

The Printed Word in French Indo-China

By Rev. IRVING R. STEBBINS

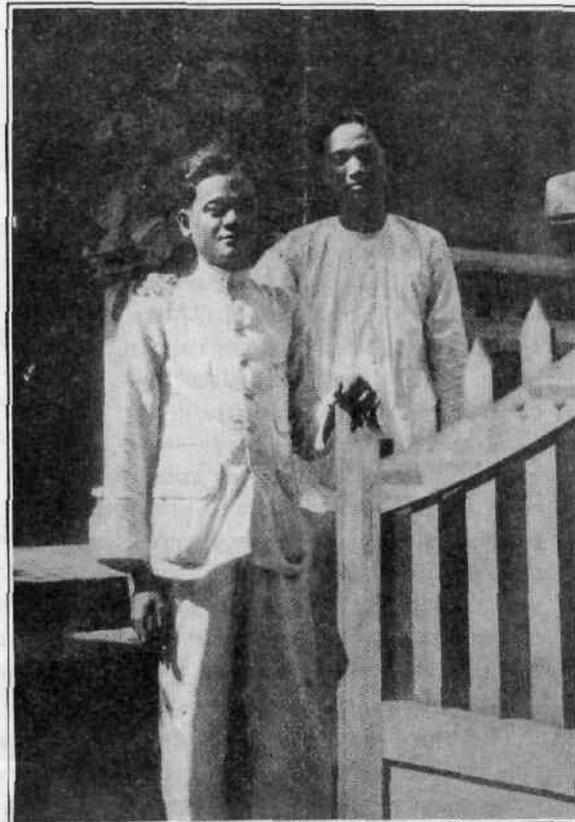
David and/or Siem Riep
Sihanouk

Jonathan and/or Siem Riepe
Dy Bellong

Maybe - Y Bham

Moses - Hieu

Zech. 10:12 - our five
"prisoners of hope"



Annamese Evangelist at right, and Bible translator at left

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The translation of the Gospels and the Acts was begun early in the work in French Indo-China, and the circulation of the Scriptures soon followed with the aid of the British and Foreign Bible Society. In 1924 each native Christian possessed a New Testament in his own tongue. The entire Bible is now translated and published in Annamese, and the Annamese colporteurs have scattered the Scriptures through three provinces. The Gospels are now being printed in the Laotian tongue, and a Bible magazine in Annamese is now under way.

We give much praise to God for giving us very early in the history of this mission a publication work, and also missionaries who had both the vision and the perseverance to render a complete translation of the Bible into the Annamese language. As early as 1916 Mr. and Mrs. Cadman, in the city of Hanoi, began work on the four Gospels and the Acts. As Mr. Cadman thoroughly understood the art of printing, their translation was soon in print and circulation. The British and Foreign Bible Society made the success of this stupendous undertaking possible. Seeing the value of the work, they asked for the copyrights, and also requested us as a mission to take the books as fast as printed and with our workers spread the Word of God in all directions. Their plan was for our society to continue with translation work, with the help of Annamese workers of the Bible Society, and all of the printing was to be done on our own mission press.

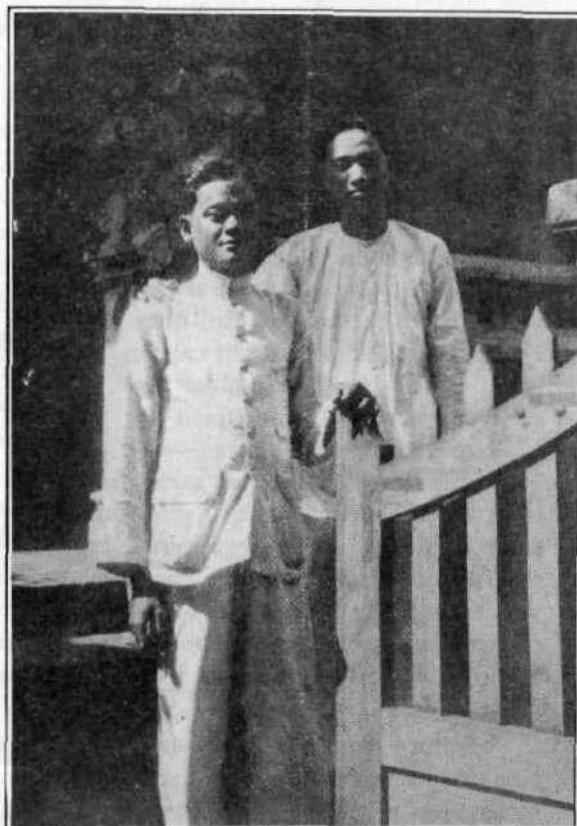
In 1920 Mr. Olson, of Cochin China, joined Mr. and Mrs. Cadman, in the translation work, and they worked night and day to complete the work. It was not long before forty natives were working on night and day shifts in the printing plant to publish the translations. When I went to the field in 1918, only the four Gospels and the Acts were in circulation; in 1924 the New Testament had been published, and each native Christian possessed a copy. The circulation of the Scriptures has no doubt been one of the chief contributions to the rapid growth of the Annamese church.

Years ago the Roman Catholic Church had made a translation of the Bible, but its circulation is still forbidden, and in order to secure a copy we had to send to Hongkong where we purchased a four-volume Bible in Latin and Annamese at a high price. Our Bible is in one small compact, clear typed book, delivered for one-thirteenth the price of the Latin-Annamese edition, which puts it within the reach of the poorest native, thank God!

The Complete Bible in Annamese

The year 1926 caused great thanksgiving to God, for in that year the press at Hanoi completed the publication of the entire Bible in the

Annamese language. It made a new page in the history of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, for the Indo-China Mission produced the first complete translation of the Bible into the native language! How our hearts were thrilled and encouraged as we each received our first copy! What shouts of joy went up in the native churches as the Christians purchased copies of the complete Word of God to take home! How our hearts rejoiced as we watched our Christians turn from place to place in the Bible as we gave out various references to our sermons! What a substantial help this brought to our Bible school where we had been laboring



Annamese Evangelist at right, and Bible translator at left

with such handicaps under a faulty Catholic Bible! Nothing has ever happened on this field to solidify our work more than the production of the Annamese Bible.

Colporteurs Scatter the Word Through Three Provinces

The circulation of the Bible kept pace with its printing. We hired colporteurs as rapidly as the Lord gave means. Voluntary helpers also have scattered hundreds of thousands of copies of the Gospels and the Acts throughout the three provinces. Eternity alone will reveal all the souls who have been brought to Jesus through this widespread circulation of God's Word, and we are certain that as yet we have but the firstfruits of an immense harvest just before us.

In 1918 a hymnal in Annamese was published, also many tracts. In 1928 our Hanoi Press printed 10,284,545 pages. These included:

- 60,000 Cambodian and Annamese Scriptures,
- 5,380 Sunday School pamphlets,
- 122,000 special series of 16-page evangelistic tracts,
- 5,860 The Call of Indo-China.

Our missionaries in Cambodia, appreciating the immense value of the Bible in the native tongue, have been fired with a like ambition, and a tentative edition of the Cambodian New Testament is on the press.

The Gospels Translated into Laotian

During 1928 our colporteurs circulated 151,343 Scripture portions, New Testaments, and Bibles, an increase of fifty per cent over any previous year. Our press is also busy printing the Gospels into Laotian, the translation work of several Swiss missionaries. Splendid tracts on salvation, sanctification, prayer, and books on prophetic subjects by Mr. Jaffray, have been published. It would be impossible to estimate how much these clear explanations have helped the work.

A Bible Magazine in Annamese

Pray for our newest project, that of publishing a Bible magazine for circulation throughout the Annamese church, and our first Christian monthly paper. Pray for the circulation of

(Concluded on page 138.)

Up the Mekong for Christ

(Concluded from page 136.)

rushing current, which at times impeded the progress of the boat, we were aware that it was a mighty river. The Mekong is of special interest to us because it is the principal waterway to our field. With mingled emotions, yet upheld by God's promises of protection and care, we started up this great river. Standing on deck one evening as we passed a number of islands, some lines from Whittier's "Eternal Goodness" came to our minds with comforting thought:

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

"I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies."

There were three other white passengers going up the river at the same time as we—one an American, who was heading an expedition to the mountains of Laos in search of tin or gold deposits. The part of Laos that they will enter is extremely difficult of access, being mountainous and filled with jungles. For the sake of earthly gain these men are willing to leave home and loved ones, willing to surmount the greatest obstacles, yes, willing to risk their lives, to find treasure, "gauds that perish." Shall not we, the children of light, have the same type of courage and sacrifice in searching for the "things that last, the things that are more excellent"? Hath not God said "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," and again "I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places." These geologists, after all their efforts, may fail to find treasure, whereas we are sure of an inheritance, according to God's promise.

We were not the only passengers, however, for the boat was well crowded with scores of natives who set up housekeeping on deck as soon as they got on board. Each one carried with him several large wooden bowls—one filled with wood, one with food, and another with utensils. Also a large straw mat, which served as dining table during the day, and at night, as bed. The combined odors of all these culinary efforts were not the most agreeable when one would emerge from a hot and stuffy cabin to enjoy a little of the cooler evening air on deck.

At a certain place the boat stopped to take on some passengers. There upon the little wharf lay two men who were very ill. One especially was in real agony and tossed to and fro upon the rough boards. There he lay in great distress, with not even a pillow under his head, nothing but the hard boards of the wharf. These sick men were put on board, and ere we had traveled many miles this man passed into eternity. Undoubtedly without a ray of Gospel light he entered into the blackness of the midnight of eternity—a poor, lost heathen soul. How we should liked to have told him of the Saviour and His love, but without a knowledge of the language we were helpless. Had the Church of Christ more quickly obeyed the command "Go ye into all the world" this man might have had the knowledge of salvation. May the Church of Christ bestir itself to obey, lest millions more pass away as did this poor soul.

One evening at dusk six men came out to the boat in a "pirogue" or native canoe to take some passengers ashore. When alongside our boat, the pirogue suddenly capsized and all were thrown into the current. Another pirogue near at hand rescued two of the men and then pulled for shore because it could not take on more lest it also capsize. Our captain ordered our boat to travel in reverse and then he threw out life lines. One of the four men was a strong swimmer and thus held his own against the current, so that finally he reached the life line and was saved. The other three men were clinging to the capsized pirogue which was hurriedly borne downstream by the swift current. The captain said it was impossible to go back farther due to the danger of striking some hidden rocks, and so ordered the boat to advance up the river. We felt that more could, and undoubtedly would have been done, had they been Europeans. In this case the captain very likely would have turned the boat and gone downstream to pick them up; but, since they were only natives—well, perhaps in his mind it made no great difference, or perhaps he felt well gratified to have saved one. There they were—three men adrift in the night with no one to save them. They might be borne by the current near an island or a clump of trees and thus be rescued, but this was rather doubtful.

The third day our boat stopped at Kone, where there are great rapids, and it was necessary to transfer to a small train traversing an island, on the other

side of which we boarded a smaller boat. We were on this boat a day and a half, passing through some wild jungle country. About 7 o'clock at night our boat tied up to the densely-wooded shore, it being too dangerous to travel in the darkness. The heavy scent-laden breath of the jungle permeated our cabin. Night's solemn stillness was broken only by the droning hum of a thousand insects and the weird low-toned chatter of the natives as they conversed during the late hours of the night. At dawn we were aroused from our slumber by the chug-chug of the engines as the valiant little boat continued its course up the Mekong. At Pakse, Laos, we were met by Mr. Gunther, who took us to a fairly comfortable Chinese hotel for that night. Early the next morning we started on the last stretch of our journey, taking a native bus for two hours and then transferring to a small river boat going to Ubon. So we have had occasion to try almost every kind of water craft except the native pirogue, which is still left for the future.

Pray for Eastern Siam, this needy section of the harvest field, which has been opened so recently, that God will establish a strong native church to minister to these three millions of people who are still without Christ.

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(Concluded from page 137.)

Bibles and tracts. Tonkin and Annam are opening their doors to the Gospel, and soon colporteurs will be permitted to go in every direction as in Cochin China. This scattered seed is sure to bear much fruit.

Indo-China is tired of idolatry and hungry for something more soul-satisfying. After every evangelistic meeting inquirers take the printed pages to their homes and continue their search for the Way of life. A request is now in France, sent by the Governor General of French Indo-China, asking that the work of our Alliance Mission be duly recognized throughout French Indo-China. Pray that every remaining barred door may be thrust open. Surely God wills to evangelize Indo-China in this generation. The printed page is one of the surest methods by which to accomplish this task. Pray, then, that this most important work may go steadily on.