

FOREWORD

Chinese is the most varied language in the world - so many different sounds and tones to express the same meaning. The written language is constant (although even there are to be found slight area variations) but the pronunciation of each character differs as to region and origin of the speaker. This dictionary is prepared for the speaker of Bân-lâm gí 閩南語, what we call Amoy Chinese, which has its origin in the coastal regions of South China. It is not exclusive to China proper though, being understood and spoken extensively throughout all of Southeast Asia, with slight variations in inflection and pronunciation.

The publishing of this dictionary is the culmination of a long period of effort. A preliminary manuscript had been prepared by the Reverend Guerrino Marsecano S.J., aided by Mr. Ô' Tân-pêng. About 2 years ago Father Marsecano offered his manuscript to the Maryknoll Language Service Center in Taichung for further amplification and editing. Additional compilation and research has been carried on for the past 2 years by the Maryknoll Language Service Center leading to this present publication. Hence this work is the result of much diverse effort.

On perusing this dictionary, one item becomes immediately apparent - the extensive use of religious vocabulary. Why the emphasis on religious terms is easily understood, since the dictionary was prepared by religious communities for the proximate purpose for use of missionaries among Amoy speaking Chinese. Furthermore, no serious attempt has been made to include any specialized vocabulary. It is a work geared to the spoken language - not literary language form - and can be used with profit by any student in the various stages of Amoy language study.

As the student of Amoy Chinese is aware, Bân-lâm gí can be loosely divided as to accent - Chiang-chiu 漳州 and Chôan-chiu 泉州. In this dictionary, we used the form Chiang-chiu mainly spoken in the central section of Taiwan, with which the compilers are most familiar. The Chôan-chiu accent prevalent in other sections of Taiwan has not been stressed in this volume, but its many variations are to be found interspersed to manifest its usage. For example, the most common difference might be found in the "e" or "oe" variations - to "buy and sell" pronounced "bé-bē" 買賣 in the central

section, Chiang-chiu accent, would be pronounced "b'oe-b'oe" in the north where the Ch'ân-chiu accent predominates. Also we find differences in common expressions: to "study" 讀書 - "th'ak-ch'eh" or "th'ak-chu". Also some characters might have 2 tone readings, and these may be used interchangeably in this volume, e.g. k'eng-ch'hat, k'eng-ch'hat 警察 ; hū-k'în, h'ù-k'în 附近 . Many other examples of differences could be given, but the knowledgeable user of this dictionary is certainly familiar with the complexities of Amoy Chinese and will easily make the transition between tones and proper pronunciation designations.

We do not apologize for an occasional lack of preciseness in the Chinese translation of certain English words or phrases. Some common English expressions defy proper rendition in any language. This is all the more true in the Chinese language, since the whole style and character of Chinese thought and expression often is so different from its nearest English equivalent. In some instances, the English given might be a bit stilted in order to attempt to correspond with a fitting Amoy expression. We trust the user might provide for oneself a more fitting rendition. This publication was finished in the shortest possible time with the view to immediate use. It is not intended to be a definitive or error free work. Hence for any omissions or mistakes, we beg your indulgence. Even most careful proof readings are rarely infallible.

The selection of examples or phrases under the English heading word is meant to be representative rather than exhaustive. They are given as an aid to the speaker's own oral constructions. With a view to synthesis, some headings will have disparate meanings that will appear under the different examples given for the heading. No definitive attempt was made to categorize words as to precise meanings. Hence, for example, we define the word "magazine" as a form of reading material, and at the same time "powder magazine" (ammunition) appears in the illustrations for the word "magazine". Despite it possibly being at times confusing, it is only by using such entries as this that we could present as many disparate meanings and usages as possible, without tedious dividing and subdividing.

Furthermore some Chinese expressions used are common idioms, and their connection to the English might not be immediately apparent. For example,

the expression "to rush into danger" is given as "thâu-mo' chhi-hóe" (lit. test if fire burns the hair). We felt it not imperative to provide a complete explanation of the usage of this type of idiom in this dictionary, since instances such as this can be worked over by student and native teacher.

A word about some of the symbols used will be of benefit.

- 1) The designations of (v) verb, (n) noun, (a) adjective, etc. are used only rarely and then to obviate a possible difficulty. It was felt that in most cases the user would know by the word itself the proper grammatical designation.
- 2) A symbol such as (gōa) or (for.) denotes a word with a foreign derivative or one adapted from a foreign sound. Most of these are derived from Japanese or English, and would be a transliteration of the sound of a foreign word or tone. The words with these symbols might or might not have tone marks. One thing to take note of in this regard: the tones on the words under (gōa) or (for.) do not usually change; that is, the words are ordinarily pronounced with the tones as given.
- 3) Also other symbols will be found, the meaning of which should be readily apparent: e.g. (Cath.) Catholic; (Budd.) Buddhist term; (pl) plural; (bot.) botanical term, and so on. Also on occasion an explanatory word or phrase (in English, romanization or characters) might be included in parentheses along with the heading word.
- 4) Finally a slash mark between two words e.g. chò-hóe/tau-tin (be together), means that the words divided by the slash mark can ordinarily be used interchangeably.

One last item with regard to the use of this volume is the omission of proper classifiers for nouns. It was felt that it would only confuse more than help since so many words have multiple classifiers. Also the Amoy speaking user would already have an adequate grasp of the use of classifiers. The user is referred to our previous publication Amoy-English Dictionary (Maryknoll, Taiwan, 1976) for a more comprehensive treatment of classifiers.

Our sincere thanks to the many people who worked so long and arduously to complete this work. We hope their efforts will be repaid by their satisfaction in its production. We owe gratitude to Fr. Marsecano and Mr. Ô' for their initial work. We appreciate the work of Mr. HÔ Tek-siu 何德修 for his specialized work in the early stages, and for the continuing and finalizing work done by the permanent teaching staff at the Maryknoll Language Service Center, Messrs. Tân Chùn-sū 陳俊士, Tân Liông-hiông 陳良雄, Gô' Ko-siông 吳高松, Ng Tì-hêng 黃智恒. Special recognition must go to our language school secretary, Miss Wanda Chen 陳惠珠 for her many months of painstaking hours, typing the originals, snipping and cutting and pasting the revisions - a most tedious task.

It is our fervent hope that this dictionary will be of value to Amoy speaking people everywhere and will be accepted as a small contribution in exploring the riches of the multifaceted Chinese language.

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Maryknoll Eng-Amoy Dictionary

ENGLISH AMOY DICTIONARY

英語閩南語字典

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