

A Brief Overview of Chinese Bible Translation History

Translators	Date Published	Source Text (s)	Chinese Style	Translation Principles	Comments	Problem(s)
Joshua Marshman	1822 (India)	Griesbach's Greek Text English (KJV)	Ancient Literary Style (see below)	Formal Correspondence	Marshman consulted Morrison's work to some degree as they were working simultaneously, and publishing incrementally	- Corrupt Greek text - High literary Chinese
Robert Morrison	1823 (China)	English Text (KJV) Textus Receptus (Greek) Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Ancient Literary Style (this style was the accept literary form at the time, but virtually unintelligible to non-scholars)	Formal Correspondence	In addition to consulting some of Marshman's work, Morrison's translation of Matthew-Hebrews, was mostly a revision (and correction) of an incomplete 17 th century Catholic translation of the Latin Vulgate	- High literary Chinese - Some Catholic influence
Medhurst, Bridgman & Gützlaff	Not published (completed in 1835-36)	Unknown Mostly a revision of Morrison's work	Unknown (likely in the literary style as well)	Frequently used paraphrase	Tended to use a lot of paraphrases, and thus was rejected for publication	- Translation principles (paraphrase) - literary style
Delegates Version (Medhurst, Boone, Bridgman, Stronach, Milne)	1858 1852 (NT)	Textus Receptus (Greek) Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Very High Literary Style (extremely difficult for the common man to understand)	Closer to "dynamic equivalent" in many cases	This version was produced by a group of foreign missionaries and their Chinese language assistants.	- Translation principles (dynamic equivalence) - literary style

					It aimed to win over Chinese scholars with its high and flowery Chinese	
Nanking Version (Medhurst, Stronach)	1856 (NT)	Basically a revision of the Delegates NT,	Early form of modern Mandarin (a more colloquial and understandable style)	Based on Delegates version (see above)	This version was never widely used as it employed a more southern style of Mandarin which wasn't common	- Translation principles - Non-standard Mandarin
Peking Version (Schereschewsky, Burdon, Blodget, Edkins, Martin)	1878 1872 (NT) 1874 (OT – done solely by Schereschewsky)	Nanking Version Textus Receptus Massoretic Hebrew	Colloquial style on northern Mandarin (it was highly understandable and thus became very popular, especially in the northern part of the country)	Loose Formal Correspondence (often tended to use cultural equivalence in translation)	Mandarin Chinese was a form that was starting to gain popularity as a lingua franca, especially in northern China, but was still poorly developed and undergoing change. Thus the form used was a rather poor and awkward form of Mandarin	- Translation principles (Loose formal correspondence) - Non-standard Mandarin - Poor translation
Union Versions (Mandarin, Easy Wenli and High Wenli)	1919 Easy Wenli (NT 1902) High Wenli (NT 1907) Mandarin (NT 1907)	Peking Version Westcott and Hort's Greek Text	High Wenli (High and Literary Style of Chinese) Easy Wenli (Simplified Literary Style) Mandarin (Colloquial Literary)	Generally uses formal equivalence	Only the NT of the Easy Wenli was completed. This version never became popular. The High Wenli was published at the same time as the Mandarin version and was far less	- Corrupt Greek text - Sometimes uses cultural equivalence

			form)		enthusiastically received The Mandarin Version was released at a time when there was a major move away from ancient literary Chinese toward colloquial literary Chinese, and so the Mandarin Version quickly became the standard Bible in China.	
Other Modern Translations (Sigao, LZZ, CCV, TCV, NCV, REC, RCUV, DYN)	1950-2010	Critical Greek Texts	Mandarin (ranging from formal, literary Mandarin, to extremely colloquial and substandard language)	Dynamic Equivalence (TCV, CCV) Formal Equivalence (LZZ, NCV, REC, RECUV) Paraphrase (DYN)	SiGao (Catholic version) LLZ (translated by Lv Zhen Zhong) CCV (Chinese Living Bible) TCV (Chinese Today's English Version) NCV (New Chinese Version) REC (produced by Li Chang Shou cult) RCUV (Revised CUV...same Greek text) DYN (liberal use of lengthy paraphrase)	- Corrupt Greek text - Frequently use dynamic equivalence or paraphrase