Contingent Companion with the Cantonese: Uncovering a Hidden History of Written Cantonese Christian Literature in the Late Nineteenth Century †

Christina Wai-Yin Wong

Divinity School of Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China; wycwong@cuhk.edu.hk
† This paper was originally presented at Translation, Literature, and Publishing in Chinese Christianities: An International Conference, organized by the History Research Centre (Manchester Metropolitan University) and the Centre for Sino-Christian Studies (Hong Kong Baptist University), 3–6 January 2022.

Abstract: This paper aims to uncover a hidden history of Cantonese Christian literature. Written Cantonese has been present since the late Ming dynasty in parallel to the emergence of a distinct Cantonese identity. Western missionaries, for the sake of evangelism, facilitated the development of written Cantonese in South China since the mid-nineteenth century. At that time, missionaries put a lot of effort into translating religious leaflets and booklets, the Bible, the book of prayers, and even Cantonese–English dictionaries. These works contributed to standardizing written Cantonese and indirectly helped to develop Cantonese identity. I will critically examine how Cantonese Christian literature declined for the sake of nationalism, as the first publication of Heheben (Mandarin Union Version) in Protestant Christianity in 1919 represented the unification of the Church by using written Mandarin. After elaborating on the unintentional alliance of missionaries with Cantonese in the nineteenth century, in conclusion, I will make a brief comparison of Hong Kong Church in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which is inactive in the continuous written Cantonese movement in Hong Kong.

Keywords: Cantonese identity; Chinese Christian literature; Heheben (Mandarin Union Version); Western missionaries; written Cantonese

1. Introduction

The use of written Mandarin was first promoted by the nationalist May Fourth Movement for cultural enlightenment. By 1922, the Beijing Government further announced vernacular Mandarin as the national written Chinese. Its status continued in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) since 1949. Parallel to the emergence of Guoyu (国语) for nation-building, the first publication of Heheben (Mandarin Union Version, MUV in short) in Protestant Christianity in 1919 represented the unification of the Chinese Church by using written Mandarin to translate the Bible. Other Chinese Christian literature followed. George Kam Wah Mak’s book, Protestant Bible Translation and Mandarin as the National Language of China, has documented in detail the process of making MUV, “one Bible for one nation” (Mak 2017, p. 61). Based on his studies, I further examine in this paper how the vision of using the national language in Chinese Christian literature discouraged other local languages’ publication, including written Cantonese. A few scholars state that written vernacular Chinese (白话), not limited to Mandarin, significantly contributed to the emergence of ethnolinguistic identities in Chinese communities (Snow 2004, p. 43). Regarding written Cantonese, interestingly, we can trace two contingent development periods to connect with local communities, i.e., Cantonese identity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and Hong Kong (HK) identity since the 1950s. In the first period, in the nineteenth century, the enthusiasm of missionaries’ Cantonese translation of Christian
literature (as well as their linguistic works like dictionaries) indirectly contributed to the emergence of Cantonese identity. In the second period, since the mid-twentieth century, i.e., after 1949, written Cantonese has been well established in HK, even though it is not recognized as an official “written” language but in fact an official “spoken” language (Bauer 2018, p. 107). As a historian of regional studies of Chinese Christianities in South China, in this paper, I attempt to analyze a contingent companionship between Western missionaries and local people in normalizing written Cantonese in the late nineteenth century.

This paper aims to uncover a hidden history of Chinese Christian literature in Cantonese. Written Cantonese has a long tradition, dating back to the Ming dynasty (Leung 1997, p. 271). Significantly, Western missionaries indirectly facilitated the development of “Cantonese identity” by using written local vernacular language in South China since the mid-nineteenth century. At that time, missionaries strove to translate religious leaflets and literature, the Bible, the book of prayers, and even Cantonese–English dictionaries. These works contributed to standardizing written Cantonese and indirectly helped to develop Cantonese identity. I will critically examine how Cantonese Christian literature declined for the sake of nationalism, as the first publication of MUV in Protestant Christianity in 1919 represented the unification of the Church by using written Mandarin. After describing the unintentional alliance of missionaries with Cantonese people in the nineteenth century, in conclusion, I will make a brief comparison of Hong Kong Church’s inactivity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the continuous written Cantonese movement in Hong Kong.

2. The Origin of Canton and the Imagination of Cantonese Identity

The growth of Canton likely emerged from its long history as a trading port, as well as from the large-scale reclamation of the Pearl River Delta. As early as the Qin-Han period (221 BCE–220 CE), the city of Panyu 番禺 (i.e., Canton) received ships from Southeast Asia and offered access to an interior transportation route from Guangxi province in the west to Hainan Island in the south. During the open-door policy of the Tang dynasty (618–907), in particular, Canton became a major international port in South China. Indian and Persian communities settled there, and Buddhist monasteries and an Islamic mosque were built there (Faure 1996, p. 38). In the period between the Tang and Southern Song dynasties (618–1279), Canton was a principal trading port (Xu 2011, p. 13; Zhao et al. 2002, p. 305). European trade was concentrated within the Thirteen Hongs 十三行 in Canton from 1755 to 1842 under the Canton System (Grant 2014, pp. 62–63). After the defeat of the First Opium War, Canton then was forcibly opened as one of five trading ports in China, as stipulated in the Treaty of Nanking (Bracken 2019, pp. 168–76). Paradoxically, as the principal trading port for long periods, it was hampered because of local politics among local lineages, local officials, the Qing court, and Great Britain. From the end of the Second Opium War (1856–1860) to the Republican China period (1911–1949), Canton contained British and French concessions in Shamian 沙面. This allowed frequent interactions among Chinese and residing foreigners. Furthermore, a seaward location enabled Canton’s frequent interactions with overseas countries, as evidenced by its long trading and labor emigration to Southeast Asia and the United States since the nineteenth century. This brief introduction to Canton is significant for understanding the spread of spoken Cantonese beyond the province of Canton itself, in locations including parts of Guangxi province, Southeast Asian countries, North America, and so on (Snow 2004, p. 68). In fact, Gina Anne Tam observes that there are different Cantonese dialects in different regions, e.g., Taishan dialect and Gaozhou dialect (Tam 2020, p. 21).

After briefly introducing the history of Canton as a trading port, I now give a short summary of the emergence of Cantonese regional identity. Current historians have pointed out that the Han Chinese are not merely distinguished by ethnicity but also assimilated through the formation of cultural identity (Liu and Faure 1996, pp. 1–2). Cultural identification is not consistent from top to bottom, as the interplay between the two is complex. This includes diverse imperial policies of cultural assimilation in different dynasties and
local adaptation of Han Chinese culture. Moreover, the fusion of identity is complicated by different ethnic group identities and the “stereotypes” by others (Ching 2006, pp. 28–29). This has led to regionally diverse manifestations of Han Chinese identity. In the case of Canton, the people of the province were historically portrayed as Sinicized Yue (粵 or 越), or barbarians in the eye of Han people, in the writings of the Han through Tang dynasties (206 BCE–907 CE). However, in local genealogies compiled later during the Qing period (1644–1911), the major lineages of the Pearl River Delta would trace back to their ancestors’ migration from Zhongyuan 中原 [central plains] in the Song and Yuan dynasties (960–1368) to avoid nomads’ attack from the north (Siu 1993, p. 23). Even more complicated, there are different ethnic groups with different spoken languages in Canton, i.e., Punti 本地 (local and native inhabitants), the Hakka 客家 (Kejia, literally, guest inhabitants), Tanka 蜑家, Hoklo鹤佬 (Helao, also called Fulao 福佬) and also Teochew (Teochiu, Chiuchow, 潮州 [Chaozhou]). Some of them claimed their originality from central plains, in order to affirm their authentic Han identity. Ching May‑Bo remarked that in various historical contexts, there were different classifications defining Cantonese (Guangdong ren 廣東人), and definitions of “we” and “other” changed in accordance with the different political preferences of the time (Ching 2006, pp. 66–96; Faure 2007, pp. 38–50). In short, ethnicities were not static but changed depending on social mobility. She further noted that the emergence of Cantonese cultural identity paralleled the emergence of nationalism in China. Based on nuanced studies of the emergence of a written vernacular (i.e., Cantonese), written local gazetteers (and literature), the development of Lingxue嶺學 [the School of South China], and local ethnic studies in Canton province, Ching examines how the Cantonese literati developed a fuzzy local Cantonese culture and identity from the 1820s to the 1940s. This project was concomitant with the penetration of a grand “Han”, and afterward, the Chinese nationalist identity (Ching 2006).

3. The Origin of Written Cantonese

After an analysis of the locality of Canton and the emergence of Cantonese identity, in this section, I introduce the development of written Cantonese and how it relates to the development of Cantonese identity in South China. Before that, I first touch upon the political implications of the distinction between dialect and language.

There is difficulty drawing a border between the terms dialect and language. The distinction between them mostly comes from political and cultural factors (Trudgill 2000, pp. 4–5). In China, given that Mandarin (now called Putonghua) is the national language, the others are classified as dialects, including Cantonese. Victor H. Mair stated that using the term dialect gives it an inferior position vis à vis the national language (Mair 1991). In a linguistic sense, the criterion to distinguish the correlation between language and dialect is based on mutual intelligibility. In China, Mandarin, Cantonese, and other regional languages such as Hokkien, Hakka, and Shanghainese are mutually unintelligible and should be classified as languages under the Sino-Tibetan language family (Bauer and Wakefield 2019, p. 9).

Despite the mutual unintelligibility between spoken Mandarin and Cantonese, written Cantonese uses Standard Chinese characters. However, it is used with Cantonese characteristics. To preserve the sounds with the Standard Chinese character set, written Cantonese incorporates unique Chinese characters, romanization, borrowing other Chinese characters with the same sound (“phonetic borrowing”), and lastly rediscovering ancient characters (Snow 2004, pp. 51–55). Lastly, as Jerry Norman suggests, Cantonese originated from the old southern Chinese, which has the most ancient and autochthonous elements of Chinese (Norman 1988, p. 210). This makes some Cantonese people proclaim that they are more “Han” among the Han than northern Chinese (Ching 2006, p. 76; Pan 1987, p. 35). In short, linguistically, it is not suitable to classify Cantonese as a dialect, compared to a language within the broader Sinitic language family (Bauer and Wakefield 2019, p. 9).

The development of written Cantonese was first attested by songbooks of local folk songs and narrative songs, i.e., “wooden fish books” 木魚書, “southern songs” 南音,
“dragon boat songs” 龍舟歌, and “Cantonese love songs” 粵謳 (Ching 2006, p. 123; Snow 2004, p. 80). Regarding genre and style of language, dragon boat songs were more vernacular than the other three (Snow 2004, p. 80). All these printed materials targeted a lower-class audience, particularly local women (Snow 2004, pp. 78, 81). According to Evelyn Rawski, a considerable population possessed enough literacy skills to read these popular entertainment materials (Rawski 1979, pp. 11–12, cited from Snow 2004, p. 79). The oldest remaining wooden fish book is Huaqian Ji《花箋記》 [The Flowery Scroll], published in Canton in the early Qing dynasty (1713), but scholars now believe that was first published in the late Ming period (Leung 1997, p. 271; Snow 2004, p. 81, n. 50). It was about a love story of a talented young scholar with a young woman (Snow 2004, p. 81). Other wooden fish books had similar love stories, the history of kings and key officials, and Buddhist stories, which were like sung narratives (Yuan qu元曲) in the north in the Yuan dynasty (Ching 2006, p. 123). Apart from these Cantonese songs, Cantonese Opera粤劇 also contributed to strengthening the development of written Cantonese. The earliest extant manuscript was Furong Ping芙蓉屏 [Lotus Standing Screen] in 1871 (Ching 2006, p. 136). The earliest manuscripts of wooden fish books and Cantonese opera were mixed with literary Chinese, Mandarin, and Cantonese, a pattern called Saam kap dai 三及第 (Snow 2004, p. 60; Ching 2006, p. 136). From 1920 to 1936, Cantonese opera used solely Cantonese vocabulary (Snow 2004, p. 94). Apart from these, to enhance popular literacy, there were textbooks teaching written Cantonese. An early example is Forty Chapters in Prose 《散話四十章》, published by St. Paul’s College in HK in 1877 (Snow 2004, p. 91). At the turn of the century, more local literati wrote literacy textbooks in written Cantonese for women and children, e.g., Rhyming Book for Women and Children 《婦孺韻語》 (1912) by Lu Zijun盧子駿 and Essentials for Women and Children 《婦孺須知》 (1904) by Chen Zibao陳子褒(1862–1922). Chen Zibao, a well-known Cantonese literacy educator, wrote multiple Cantonese literacy textbooks for women and children (Snow 2004, p. 91; Ching 2006, pp. 157–60). To summarize, the presence of printed entertainment scripts and literary textbooks evidenced the gradual development and formalization of written Cantonese from the 1800s and was well established in the 1930s (Snow 2004, pp. 61, 98).

4. Written Cantonese Christian Literature by Western Missionaries in the Late Nineteenth Century

In the field of Christian literature translation in the nineteenth century, it is well established that the variety of Chinese used in translation gradually changed from literary Chinese (Wenyan文言) to Mandarin官話 (the official vernacular language in the empire) and different local languages, before the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China in Shanghai in 1890, when a plan of making a standardized Mandarin Union Bible was formalized (Choi 2018; 2021, pp. 21–46; Mak 2017, p. 15; 2021, pp. 164–80). Early Protestant missionary translations were in Wenyan and Mandarin, possibly as they targeted Chinese literati, for example, those of Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) in the sixteenth century. Nonetheless, to access local people, early Protestant missionaries also committed to translating and publishing works in local languages in the nineteenth century. They preferred to print more Christian literature, prayer books, and the Bible to evangelize local people (Starr 2008, p. 399). In fact, most early Chinese Christians were from lower socioeconomic strata, with limited Wenyan literacy (Mak 2017, p. 51). Since Western missionaries commonly entered China in the province of Canton (either from Macau, Canton itself, or Hong Kong), they studied local vernaculars and wrote or compiled Cantonese dictionaries and other language textbooks for the quick adaptation of local languages by new foreign missionaries. Considering linguistic studies, there is a prevalent trend to study Western missionaries’ work in Cantonese and analyze the development and linguistic pattern of written Cantonese in the nineteenth century (e.g., Cheung 2021, pp. 25–57; Yoshikawa 2019, pp. 11–29). The missionary work significantly contributed to the formation and normalization of written Cantonese in the nineteenth century. In this section, I briefly discuss their work on the translation of Christian literature and the Bible in Cantonese.
The publication and translation of Christian literature in written Cantonese is loose and fragmented. Some characteristics of the corpus are summarized below, with reference to the work by Dyer J. Ball (1847–1919) in 1894, a missionary and an important Cantonese linguistic expert at the turn of the century, as well as to other resources (e.g., Ball 1894; Ching 2006; Kataoka and Lee 2022, pp. 139–43; Lai 2012, pp. 249–88; Yao 2018; You 2002, pp. 198–99). I counted forty-three texts published from 1847 to 1906, plus seven texts with no publication dates, i.e., fifty in total. In general, they were mainly published during the 1840s–1890s. The themes of the written Cantonese publication have covered a wide range of Christian life, i.e., religious education and Christian doctrines (15 texts), Christian literature and stories (14 texts), Bible stories and teaching (11 texts), hymns (6 texts), and Book of Common Prayer (4 texts). Regarding the background of authors or translators, American Presbyterian missionaries (i.e., Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, PCUSA) in Canton played a significant role in publishing Cantonese Christian texts. They compiled or translated more than half of the mentioned texts in Cantonese (26 texts). In particular, several American Presbyterian women missionaries, i.e., Mary Ball Collins (b. 1833?), Lily Happer Cunningham (1853–1886), Harriet N. Noyes (1844–1924), Mrs. Noyes, Mrs. Happer, and Harriette Lewis (d.1933), participated in compiling or translating Cantonese Christian literature (20 texts). Some of their work probably targeted children and women. It can be understood that American Presbyterian women missionaries were actively involved in education for women and girls in Canton, e.g., 3 boarding schools for women and girls, and 21 day schools for girls in 1884, the largest provider of women’s education among missions (Henry 1885, p. 209). Presbyterian women missionaries were possibly eager to publish more textbooks for their targeted students.

In contrast, the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in HK focused more on liturgy. They translated the whole or parts of the Book of Common Prayer (four texts). At that time, the bishop of Victoria diocese also took charge of the ministry in Canton province. This shows a characteristic of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer in China in the nineteenth century, where local dioceses translated their colloquial Book of Common Prayer (Starr 2008, pp. 32–48). However, when the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui 中華聖公會 was established in 1912, the Anglican Church intended to unify its liturgy including language. The first unified Book of Common Prayer produced in Mandarin was not widely used in the dioceses. In fact, since the end of the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui in 1958, when it merged into the Three-Self Church, the Chinese United Book of Common Prayer, unfortunately, has not yet been published (Guo 2015, pp. 103–16). Lastly, the missionary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Rev. George Piercy (1829–1913), was also a significant contributor to Cantonese Christian literature, as he compiled or translated seven of the fifty texts. He was also one of the significant contributors to translating the Cantonese Bible in the nineteenth century.

Regarding the translation of the Bible into Cantonese, I give a summary mainly from the works of Daniel Kam-to Choi and Kataoka Shin (Choi 2018; Kataoka 2022, pp. 1–20). The first part of the Bible translated into Cantonese, i.e., the Gospel of Luke, used romanization by two missionaries, Christian W. Louis and Ernst Faber (1839–1899), from the Rhenish Missionary Society in 1867. This translation used Lepsius’ Standard Alphabet, which was common for the romanization of local languages’ Bible translation in China, e.g., Hakka (Choi 2013, pp. 517–18). After that, the missionaries adopted the local practice of written Cantonese, i.e., using Chinese characters to write Cantonese. Reports of the British and Foreign Missionary Society in 1870 mentioned a united translation of the New Testament in Cantonese by missionaries from a few mission boards. This is an important project as the Cantonese Bible could reach out to 14–16 million Cantonese speakers in Canton province. Moreover, a Cantonese Bible would help missionary efforts amongst the illiterate men, women, and children in mission schools, who were unfamiliar with written Chinese (British and Foreign Bible Society 1870, pp. 222–23). At that time, Cantonese people in general did not understand written Mandarin. However, the previously mentioned prevalence of popular written Cantonese scripts demonstrated that written Cantonese was...
sufficiently prevalent for the large number of books published. Missionaries were therefore inclined to take part in the Cantonese translation project, with the first Cantonese Bible translation completed by PCUSA’s missionary, Charles F. Preston (1827–1877), who first translated the Gospels of Matthew and John in 1862. In 1868, along with Piercy the Wesleyan missionary, and Adam Krolczyk (1836–1872) from the German Rhenish Missionary Society, Preston formed a united translation committee for Cantonese Bible work based on Textus Receptus, a recognized Greek text by the Protestant Church in the nineteenth century (Choi 2013, p. 510). It was the first cooperation among missionary societies for biblical translation in China, earlier than the united work setup for MUV established in 1890 (Choi 2013, p. 510, n.13). The Gospel of Luke and Colossians were finished in 1871, and in 1872, the Gospel of Mark and Acts of the Apostles followed. The translation of the New Testament was then finished in 1877. The Old Testament was fully translated in 1894, and the whole text was then subject to a series of revisions. The product, the first Cantonese Bible with both testaments, was finally published in 1907 (Choi 2013, pp. 510–14).

Apart from the written Cantonese version, since 1890 onwards, the CMS produced a romanized Cantonese Bible for Beihai 北海 station in Guangxi province (Choi 2018, pp. 530–32). As aforementioned, because of the close ties with Canton, some parts of Guangxi spoke Cantonese as their everyday language, alongside Pinghua 平話, a group of related varieties. After the series translation of individual books, the romanized New Testament and the Protestant Bible were published in 1913 and 1915, respectively, which were mainly compiled and translated by the CMS’s missionaries, W. E. H. Hipwell and his wife (Choi 2018, p. 521).

Turning back to the publication of a Cantonese Bible, in Hong Kong, two revised versions of this Cantonese Union Bible were published in 1959 and 1997, respectively (Choi 2018, pp. 529–30). Nonetheless, the Cantonese Bible is not popular in HK despite most HK churches delivering a Cantonese service nowadays. Most churches use the MUV (published in 1919) or revised MUV 和合本修訂版 (published in 2010) in Standard written Chinese, i.e., Mandarin. Apart from the Cantonese Bible, other Chinese Bibles in local languages fell to the wayside because of MUV’s popularity to date in Chinese Christian communities worldwide, likely due to the greater intelligibility of Standard written Chinese for most.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, I have traced the origins of written Cantonese through the entertainment of the lower classes with reference to its historical and geographical contexts, with examples including songs of “wooden fish books”, “southern songs”, “dragon boat songs”, and “Cantonese love songs” in Canton in the nineteenth century. To a certain extent, they reflect local popular culture and consolidate the Cantonese community, which eventually encouraged the formation of a Cantonese identity. For different purposes, I pinpoint that Protestant missionaries in Canton actively engaged with written Cantonese in the nineteenth century too. They produced Cantonese–English dictionaries possibly for new missionaries or foreigners learning Cantonese or for documentation of the Cantonese language in its time. Targeting locals, they translated religious leaflets and literature, the Bible, hymns, and the book of prayers for evangelization and enhancing church life. Moreover, some Cantonese Christian textbooks and literature would be used for Christian education at mission schools. Thus, I claim that these missionaries were contingent companions of developing written Cantonese with local people in the nineteenth century, as they enhanced the early development of written Cantonese by producing dictionaries, textbooks, the compilation and translation of Christian literature, and the Bible in Canton in the nineteenth century. As previously mentioned, the Cantonese Bible was marginalized after the publication of MUV in 1919, which is a unified written Mandarin Bible in the national language. MUV was a symbol to show “Chineseness” through the united efforts of the Protestant Church in response to Western imperialist powers in the May Fourth Movement (1917–1921).
made a dream of one Bible for one nation since 1890 come true, but it neglected local words and expressions (Mak 2017, pp. 21, 61–62).

The last remark is that although the use of written Cantonese in Christian Literature declined in the twentieth century, written Cantonese is/was alive in its own way. Influenced by the prevalence of Cantonese opera, written Cantonese was well established in the 1930s (Snow 2004, p. 98). While written Cantonese in Canton city declined after 1949; in contrast, it flourished in HK since the 1950s, because of the different sociopolitical environment (Bauer 2018, pp. 105, 110). Indeed, most in HK embraced written Cantonese as it moved into the HK cultural mainstream, as a kind of identification with a local HK identity (Snow 2004, p. 41). Unfortunately, the Church in HK is absent in this local written Cantonese movement. Apart from embracing the MUV compiled by Western missionaries and the Chinese Church in the heyday of nationalist sentiment in 1919, it is worth noting that the HK (Chinese) Church is also absent in the second stage of the written Cantonese movement in HK from the mid-twentieth century. This written Cantonese movement, where the Church is absent, links up with a new local culture and identity (Snow 2004, p. 7). It is likely because written Cantonese is associated with a vernacular local language for popular culture, which does not fit into the middle-class conventions of the HK Church. Alternatively, the HK Church is not aware of its role in the formation of an HK identity. In short, when the literacy rate increased in reading Chinese (written Mandarin), the HK Church adopted the MUV and printed Christian literature in written Mandarin. This significantly increased the circulation of their publication to a global Chinese audience. On the other hand, as I claim in this paper, the HK Church has not actively engaged in the written Cantonese movement in HK since the 1950s onwards, although spoken Cantonese is prevalent in HK Church worship. Although outside the scope of this paper, how spoken Cantonese worship shapes HK’s social and political identity is a subject for further research.

**Funding:** This research was funded by Research Grants Council, Hong Kong, grant number 24619021.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

1. In this paper, I call ‘Canton’ 廣州 rather than the pinyin ‘Guangzhou’ because of its long usage. The British derived the English name ‘Canton’ from ‘Cantão’, which is the sixteenth-century Portuguese romanization of the Cantonese word (Yule and Burnell 2013, p. 127).

2. For example, in the sixth–seventh centuries, the classical Chinese description of Yue indigenous custom as “to cut their hair and decorate their bodies”, and “they also cast bronze into large drums”, which were the main key features to connecting with the community (Kiernan 2017, p. 104).

3. Both Punti and Tanka mainly spoke Cantonese. However, Tanka people dwelled on boats and were demeaned as a lower class, who mainly engaged in fishing and water transport. In addition to the above ethnic groups, there are aboriginals (e.g., Yao, She, and Zhuang) in the hills, who speak different languages.


5. As written Chinese uses a character-based system, both written vernacular Mandarin (Báihuà) and literary Chinese (Wényán) use Chinese characters, also used by Cantonese.

6. The work was a translation of Section 3 of Yú Yen Tzŭ Ērh Chi 語言自邇集 by Thomas Francis Wade into Cantonese by John Shaw Burdon, the bishop of Victoria Diocese (in HK), who learned Mandarin before Cantonese (Kataoka 2019).

7. In compiling dictionaries, the first Protestant missionary to China, the LMS’s Robert Morrison (1782–1834), compiled the first Cantonese–English dictionary, Guangdong sheng tuhua zihui 《廣東省土話字彙》 [Vocabulary of the Canton Dialect], published in 1828. After that, two other LMS missionaries, John Chalmers (1825–1899) and Ernest John Eitel (1838–1908), wrote three Cantonese–English dictionaries, A Cantonese Phonetic Vocabulary (1855), An English and Cantonese Pocket Dictionary: For the Use of Those Who Wish to Learn the Spoken Language of Canton Province (1859), and A Chinese Dictionary in the Cantonese Dialect (1877) (Ching
References

Bauer, Robert S. 2018. Cantonese as Written Language in Hong Kong. Global Chinese 4: 103–42. [CrossRef]


British and Foreign Bible Society. 1870. Reports of the British and Foreign Bible Society, with Extracts of Correspondence. London: British and Foreign Bible Society.


Choi, Daniel Kam-To 蔡錦圖. 2018. Shengqing zai Zhongguo: Faliu shidao shengqing lishi mulü 《聖經在中國: 附中文聖經歷史目錄》. Hong Kong: Daofeng Shu She 逍風書社.


Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.