

We must ensure that these major versions are worthy of the important role they are called on to play as reference books for translators. Another lesson is that the Church should make provision for some to learn the original languages of the Bible in order that in future they may be able to translate without the help of intermediaries. Then again, there is an urgent need to provide sound exegetical commentaries in the main languages. It is true that this need has been recognized and is being met in various ways, but the amount of help available at present is in no way commensurate with the need. Future translators must have these aids and a bibliography of what is even now available would help those who find books in English to be hard going. In the last resort, no part of the translator's task is more important than a humble and patient study of the text to be translated. At the present time the means for such study are scarcely available.

Another matter which calls for careful examination emerged from our discussions regarding future translation policy. It is evident that the Christian Church demands the whole Bible for its nurture. That the whole of the Old Testament as well as the New should ultimately be translated into as many languages as men and women use in daily life in Assam is not a simple deduction from this truth. Yet the fact remains that at the present time in nearly every language in which the people possess the New Testament only, the churches are turning their attention to the translation of the Old Testament. There should be consultation and close cooperation in this field between representatives of cognate languages and different churches, so that we do not unwittingly perpetuate divisions which may have little meaning by the end of this century.

The Church in Assam numbers more than one million people and it is still an area of rapid growth. It is characterized by youth, vigor, fervor, independence of spirit, and great diversity. These are all splendid qualities, but they carry with them their own temptations and dangers. It is against this background that we need to view the problems and opportunities in the field of Bible translation.

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## Orthography Conference for French West Africa

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French colonial policy in Africa has been to ignore the use of the vernacular languages in education, stressing education in the French language from the very first grade. This has created a sharp difference in the use of vernacular languages for education and literature between British and Belgian Africa, on the one hand, and French Africa, on the other. Missions have used many of the African languages in French areas, and there have been translations of Scriptures and other Christian literature in a good number of these languages, but missions have found it impossible to do alone what the government and missions together have done in areas of British influence.

One side effect of the lack of government interest has been the fact that there has not been any standardization of spelling for languages in French Africa. In many cases where there are both Catholics and Protestants each group has a different writing system. This, of course, occurs elsewhere also, but in French Africa there has not in the past been any official or semiofficial attempt to remedy the situation.

### *IFAN-Sponsored Orthography Conference*

It is because of traditional French reluctance to concern itself with vernacular writings in Africa that a conference organized by l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (a government-sponsored scientific organization in West Africa) to reach a decision about a standard writing system for Moore attracted wide interest. Moore, spoken by the Moosi people of Upper Volta, is one of the largest linguistic groups of French West Africa. In addition to the central question of how the Moore language was to be written, and what changes this would require from present writing systems, missions of the area (and Bible Societies) were most interested to see what the IFAN linguist would recommend, how sensitive IFAN would be to the enormous linguistic complications of the area, how much adaptation to French writing it would expect, and how sympathetic a view it would take toward the efforts of the missions in the direction of vernacular literature. Another point of deep interest was the manner in which Protestant and Catholic forces in the area would be able to work together and come to an agreement on spelling for their mutual benefit.

Because of this widespread interest among Protestant missions, there were observers from other languages than the Moore. In addition, E. M. Roulet, of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Georges Mabile, of the Protestant Federation, and the writer, of the American Bible Society, were also present.

The conference lasted three days, March 11-13. The first day was given to a discussion of general principles, the second to the details of Moore writing, and the third to problems in other languages as suggested by people attending the conference.

The IFAN leader of the conference was M. Houis, head of IFAN's linguistic section at Dakar. Mr. Houis gave every indication of being a most competent linguist with a good feeling for linguistic structure. He also showed a most helpful spirit, a desire to be practical, and an ability to make his points clear to the nonlinguists present. He has done linguistic research in several West African languages, including varieties of Mande, Fulani, and Bobo. He spent a month working on Moore in preparation for the conference.

### *General Principles and Orthographic Suggestions*

Mr. Houis discussed several principles behind the development of a practical writing system and distributed a suggested inventory of symbols for use in West African languages spoken in French areas of influence. These principles and the suggested symbols will be presented in this section. Discussion of them will be reserved for later. Here are the principles:

1. There should be a standardization of orthographic custom

throughout French West Africa. Symbols should have approximately the same value from language to language.

2. Those symbols in the French spelling system which can be generalized should be used, but in a completely consistent fashion. However, those symbols which are inconsistent, or which cannot be generalized, which are "strictly French," should be eliminated. This would mean eliminating the use of *gn* for /ñ/ (written *ny* in missionary productions in many West African languages), and *ou* for /u/, as well as superfluous elements in French writing, such as *qu*, *c*, *ç*, *et*, *ais*, *ait*, *ey*, *er*, *ille*, etc.

3. When symbols have to be made up, they should be typable on a standard French typewriter. As much as possible the space above vowel symbols should be kept clear for tone markings and indication of nasalization. In other words, it would be better not to use *é* for /e/ in the French manner, although Houis would allow this in some cases.

4. There should be only one symbol per phoneme, and representation of the phoneme should be completely consistent. An orthography should be based on phonemic distinctions, and not on phonetic differences.

5. Suggestions and solutions should be considered tentative since so little is known of the phonemics of West African languages.

The following chart gives Mr. Houis' suggested solutions of typical West African phonemes. In some cases more than one solution is given. As a reference point we have used the International African Institute symbolization in the first column, with an occasional indication of the phonetic value in brackets. Houis solutions follow in columns 2 and 3.

### Vowels

International African Institute	Houis I	Houis II	Remarks
a	a		
ɛ	e		
e	ɛ	é	The closed vowel is marked rather than the open because Houis feels it occurs less frequently.
ɔ	o		
o	ɔ		
u	u		<i>ou</i> is kept for the diphthong [ow].
~	^	~ Vn	(V stands for any vowel.) The major justification for using the circumflex is that it occurs on French typewriters. Houis would allow the indication of nasalization by a following <i>n</i> in the French manner only when there is no consonantal <i>n</i> in this same position.
double vowel	Vh	double vowel	

It should be noted that Houis feels that when languages have other vowel qualities than these, other symbols should be used, whether the listed symbols are needed or not.

### Consonants

For b, d, f, g, h, k, l, m, n, p, s, t, v, w, y, z, kp, gb, no change.

International African Institute	Houis I	Houis II	Remarks
ɓ	B		Voiced implosive
ɗ	D		Voiced implosive
ʒ [ʒ̥]	j	zh or ž	The sound of the first consonant in <i>azure</i>
ny [ñ]	ñ	ny	
[ḳ]	q		Backed velar or uvular stop
r	r		Flapped [r̥] only
[ʔ]	ʔ		Glottal stop
ʃ [ʃ̥]	ch		Initial sound in <i>she</i>
ŋ	ḡ	ng	
x	kh		Voiceless velar fricative
ɣ	gh		Voiced velar fricative
[r̥]	rh		Uvular trill
ts	ts		
tʃ [tʃ̥]	tch		
dʒ [dʒ̥]	dj		
Cy	Cy		(C indicates any consonant.) Palatalization of a consonant.
nC	nC		Prenasalization of a consonant.
Cw	Cw		Labialization of a consonant.

### Orthography Decisions for Moore

The second day of the conference, given over to a discussion of Moore orthography, was most interesting from many standpoints, but most particularly from that of the intelligent and informed participation of several Africans. One of them, Abbé Laurent Naré, showed considerable knowledge of the basic principles of phonemics and a thorough knowledge of the phonemic contrasts of his language. He had been in correspondence with Mr. Houis for some time and had worked out a spelling system which was a considerable improvement over the one more generally in use by the Catholics.

It was also interesting that the Catholics, both French and African, were not much more interested than Mr. Houis in writing Moore in as nearly a French way as possible, except that they wanted all of their symbols to be on a standard French typewriter keyboard.

The principal problems in the transcription of Moore lie in the vowel system. In some dialects there are nine phonemically distinct vowel qualities which may be charted phonetically as follows:

Front	Centralized Front	Centralized Back	Back
	i	u	
ɪ			ʊ
e			o
ɛ	a		ɔ

However, both [ɛ] and [ɔ] correspond with diphthongs in other dialects, and can be so written without confusion. This leaves seven vowels, for which Mr. Houis suggested, and the conference accepted, the following symbols: *ï, i, e, a, o, u, ü*. Some of the Africans felt that the symbolization of *ï* and *i* should be reversed, and likewise that of *ü* and *u*. They felt that the sound which they identified with French *i* should be so written, and the diacritics reserved for the sound which does not occur in French. Houis resisted this point of view for two reasons. One was that nasalization was to be indicated by *ˆ*, and that the vowels which he wanted to symbolize by the diacritical marks do not occur nasalized. The other was that two dots are commonly used in phonetic symbolization for centralization of vowel.

Nasalization is to be indicated by a circumflex over the vowel, and length by a doubling of the vowel. There was considerable discussion over this latter point, some of the group (supported by Houis) wanting to write *Vh*, and others wanting to write a macron over the vowel.

For the consonants there was little that was startling. *w* and *y* are to be used. The most interesting departure from previous practice was based on the discovery of Abbé Laurent Naré that [y] and [ɲ] (usually written *ny*) are members of the same phoneme. [y] never occurs before a nasalized vowel, whereas [ɲ] always does. Nasalized or oral vowels may occur after some other nasal consonants. [y] and [ɲ] are therefore written with the same symbol *y*, and the nasalization of the vowel, or lack of it, is of course indicated.

### *Critical Observations*

My own views on writing systems have been expressed in an earlier issue of *The Bible Translator*<sup>1</sup>. In that article I rated the factors in the choice of a symbolization (from most important to least important) as follows:

1. Maximum motivation for the learner, and acceptance by his society and controlling groups such as the government.
2. Maximum representation of speech.
3. Maximum ease of learning.
4. Maximum transfer. This refers to the fact that certain symbols will, when learned, be applicable to the more rapid learning of the trade or colonial languages in the area.

<sup>1</sup> William A. Smalley, "How Shall I Write this Language?" *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (April 1959), pp. 49—69.

5. Maximum ease of reproduction (typing and printing).

My major criticisms lie at just those points where I feel Mr. Houis and the conference departed from these principles. I would say that his rating would place maximum representation first, typewriter convenience second, and transfer value third. Motivation and teachability did not come in for much mention at all.

It is very true that the Africans at the conference were not highly interested in any particularly close approximation to the French writing system. None of them seemed to want to use *ou* for /u/, which would have been perfectly possible. Nor did they want to use *Vn* for nasalization, which is much more of a problem in Moore because final consonantal /n/ occurs. These men, however, were sophisticated individuals who had been working with their own language in writing. The ordinary French-educated person, however, who had never read his own language before, might well feel differently. The only symbols in the vowel system chosen for Moore, for example, which have much transfer value to French are *a* and *o*. What this will do to reading motivation remains to be seen.

On the other hand, the system chosen for Moore is more teachable than one more rigidly based on French would be, so far as new literates are concerned. I have heard a great deal of expressed concern on the part of missionaries in various parts of West Africa in opposition to writing systems which more nearly approximated French values on the basis of greater difficulty in teaching new literates to read.<sup>2</sup>

The greatest criticism which I have of Mr. Houis' suggestions and the conference, however, was the place of importance given to the typewriter. As I said there, this smacks of "mechanical imperialism" of a most petty sort. If these writing systems were not being made for people to read, if they were being constructed for linguists, or even for missionaries, there would be no objection. Any symbol is possible for any sound. These writing systems are being constructed, however, for unsophisticated people who do not know that any symbol is possible for any sound. They are being constructed for people whose hold on the ways of the West, including its reading skill, is precarious and insecure. To select *B* and *D* to represent /b/ and /d/ is expedient typewriter-wise, and is linguistically as good a solution as any other, but is culturally ridiculous. Much the same can be said for such symbols as *ḡ*. This should be an utterly last-resort kind of symbolization, not a seriously proposed solution.

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<sup>2</sup> Until missions demonstrate that they are out to teach readers by the thousands, however, the weight of potential readership in French West African languages lies with the French-educated except in the more remote parts of the area. New literates by the thousands may well be possible in some areas if the problem is approached as comprehensively as Dr. Wesley Sadler approached it in Liberia among the Loma (where there is no government vernacular education either), but it is not being done in French areas yet. I hope that a recent visit by Dr. Sadler to Togo and the Ivory Coast will have an effect on the stimulation of such a program. It seems strange that missions generally appoint doctors, nurses, builders, teachers, printers, and other such specialists, but are often reluctant to appoint full-time specialists for the building of literacy.

I am not one who believes that the extremely meager Scripture distribution in French West Africa is due primarily to the fact that missionary writing systems are not French-based, although I believe this sometimes plays a part. The situation is far more complicated than that. I am sure, however, that the development of the most adequate possible writing systems will have to include an element of real cultural sensitivity as well as deep linguistic sophistication on the part of those who set themselves the task of preparing a writing system for another people.

So far as the Moore is concerned, the American Bible Society stands ready to reprint the New Testament as soon as we have assurance that the new spelling is being put to use by other groups. We will watch the progress of its acceptance by the Moosi, literate and illiterate alike, with enormous interest. If the Africans present at the meeting have the backing of other opinion leaders, and if they produce the literature of which they are capable, it appears to have a good chance of success.

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## Junctions and Conjunctions

Richard F. Weymouth, in the introduction to the fifth edition of his *New Testament in Modern Speech*, makes a significant point about the frequencies with which certain grammatical patterns occur. Weymouth insists that it is not enough merely to translate words. One must be aware of their idiomatic value within the receptor language:

But he who would make a truly English translation of a foreign book must not only select the right nouns, adjectives, and verbs, insert the suitable prepositions and auxiliaries, and triumph (if he can) over the seductions and blandishments of idioms with which he has been familiar from his infancy, but which, though forcible or beautiful with other surroundings, are, for all that, part and parcel of that other language rather than of English: he has also to beware of connecting his sentences in an un-English fashion.

Now a careful examination of a number of authors (including Scottish, Irish, and American) yields some interesting results. Taking at haphazard a passage from each of fifty-six authors, and counting on after some full stop till fifty finite verbs—i.e. verbs in the indicative, imperative, or subjunctive mood—have been reached (each finite verb, as every schoolboy knows, being the nucleus of one sentence or clause), it has been found that the connecting links of the fifty-six times fifty sentences are about one-third conjunctions, about one-third adverbs or relative and interrogative pronouns, while in the case of the remaining third there is what the grammarians call an asyndeton—no formal grammatical connexion at all. But in the writers of the NT nearly two-thirds of the connecting links are conjunctions. It follows that in order to make the style of a translation true idiomatic English many of these conjunctions must be omitted, and for others adverbs, etc., must be substituted.