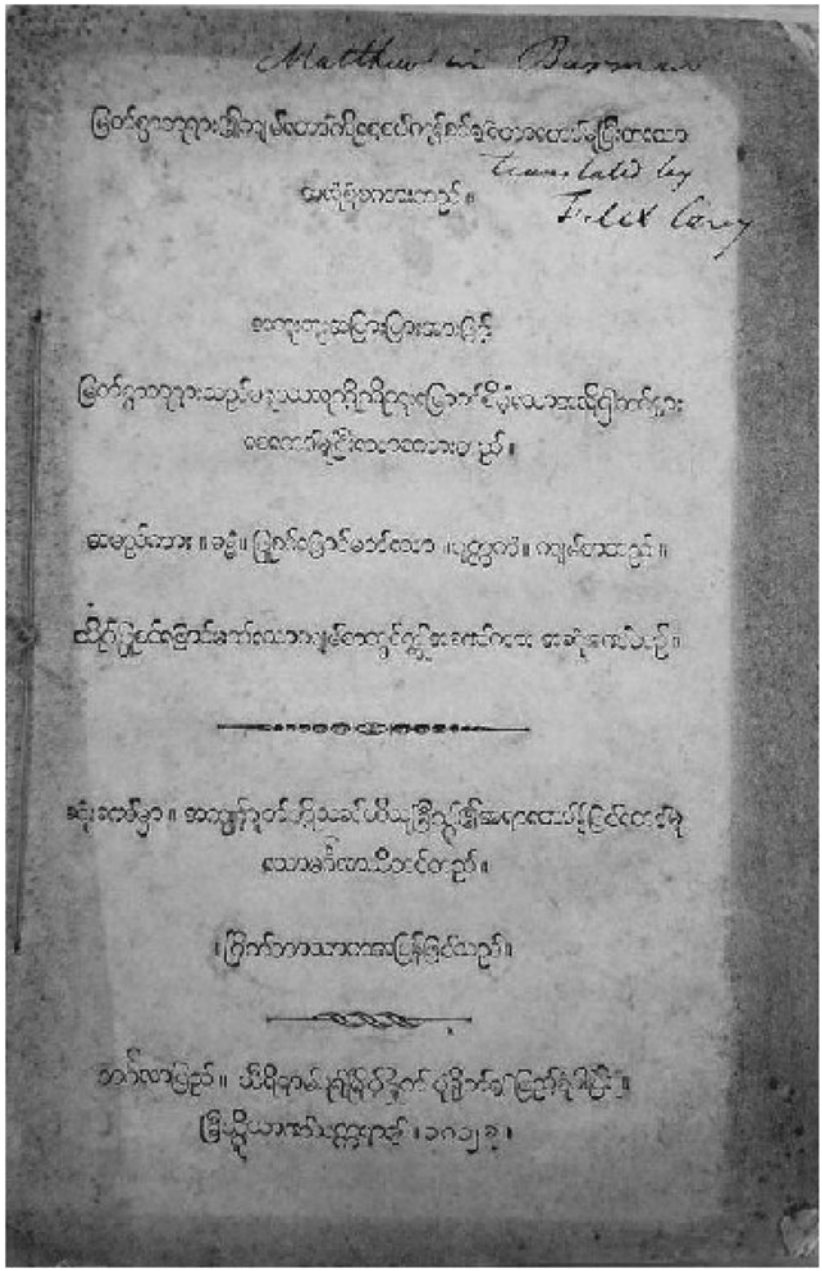


Figure 2. James Chater's 1812 Gospel of Matthew (inscription wrongly attributes to Felix Carey)

As with Chater's translation, unnamed native speakers did much of the Serampore translation work, but the British missionaries, who lacked expertise in the target language, made the final translation decisions. The hurried approach to translation underestimated the depth of expertise required in the language and resulted in Bible

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translations that were badly done and difficult to understand.[61] Nevertheless, in spite of his dismissal of Chater's translation, Judson made use of it to a considerable degree in his own first attempt at translating the scriptures, also the Gospel of Matthew.[62]

American Baptists

Adoniram and Ann Judson arrived in Rangoon in July 1813 and were hosted by Felix Carey's Burmese wife, Felix being at the royal court in Ava.[63] The Judsons were joined in October 1816 by printer George Hough and his wife Phebe. Hough had sent the printing press and Burmese types, gifted by the Serampore mission, ahead of him, the press arriving in Rangoon by August 1816.[64] Although Judson complained about the "types being in a miserable state, some new, and some worn flat, which we cannot account for, as so little work has been done with them at Serampore,"[65] he and Hough used the press to great effect and would have a fruitful relationship publishing Burmese translations of Scripture and other Christian literature.

Burmese Writings and Bible Translation by Adoniram and Ann

Before Adoniram translated any Scripture, he wrote a tract in Burmese and Ann wrote a catechism for children in Burmese. Although Ann mentions sending her catechism to their New England homebase, an English translation was never published in the *American Baptist Magazine*.[66] Adoniram evidently had greater appreciation for Ann's catechism, as in early 1817 he printed one thousand copies of his tract but three thousand copies of Ann's catechism.[67] Ann translated her catechism into Siamese in 1819 for immigrants living in Rangoon, making her the first Protestant to translate Scripture into that language.[68] According to Laura Rodgers Levens, Ann's catechism continued to be used by Adoniram and other missionaries after her death. It was translated into other languages of modern-day Myanmar, such as Mon and Shan, and was widely used as late as the 1880s, but no English translation is known to exist.[69] Ann also

[61]Potts, "British Baptists in India," 79–91; H. L. Richard, "Some Observations on William Carey's Bible Translations," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 42, no. 3 (2018): 241–250.

[62]See further John de Jong, "'I Have Nothing Yet That I Can Venture to Use': Adoniram Judson' Rejection of James Chater's Gospel of Matthew in Burmese," *The Bible Translator* 74, no. 2 (2023): 284–298.

[63]Francis Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev Adoniram Judson*, vol. 1 (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, 1853), 121, https://archive.org/details/amemoirlifeandl03waylgoog/page/120/mode/2up (accessed February 8, 2022).

[64]Adoniram Judson, "Extract of a letter from Rev. Mr. Judson, to Dr Staughton, dated Rangoon, August 3, 1816," *The American Baptist Magazine* 1 (1817): 180–181, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015039721751&view=1up&seq=185&skin=2021 (accessed January 10, 2022).

[65]Judson, "Letter from the Rev. Adoniram Judson, American Baptist Missionary in Burmah, to a Minister in London."

[66]Ann Judson, "Extract of a Letter from Mrs. Judson, dated Rangoon, Aug. 20, 1817," *American Baptist Magazine* 1 (1817): 410–412, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015039721751&view=1up&seq=414&skin=2021 (accessed January 20, 2022).

[67]Adoniram Judson, "Letter from Mr. Judson to the Corresponding Secretary of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions. Rangoon, March 7, 1817," *American Baptist Magazine* 1 (1817): 329–31, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433068272016&view=1up&seq=339 (accessed January 18, 2022).

[68]Dana L. Robert, "The Mother of Modern Missions," *Christian History and Biography* 90 (2006): 24.

[69]Levens, "Reading the Judsons," 46.

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translated Jonah and Daniel for Adoniram, representing yet another stream flowing into the "[Adoniram] Judson Bible."[70]

An English translation of Adoniram's 1816 tract, however, was published; and even in English translation, key biblical/Christian terms carried over from Percoto and the Burmese Catholic tradition can be discerned.[71] These include terms such as God the Father; God the Son; [God's] glory, power, wisdom; heaven; command of God; sin; hell; the glad news.[72] The writing of this tract was part of Judson's preparation for translating the scriptures themselves.

Judson's first published translation of scripture into Burmese, the Gospel of Matthew, was printed in 1817 at Rangoon.[73] Remarkably, Judson and the missionary printer Hough published the gospel in the form of a palm leaf inscription (see Figure 3).

Palm leaf was the traditional material used for writing religious texts in Burma, and Judson imitated the format to conform with what a religious text would be expected to look like.[74] Judson published his Burmese translation of the whole New Testament in 1832 at Mawlamyine, in book form.[75] Yet there were many iterations in between these two printings. For example, in 1821 Judson wrote, "March 12th—Have had nothing to notice lately, except the progress of the translation. During a few months past, I have finished Matthew (a new translation)."[76] This was Judson's typical *modus operandi*: to translate a portion of Scripture into Burmese and then revise it in an ongoing manner. Judson published the entire Bible in Burmese in 1840, also in Mawlamyine, and it is this translation that remains the most widely used Bible in Burma. The 1817 translation of Matthew was greatly revised in the 1832 edition, but the 1832 is more or less the same as the final 1840 edition, apart from Judson changing Greek texts (see below).

The Importance of Pali

The early Bible translators considered Pali, the language of the Buddhist Scriptures, essential to communicate Christian theological concepts in Burmese. Ann Judson

[70]Robert, "The Mother of Modern Missions," 24; Ann Judson, "Extract of a Letter from Mrs. Judson to Friend in this Country. Rangoon, Feb. 10, 1818," *The American Baptist Magazine* 2 (1819): 14–15, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015039721769 (accessed January 18, 2022).

[71]Adoniram Judson, "Mr. Judson's Tract," *The American Baptist Magazine* 1 (1817): 403–406, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015039721751&view=1up&seq=7&skin=2021 (accessed February 9, 2022).

[72]For more detail on the Pali and Burmese Buddhist background of these terms see Dingrin, "Is Buddhism Indispensible?"

[73]Adoniram Judson, *Gospel of Matthew in Burmese*, 1817, Hartford Trinity College, CT, Rare Books and Special Collections, Watkinson Library, Rangoon. My thanks to Dr Eric Johnson-DeBaufre of the Watkinson Library, Trinity College, Hartford, CT, for making a copy of this rare manuscript available to me. Another copy is also held at Carey Library and Research Center of Serampore College, India. My thanks to Peter de Vries, voluntary consultant at the Carey Library and Research Center, for his bibliographic assistance in this research project.

[74]See further https://www.brandeis.edu/library/archives/essays/special-collections/burmese-texts.html (accessed March 16, 2022).

[75]Adoniram Judson, *The New Testament in Burmese* (Maulmein: 1832). https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=UylKAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed February 28, 2022).

[76]Adoniram Judson, "Mr. Judson's Journal, Continued from November 18, 1821," *American Baptist Magazine* 4 (1823): 98, https://archive.org/details/sim_baptist-missionary-magazine_ 1823-05_4_3/page/98/mode/2up (accessed March 2, 2022).

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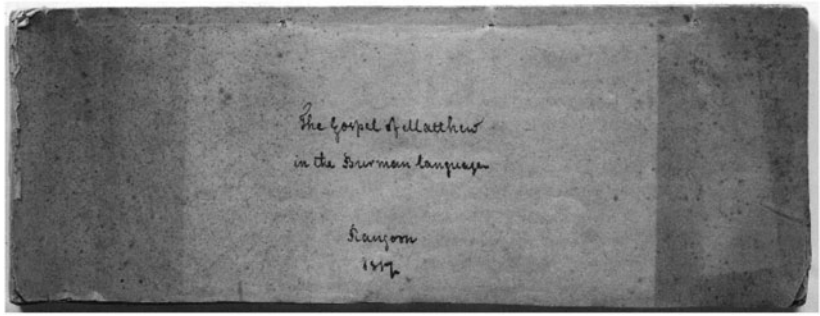


Figure 3. Adoniram Judson's 1817 translation of the Gospel of Matthew

had reflected on how "new terms must be invented to give them right ideas of a Being of whom they are entirely ignorant," and these terms were mainly taken from Pali.[77] Percoto was considered a master of Pali, and, as Dingrin has demonstrated, key Christian terms derived from Pali and later used by Chater and Judson had already been developed in Percoto's *Compendium*.[78] Felix Carey was working on a Pali grammar and dictionary and, in yet another failed aspiration, had wanted to translate the Bible into Pali, which the British Baptists of the time called "Maguda." The gifted Felix had a great advantage in already knowing Sanskrit, from which, his father notes "the Maguda so little differs."[79] Judson, begrudgingly, compiled a Pali-Burmese-English dictionary of about four thousand words in the last six months of 1815, in preparation for Bible translation, writing,

> It has grieved me to spend so much time on the Pali, but the constant occurrence of Pali terms in every Burman book made it absolutely necessary. . . Thus, though the Pali is now a dead language, cultivated by the learned only, some knowledge of it is indispensable to one who would acquire perfect knowledge of the Burman [language], and especially to a missionary, who intends to translate the Scriptures, and who ought, therefore, above all others, to be perfectly acquainted with the terms he employs.[80]

Pali, the religious language that is so integrated into Burmese language and culture, played a key role in the translation of the Bible into Burmese.

[77]Ann Judson, "Extract of a Letter from Mrs. Judson, dated Rangoon, May 10, 1816, to a Lady in Beverly," *American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer* 1 (1817): 97, https://babel. hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015039721751&view= 1up&seq=101&skin=2021 (accessed March 7, 2022).

[78]Dingrin, "Is Buddhism Indispensible?"

[79]J. Marshman W. Carey, W. Ward, "Third Memoir of the Translations Carrying on at Serampore, in a Letter Addressed to the Society. Serampore, Aug. 20, 1811," *The Christian Guardian and Church of England Magazine* 4 (1812): 456, https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=r_oDAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA456&lpg=PA456&dq=Maguda+language&source=bl&ots=486ehg8vHc&sig=ACfU3U05iZb0muFC-nyNklLfYFEzQzdNNg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiM24P0tcb2AhUSwTgGHaFSBkkQ6AF6BAgOEAM#v=onepage&q=Maguda%20language&f=false (accessed April 5, 2022).

[80]Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev Adoniram Judson*, vol.1, 174–175.

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Summary

Adoniram Judson began translating the Bible in 1817, by which point he was already a latecomer on the Burmese Christian literature and scripture translation scene. Judson received a number of different scripture portions and traditions from the Catholics and the British Baptists. Judson was not starting from scratch, as is so often supposed, but neither was he simply passing on the work of others. Judson both received and transformed these different traditions and texts, rewriting them into a new text, stamped with his own translation style. For Judson, this was an ongoing, drawn-out process, beginning in 1817 with his first translation of Matthew, and not ending until 1840 with his final publication of the entire Bible in Burmese.

A snapshot of the working out of this process can be observed by looking at several Burmese translations of the Lord's Prayer. This passage is chosen because the Matthean version, which is used in Catholic liturgical tradition, is in Percoto's *Compendium*, and thus can be compared with both Chater's and Judsons' translations. It is impossible to know to what extent Percoto's translation of the Lord's Prayer drew upon existing Burmese Catholic tradition because his is the first printed and published version. All preceding texts, written by hand, are now lost, but it must be assumed that Percoto drew extensively upon this tradition, which already spanned 250 years. Conversely, subsequent Catholic publications show that Percoto's translation constitutes the foundation for what is now the standard Catholic version of the Lord's Prayer in Burmese, which, although revised, still uses many of Percoto's key terms and structures.[81]

II. Dependency and Development in Judson's Translation

A detailed analysis of the early translations of the Lord's Prayer into Burmese is beyond the scope of this article.[82] For present purposes, an analysis of the first petition of the prayer in each of the translations gives insight into both the translation approach and Burmese language ability of each translator.[83] The first petition is brief, both in the original Greek and English translation: ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου / "Hallowed be your name," and this brevity stands in contrast to the Burmese translations (see Figure 4).

Percoto's translation of the first petition, and of the entire prayer, is longer than both Chater and Judson, for two reasons. First, Percoto, the most accomplished of the three in Burmese, writes in more natural Burmese than the other two. Literary Burmese delights in stringing synonyms together and expansive description, which in English would be considered flowery and redundant, one of the many differences between the languages. The second reason, related to the first, is that Percoto translates paraphrastically. Percoto was not afraid to add explanatory elements into his text, illustrated by his translation of the first petition.

Burmese does not have a genuine passive voice, so the clause must be expressed differently in translation. In good Burmese style, Percoto has piled up the synonyms, using, for example, two word-pairs (ရိုသေ/လေးမြတ်) to express "reverence and honor." Grammatically, Percoto has changed the passive verb in the source text, "to be

[81]See Matt 6:9–13 in Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, *New Testament, Psalms, Proverbs and Deuterocanonical Books* (Myanmar: Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, 2012), 11; *LanPyaTarYar (Catholic Prayer Book)* (1989).

[82]See John de Jong, "Early Burmese Translations of the Lord's Prayer," *Lamp: MEGST Journal of Christian Thought and Praxis* 2 (2022): 1–21.

[83]I thank Burmese teacher Zin Mar Myo Swe for her help in analyzing these texts.

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Percoto
ရှင်ဧနာမတော်မြတ်ကို သူခပ်သိမ်းတို့ ရှိသေလေးမြတ် ခြင်းရှိကြသည် ဖြစ်စေသော။
For your exalted name, Lord / people everywhere / having reverence and honor / may you cause it to be
Chater
ကိုယ်တော်အမည်နာမတော်သည် ရှိသေသည် ဖြစ်စေတော်မူပါ။
Your name, Lord / revering / may you cause it to be
Judson 1817
ကိုယ်တော်၏နာမတော်ကို ရှိသေလေးမြတ်သည် ဖြစ်စေသော။
To your name, Lord / revering and honoring / may you cause it to be
Judson 1832
ကိုယ်တော်၏နာမတော်အား ရှိသေလေးမြတ်ခြင်း ရှိပါစေသော။
To your name, Lord / reverence and honor / may there be

Figure 4. The First Petition of the Lord's Prayer (Percoto 1776; Chater 1812; Judson 1817&1832)

hallowed/sanctified," into a noun phrase, something achieved very easily in Burmese by adding the particle ခြင်း to the verb. Percoto now has a noun phrase, "reverence and honor." This requires him to add the verb ရှိ ("to have"), leading to his next translation decision, which is to identify who will have respect and honor. So Percoto adds သူခပ်သိမ်းတို့ ("people everywhere"), a phrase nowhere to be found in the Greek source text. In this sense, there is an element of paraphrase or commentary in Percoto's translation, but it is accurate commentary. The first petition of the Lord's prayer, "Hallowed be your name," is a prayer for God to vindicate himself on earth by fulfilling his promises to his people through establishing his kingdom on earth (the second petition). In the context of first-century Judaism when Jesus prayed this prayer, and subsequently in Christian faith, when the kingdom of God is established, all people will acknowledge God as the true God. Percoto expresses this in his paraphrastic translation.

In modern translation theory, Percoto has a functional equivalence translation approach—that is, to translate the meaning of the source text in equivalent ideas in the target language. This contrasts with trying to reproduce the form of the source

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text in the target language as much as possible, known as a formal translation approach. Percoto also has elements of free translation, seen in the paraphrastic aspects.

Chater, who only lived in Burma for three years and had the least ability of the three in Burmese, struggled to translate this first petition. Grammatically, he omitted the object marker (ကို) from the first phrase "Your name, Lord," using instead the subject marker (သည်), giving the straightforward meaning of "Your name, Lord, reveres." In terms of style, Chater is spare in contrast to Percoto. He uses the verb phrase "revering" (ရိုသေ), one of the two word-pairs Percoto employs to describe God's name being revered. In good Burmese style, Percoto's use of the two pairs is the respectful and proper way to talk about the deity. Syntactically, Chater struggles to express the passive third-person imperative from the Greek text. Chater forms (badly) an indicative statement, "Your name is revered," and puts it into the subjunctive mood by adding "may you cause it to be." It is comprehensible, but for native Burmese speakers (who rival the French in language snobbery), it is inelegant and unnatural, among its other failures.

So what did Judson do, who had both Percoto's (or something very close to it) and Chater's translations and, moreover, had praised the Catholic translation but denigrated Chater's? Here indeed is a tale of two stages of Judson's life. The first stage was Judson after having been in Burma for just over three years, not dissimilar to the length of time Chater had lived there. At this point, Judson was a reluctant translator, writing even as he worked on his 1817 translation of Matthew, "In regard to translating, I proceed with fear and trembling. I feel that I am not yet sufficiently versed in the language."[84] This was a humble but accurate self-assessment. Although he had dismissed Chater's translation of Matthew as "quite unintelligible to Burmans,"[85] Judson's 1817 rendering of the first petition follows Chater. Like Chater, Judson produces an indicative statement, "Your name, Lord, being revered and honored," then adds a phrase to convert it to the subjunctive mood, "may you cause it to be." Grammatically, Judson has correctly made God's name the object (using the object marker ကို) and stylistically he has used the same two word-pairs as Percoto (ရိုသေလေးမြတ်), recognizing that this is more appropriate in showing respect for the deity. Yet, phrase for phrase and in overall structure, Judson's 1817 translation is exactly the same as Chater's.

Judson's 1832 revised translation is quite different. By this stage, he had been immersed in the culture and language for nearly twenty years, and this shows. Judson's 1832 translation becomes more similar to Percoto by converting the verb phrase, "reverencing and respecting," into a noun phrase (with the simple addition of ခြင်း). Judson then removes the subjunctive phrase using the verb "to be" (ဖြစ်) from his 1817 translation, and now employs the grammatical form VERB–ပါစေ → "may VERB come to pass."[86] This is a great improvement on his earlier attempt, with the sentence reading naturally as a single utterance.

The reasons for the improvement are clear. Burmese is a difficult language for English speakers to genuinely learn. At a basic level, this may not seem to be the

[84]Judson, "Letter from the Rev. Adoniram Judson, American Baptist Missionary in Burmah, to a Minister in London."

[85]Judson, "Letter from the Rev. Adoniram Judson, American Baptist Missionary in Burmah, to a Minister in London."

[86]John Okell and Anna Allott, *Burmese/Myanmar Dictionary of Grammatical Forms* (Surrey: Curzon, 2001), 54.

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case as one can learn the rudiments of the language reasonably quickly. But such a superficial acquaintance with Burmese can lead to the mistakes both Chater and Judson, in his 1817 translation, made, which is to express oneself in Burmese using English syntax and style. Ann Judson herself reflected on this at the very time Adoniram was working on his 1817 translation of Matthew, writing, "In a short time one can get enough of a language for common use. But to think, to reason, and to get hold of the little connections and idiom of a language entirely different from one's native tongue, is quite another thing."[87]

Adoniram's 1832 translation shows that he had mastered the "little connections and idiom," as had Percoto so many years earlier. By this stage, Judson was able to let the language do the work rather than distorting the language to express himself in a way that he himself could understand.

Vocabulary and Phraseology

Dingrin has shown that Percoto's *Compendium* contains many Christian key terms that Judson took up and used in his translation.[88] Percoto would have inherited many of these terms from the existing Burmese Catholic tradition, although the lack of earlier sources makes it impossible to explore this. Although Chater's Burmese grammar and syntax has been found wanting, his vocabulary is more impressive, and his translation of the Lord's Prayer is more independent from Percoto's than is Judson's. This is no doubt due to the unnamed Burmese assistant who had already translated at least nineteen chapters of Matthew before Chater even arrived in Burma. Judson, who had both Chater's and Percoto's translations in front of him, draws heavily upon Percoto's vocabulary and phraseology, bearing out his assessment that it was "not very badly executed, in regard to language." Within the Lord's Prayer itself, Judson 1817 follows Percoto in the following terms and phrases:

- v.9 အကျွန်ုပ်တို့ အဘ (our father); နာမတော် (God's name); နေတော်မူသော (who dwells); ရိုသေလေးမြတ် (reverence and honor); ဖြစ်စေသော (may it come to be).
- v.10 နိုင်ငံတော် (God's kingdom); ပြည့်စုံ (to be complete); သကဲ့သို့ (to be the same)
- v.11 …အစားတို့ကို လည်း အကျွန်ုပ်တို့အား ယနေ့ပေးသနားတော်မူပါ။ (…food also graciously give to us today).
- v.12 ကျွန်ုပ်တို့အား (to us); …သောသူတပါးတို့၏ အပြစ်တို့ကိုကျွန်ုပ်တို့ (the sins of those who [sin] against us); သည်းခံ (to endure); ကျွန်ုပ်တို့၏အပြစ်တို့ကိုကညလွှတ်တော်မူပါ (forgive us our sins).
- v.13 မကောင်းမသင့်သောအရာ (evil situations); ကင်းလွတ် (to be free of).

Percoto's Lord's Prayer also contains terminology that Judson uses elsewhere, for example v.10 သခင် (Lord); ကျေးဇူး (grace); ကယ်မ သနား ("have mercy," Judson's translation

[87]A. Judson, "Extract of a Letter from Mrs. Judson, dated Rangoon, May 10, 1816, to a Lady in Beverly."
[88]Dingrin, "Is Buddhism Indispensible?"

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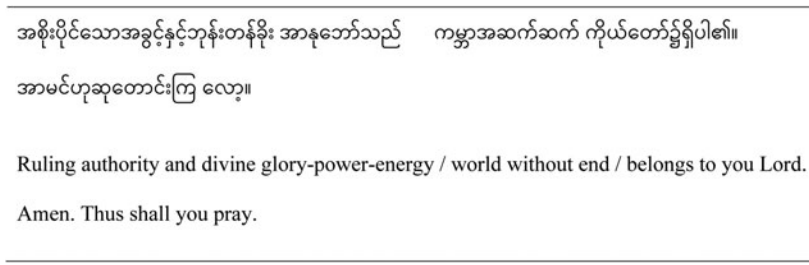


Figure 5. Doxology from the Lord's Prayer Matt 6:13b (Judson 1840)

of Bartimaeus's plea in Mark 10:48, among other places); v.13 နှောင့်ယှက် ("testing"; so, for example, Judson translates "persecution" in Matt 5:10).

Judson 1817, then, followed both Chater and Percoto to some extent. At this point, Judson lacked the ability to follow Percoto's Burmese sophistication, and he made some of the same mistakes as Chater. By the time of his 1832 translation, Judson had a greater mastery of Burmese and was able to translate using the natural idioms and structures of the language. Judson's translation style was formal, that is, retaining the form of the source text while simultaneously maintaining good style in the target language, avoiding wooden literalism, something Chater was unable to achieve. This is demonstrated in the doxology (Matt 6:13b), which by a quirk of fate became one of the last portions of scripture Judson ever translated. Judson, as a typical New England biblical scholar of the time, had translated from the most up to date critical Greek New Testament available, that of Johann Griesbach. But right at the finish line, as he prepared for his final publication of the entire Bible in Burmese, the version most widely used by Burmese Christians today, Judson abandoned Griesbach's text for theological reasons, and used instead Georg Christian Knapp's critical Greek text.[89] Knapp's text was less rigorous than Griesbach's, following more closely the Textus Receptus, and thus included the doxology with the Lord's Prayer (see Figure 5).[90]

Judson's skill as an exegete and translator are on full display in his translation of the doxology. For example, he translates βασιλεία ("kingdom") in a dynamic sense, "ruling authority," rather than the static "kingdom" (နိုင်ငံ), as does Chater. Furthermore, Judson does not try to translate "power" and "glory" word for word, as Chater did, but instead uses three Burmese words ("glory-power-energy"), which are steeped in religious meaning, to better convey the sense of the source text. Chater by contrast translates term for term, using more secular language (အစွမ်း "ability" and တန်ခိုး "power"). The gulf between Judson's translation skill in 1817 and 1840 is immense and shows how far he had developed in his Burmese language ability and as a translator. Although Judson was critical of Chater's 1812 translation of Matthew, his own 1817 version followed Chater in places and contains similar weaknesses. Judson's 1832 translation, by contrast, is much improved, seen in the idiomatic usage of the Burmese language. The

[89]See further John de Jong, "Textual Criticism, the Textus Receptus, and Adoniram Judson's Burmese New Testaments," *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* 13, no. 2 (2018): 51–60.

[90]See the contemporary review "The New Testament in the Common Version, Confirmed to Griesbach's Standard Greek Text," Book Review, *The North American Review* 31, no. 68 (1830): 267–275.

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language structures Judson employed in 1832 are more similar to those of Percoto, underlining Percoto's mastery of the language, so many years earlier.

II. Conclusion

The "Judson Bible" is an accurate description of the 1840 Bible in Burmese. Adoniram Judson's skill as an exegete and translator, his elegant formal translation style, and his expertise in Burmese are all displayed in this final product. Yet it is more than just Judson's production, as it embodies the work of countless people over hundreds of years. A snapshot of this has been demonstrated by comparing Percoto, Chater, and Judson's translations of the first petition of the Lord's Prayer. Analogies with Pentateuchal source criticism can be drawn, for example, in Judson's reuse of sentences from Percoto, and in the way Chater uses more secular language, perhaps stemming from the "native teacher" who may never have had contact with the Burmese Catholic tradition. But the identification of sources is not the best way to understand how the Judson Bible came to be. An intertextual approach is better, recognizing that countless texts, literary and oral, have intersected and intertwined, constantly producing new texts, many of which have flowed through myriad channels into the Judson Bible. Intertextuality holds together the seemingly contradictory ideas that a text is at the same time genuinely the original work of the author while also constituted of texts others have created.

Some of these texts still exist, such as Percoto's *Compendium* and Chater's translation of Matthew. Other texts are known but no longer extant, such as the Catholic translation of Matthew that Judson came across, and the "book of scripture extracts" that Carey and Chater inherited from the Catholics and then published a version of themselves. Older still, the handwritten works by the Barnabite missionaries, are known to have been produced but are now lost. Yet there are countless more texts that can never be recovered, many of which never were literary texts. These would include the first prayers and liturgies in Burmese by the Portuguese chaplains, informal discussions about Christian faith by the next generation of native Burmese-speaking Catholics, prayers and sermons by the young Burmese Catholics in training, and so on. All of these texts flowed into the written work of the Barnabite missionaries and then into the work of the British missionaries, and finally into Judson's translation.

Burmese teachers and assistants also played a key role throughout—for example, John of Yendana who helped Percoto and the Barnabites; Chater's teachers, Mr. Babasheen and Gownmeng; and Christian convert and scholar Moung Shwe Ngong who helped Judson translate the New Testament. Still more were mentioned but unnamed, such as the "native teacher" in Serampore and Judson's bevy of "Burmese assistants and transcribers."[91] Ann Judson too deserves mention as the translator of Jonah and Daniel, and no doubt hours of discussion with Adoniram about translation decisions, making it to some extent the "Judsons' Bible."[92] All of these people over a period of three hundred years produced innumerable texts, which were rewritten into a new text, the Judson Bible.

Contrary to popular belief, when Ann and Adoniram famously arrived in Burma in July 1813, Christianity had already been there for three hundred years through Catholic missionary work. Undeniably, it was the work of the American Baptist mission that laid

[91]Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev Adoniram Judson*, vol.1, 166.

[92]Not to mention the input of Judson's second wife, Sarah Hall Boardman, who translated Christian literature into both Mon and Burmese, see Levens, "Reading the Judsons," 51–52.

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the foundations for the church to grow immensely into the significant religious minority it is today in Myanmar, but this work built upon the earlier Catholic mission. Adoniram Judson is a giant in the history of Christianity in Burma, but he stood upon the shoulders of others.

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