TWO RELATED INDIGENOUS WRITING SYSTEMS: CANADA'S SYLLABIC AND CHINA'S A-HMAO SCRIPTS

R. Alison Lewis
University of Lincoln
Lincoln LN6 7TS
United Kingdom

Louis-Jacques Dorais
Département d'anthropologie
Université Laval
Québec, Québec
Canada, G1K 7P4

Abstract / Résumé

Around 1840, a team of Ojibwa and Cree speakers working with Rev. James Evans, a British Wesleyan missionary, developed a syllabic writing system which disseminated rapidly among the Cree and other northern Canadian Aboriginal nations. Some 65 years later, in 1904, another Methodist, Rev. Samuel Pollard, who also worked in close collaboration with local people, supervised the elaboration of a script for transcribing the language of the A-hmao, an Aboriginal minority in south-western China. This article tells the story of these two writing systems, discusses the evidence of a connection between them, and describes their similar educational role in terms of social empowerment.

Vers 1840, une équipe formée de locuteurs de l'ojibway et du cri travaillant en collaboration avec le Révérend James Evans, un missionnaire wesleyen d'origine britannique, développa un système d'écriture syllabique qui se répandit rapidement chez les Cris et d'autres nations autochtones du Nord canadien. Quelque 65 ans plus tard, en 1904, un autre méthodiste, le Révérend Samuel Pollard, qui travaillait lui aussi en étroite collaboration avec les populations locales, supervisa l'élaboration d'une écriture pour transcrire la langue des A-hmao, une minorité autochtone du sud-ouest de la Chine. Cet article raconte l'histoire de ces deux systèmes d'écriture, discute d'une relation probable entre eux, et décrit leur rôle éducatif en termes d'outils de pouvoir social.

Introduction

People interested in Canada's Aboriginal cultures and languages know that a large number of First Nations currently use syllabic writing systems. This is the case with a majority of Ojibwa and Cree nations, as it is with the Canadian eastern Arctic Inuit (except for Labrador), and with the speakers of at least one Dene language (Chipewyan). All these systems originate from the same source: the script devised in the late 1830s and early 1840s by a team of Native speakers of the Ojibwa and Cree languages, under the supervision of Rev. James Evans, a Wesleyan missionary at St. Clair River (Ontario) and Norway House (Manitoba).

What is often overlooked is that at the other end of the world, in south-western China (provinces of Guizhou, Guanxi and Yunnan), writing systems at least partly inspired by Canadian syllabics are also in use among the A-hmao and a few other Aboriginal populations of the area. They were devised at the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to the collaboration between Native speakers and Rev. Samuel Pollard, a Methodist missionary who most probably knew about Evans' work.

In the following pages, we will look at these two sets of writing systems in order to explore the connections between them—in terms of their history, mode of operation, and role in defining Aboriginal identities —and point at their similarities and differences. Canadian syllabics will be dealt with first.

James Evans and His Team

The story of Rev. James Evans, who is commonly credited with the invention of the syllabic script, is fairly well known (*cf.* Pilling 1891; Young 1899; McLean 1932[1849]; Hutchinson 1988; Lewis 2001). Born on January 18, 1801 in Hull (Kingston-upon-Hull), East Yorkshire, then a leading British port, Evans was the eldest son of a sea captain in the Baltic trade. After having been schooled (in Lincolnshire, according to Hutchinson 1988), he was apprenticed in 1816 to a grocer in Hull. It is presumably during this period that he acquired two skills that would play an essential part in his later life.

Whether at school or in the course of his apprenticeship, Evans learned to write in shorthand. The most common shorthand in use in the 1810s and 1820s had been devised by Samuel Taylor in 1786 (Butler 1951), and it was probably the one with which Evans became acquainted. Pitman's shorthand, sometimes mentioned as an inspiration for the syllabic script, became popular only after 1840, the year James Evans printed the first Cree book in syllabics.

The second skill seemingly acquired by Evans during his apprenticeship was an interest in foreign languages and a gift for learning them.

At that period in its history, Hull was a cosmopolitan seaport where sea-farers speaking various foreign tongues were to be met: Dutch, Scandi-navians, North Germans, Poles, and other residents from the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea. It may be presumed that some of them pro-cured their ship's supplies at the grocery where Evans worked, and that the young apprentice had ample occasion to hear the sounds of many different languages. He may also have heard about Aboriginal people—and even met some of them wintering in Hull—from local whaling cap-tains who interacted with the Inuit during their campaigns along the west coast of Greenland.

Another important event in the life of James Evans was when he converted and joined the Wesleyan Methodist church in 1818, after which he became active as a Sunday school teacher and local preacher. This teaching experience provided him with another ability he would put into good use later on: communicating knowledge.

Evans' family emigrated to Canada in 1820, at which time James and his younger brother Ephraim moved to London. There James was employed in a glass and crockery business, before joining his family in Lachute (northwest of Montreal), Lower Canada, in 1822. After a few months, he was offered a teaching job at L'Orignal, Upper Canada, on the south shore of the Ottawa River, where he met and married Mary Blithe Smith in 1822 or 1823.

In 1828, Evans was invited by the Canadian Methodists to teach at their Rice Lake Indian school, near Peterborough, Upper Canada. He stayed there for three years, learning quite rapidly the Ojibwa (also called Saulteaux) language and starting to work on translations. Between 1831 and 1833, Evans taught at various Indian missions at Credit River (Mississauga), Ancaster and St. Catharines. His first attempts at finding a script suitable to Ojibwa date from this period.

After having been ordained a Methodist minister in 1833, Evans was sent to Saint Clair mission near Sarnia, where he was invited to join a committee of the Methodist church charged with finding a solution to the problem of written Ojibwa. This committee included three Native speakers—Joseph Stinson, Peter Jones and Thomas Hurlburt—as well as three European missionaries: William Case (president of the Upper Canadian Methodist district), James Evans, and Evans' brother Ephraim, who had also become a minister (Hutchinson 1988). The committee worked as a team, the input of its Ojibwa members being essential to the achievement of its goal.

This goal was attained in 1836, when the committee proposed a script which, in contrast with the common alphabet, used symbols rep-resenting whole syllables rather than separate vowels and consonants.

This writing system, whose principle was partly similar to that of short-hand, appeared easier to learn than the alphabet. It was rejected, though, by the Toronto Bible Society, because it would have been too expensive to print books written in these new characters. It may also be added that since most Ojibwa schools were already bilingual, some educators thought that the simultaneous use of two writing systems, one for English and the other for the Aboriginal tongue, would be detrimental to students. In 1837, James Evans spent four months in New York City, publishing Ojibwa translations of hymns and biblical texts in an alphabetical orthography (Young 1899).

The rejection of the script proposed by the committee may have been instrumental in James Evans' decision to seek another field of mission. Evans had had occasion to participate in meetings with northern Ojibwa and, possibly, Cree Indians at Manitoulin Island and, in the words of his son-in-law, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) trader John McLean, "his sympathy had been awakened by the sight of their degradation and spiritual destitution" (McLean 1932: 363). Whatever the case may be, in 1838, he was asked by the Canadian Wesleyan Conference to undertake a circuit of the north shore of Lake Superior, together with Aboriginal missionary-linguists Thomas Hurlburt (who had been a member of the committee) and Peter Jacobs, in order to investigate possibilities for establishing new missions. In May 1839, Evans met with George Simpson, governor of the HBC, who, according to McLean, invited him to pursue missionary work in the Hudson's Bay territory, in exchange of which he would hold the same rank and receive the same allowance as HBC's wintering partners.

In April 1840, James Evans learned that he had been appointed superintendent of Methodist missions in the Hudson's Bay territory. He left Upper Canada for Norway House (north of Lake Winnipeg) a few weeks later, accompanied by three other missionaries, his wife, their daughter, and two Ojibwa collaborators: Peter Jacobs (Pahtahsega) and Henry Bird Steinhauer (Sowengisik).

Since Jacobs and Steinhauer played a major part in the development of Cree syllabics, it may be interesting to say a few words about them (cf. Pilling 1891: 477-478; French 1982; Sieciechowicz 1982). Jacobs was the oldest of the two. He had been born in 1807 at Rice Lake and baptized in 1825 by William Case. After having studied at two Methodist schools (in Belleville and Credit River, Upper Canada), where he presumably learned English, he became an interpreter and Wesleyan preacher. After having accompanied Evans and Hurlburt in their 1838 trip to Lake Superior, he remained at Rainy Lake (to the west of Lake Superior) till 1840, when he joined Evans' party. Jacobs was ordained

minister in 1842, after which he was stationed at various mission posts. For unknown reasons, he was expelled from the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in 1858, and died in Rama (on Lake Simcoe, north of Toronto) in 1890, after having been readmitted to the church in 1867 (French 1982).

Rama was the place where Henry Steinhauer was born in 1820. After his baptism in 1828 (he too was christened by William Case) and one or two years at the Grape Island (Lake Couchiching) mission school, he spent three more years at the Cazenovia Seminary, in New York State. This is where he adopted the surname Steinhauer, the name of the benefactor who had paid for his tuition. Henry Steinhauer then taught at various mission schools in Upper Canada. He joined James Evans' party in 1840, but left it at Rainy Lake, in order to interpret for Rev. William Mason, one of Evans' fellow missionaries. Two years later, however, Evans invited Steinhauer to Norway House, because he needed someone to replace Jacobs as translator (Sieciechowicz 1982). Steinhauer remained in northern Manitoba (at Norway House and Oxford House) till 1855, the year he was ordained Wesleyan minister. He then established a mission at Lake La Biche (Alberta), which was moved to nearby Whitefish Lake in 1858. Steinhauer died at Whitefish Lake in 1884.

Both Jacobs and Steinhauer were Native speakers of Ojibwa. This language belongs to the northwestern branch of the Algonkian family. This explains why they do not appear to have had any problem understanding the Norway House (and, in the case of Steinhauer, northern Alberta) Cree speakers, as Cree too is part of the same northwestern branch of the Algonkian languages. This is also why Evans had no problem either to transfer his linguistic skills from Ojibwa to Cree.

James Evans remained at Norway House (and Rossville, a neighbouring settlement) for six years. Working in team with Jacobs and, then, Steinhauer, he put, once again, his knowledge of shorthand into good use, adapting to Cree phonology—within two months, if Hutchinson (1988) is right—the syllabic script already devised for Ojibwa; teaching this script to adults and children; and printing books using it. The role of Jacobs and Steinhauer was essential at all steps in this process. Besides contributing to Evans' understanding of Cree phonology, they helped him devise religious and secular curricula for the local school, and translated the Scriptures and several hymns in Cree (Pilling 1891: 478).

Evans had other collaborators—two of them Aboriginal—who also had an important part to play in the production of written materials in the Cree syllabic script (see Pilling 1891: 1338-1341). John Sinclair was a half-breed Cree from the Hudson's Bay territory. According to Pilling, Sinclair translated the Old Testament up to Job, as well as the Gospels

and Acts, while Steinhauer did the same with the rest of the Old Testament, the Epistles and the Revelation. Another part-Cree, Sophia Mason, also contributed to these translations, together with her missionary husband William Mason. The Cree Bible was later published in England under the name of Rev. Mason, and it seems that in some circles, he was credited with the invention of syllabics, though he later denied having ever made such a claim (Pilling 1891: 1341). In any case, when Evans left Norway House in 1846, due to various problems and misunderstandings, his team had already published seven books of a religious nature, entirely in syllabic characters, and his collaborators continued to produce written material long after his departure.

It is said (Young 1899: 186) that because the HBC first refused to transport to Norway House the printing press Evans had been offered by the British Wesleyan Conference, the missionary had to carve the syllabic characters by himself, out of the leaden lining of tea chests, and to print his books on birch bark (with soot mixed with sturgeon oil as ink), using a fur press to do so. This may be partly hagiographic, but it is sure that James Evans' problems did not cease to increase during his stay at Norway House. In 1845, Governor George Simpson asked the Wesleyan authorities to recall the missionary who, in June 1846, received a letter inviting him to meet with his superiors in London. Evans left during summer, arriving in Britain in October. His health had already been deteriorating and he died in Lincolnshire on November 23, about a month after his arrival.

The Syllabic Script

According to Pilling, the chief problem for Evans and his collaborators was to create a writing system suitable to nomadic people who did not remain at the same place long enough to have time to go to school. This system had to be simple—in order to be learned rapidly—while, at the same time, reflecting accurately the phonemic structure of the language, *i.e.* those sounds that the language used as functional units of pronunciation.

One important advantage of syllabics, as compared to a script that would have been based on the common alphabet, was that the influence of predetermined writing conventions was at a minimum. Let us give one example, that of vowels. In written English, five letters are used for symbolizing vowel sounds: a, e, i, o, u (not to mention y). Had Evans and his team worked on an alphabetic writing system for Cree, they might have insisted that this language had five vowels, because there were five letters for vowels in the alphabet they knew. This is precisely what the Moravian missionaries did in Labrador, and the Anglicans in

the western Canadian Arctic, when they devised writing systems for the Inuit (see Dorais 1990). Most Cree dialects, though, have only four vocalic phonemes (if vowel length is not taken into account): /e/ (as in "rest"), /i/ (ee), /u/ (oo) and /a/ (as in "task"). This was correctly understood by the inventors of syllabics.

This means that the linguistic intelligence of Evans, Jacobs, Steinhauer and others had an important part to play too. They were able to discriminate, among all varieties of sounds uttered by the speakers they heard, which vowels and consonants were really functional and which ones were mere varieties of these basic phonemes. They, thus, anticipated the research methodology common among modern linguists. It is said (Young 1899: 185) that Evans first studied the Cree language to "find the number and character of the sounds used by the best speakers in the tribe," discovering that the "principal sounds" were 36 in number and that they could be expressed in written form.

Evans' familiarity with shorthand—a script where consonants and vowels are often compacted together in easy-to-draw symbols—suggested him a practical solution for achieving such a written form for Cree, a solution he had already put into use when devising a writing system for Ojibwa. Instead of attributing a separate graphic symbol to each of the 36 "principal sounds" of the Cree language, he rather found it more practical to arrange these sounds in "rhythmic order," according to Young's expression. What actually happened is that Evans and his collaborators realized that with a language like Cree, whose phonological structure is chiefly syllabic (*i.e.* words are most often composed of consonant-vowel sequences), it is much simpler, as it is in shorthand, to devise series of partly similar written symbols, each series representing a set of syllables starting with the same consonant, than to graphically separate each phoneme (Murdoch 1981).

A simple, regular shape was thus associated with each consonant of the Cree language. A supplementary shape was attributed to syllables without initial consonant (*i.e.* made out of a mere vowel). Each of these shapes could occur in four different geometrical positions, according to the vowel (e, i, u, a) included in the syllable. In the original version of the system, where eight consonants (p, t, k, ch, m, n, s, y) had been elicited, this generated a total of 36 syllabic characters, one for each of the 36 "principal sounds" (*i.e.* basic syllables) of Cree, but in fact, speakers had to memorize only nine different graphic shapes, together with the four positions each of these could take (Figure 1). This made reading and writing very easy to learn, even with the addition of diacritic signs, 11 smaller symbols used for expressing final consonants, diphthongs, or vocalic length (for a detailed description of syllabics, see Nichols 1996).

R. Alison Lewis / Louis-Jacques Dorais

Figure 1
The Cree Syllabic Alphabet

INITIALS.	SYLLABLES.				FINALS.
	ā	e	∞	ah	° ow
a	▽	△	▷	◁	X Christ
p	V	∧	>	<	' p
t	U·	∩	⊃	C	⸝ t
k	९	ρ	ᑯ	ᑲ	ˎ k
ch	٦	ᒉ	ᒎ	ᒍ	- ch
m	�ᄀ	ᒣ	ᒧ	ᒪ	⟨ m
n	ᖜ	σ	ᖆ	ᖃ	⟩ n
s	↘	ᒝ	ᒞ	↘	⌃ s
y	ᖁ	ᖀ	ᖃ	ᖋ	⟩ r
					⟨ l

The dot over any syllable lengthens the vowel sound.

˙Thus, ᒐ ⊃ = Manito, the Indian name for the Great Spirit, or God; ᒪᒪ = Mama; << = Papa.

Source: Young 1899: 187

˙The shape of some syllabic characters recalls that of shorthand symbols, but Evans and his collaborators did not systematically transcribe the Ojibwa and Cree languages into any already existing (Taylor's for instance) shorthand system. In several cases, syllabic signs are more neatly and squarely drawn than the often curvilinear shorthand symbols. The general idea of transcribing the spoken language into syllables rather than into letters representing individual vowels and consonants was undeniably inspired by shorthand, as may have been the very shape of some symbols, but syllabics should not be considered a mere adap-

tation of shorthand to Aboriginal tongues. James Evans and his collaborators rather invented a totally new way of giving a written form to hitherto oral languages.

Some twenty years before this invention, though, in 1819 or 1820, a syllabic script had been devised by Sequoya, a Cherokee Indian, to put his Native language into writing. This system, which was still in use in the Cherokee communities of Oklahoma and North Carolina in the 1990s (Walker 1996), differs from Cree syllabics in that each of its symbols is idiosyncratic, *i.e.* completely different from all others, rather than resulting from the combination of a limited number of shapes and geometrical positions (Scancarelli 1996). According to Nichols (1996: 599), Evans was "struck by reports in the mission press[1] of the success of the Cherokee syllabary," a fact which may have contributed to his choice of a syllabic (rather than alphabetical) form of writing.[2] It is worth noticing that the Cherokee script may have influenced at least one other Indigenous syllabic writing system, that of the Vai people of Liberia and Sierra Leone, devised in 1832-33 (Tuchscherer and Hair 2002).

Evans' system was readily adopted by the Cree, by Christians at first, who, according to Young (1899: 186), acquired it in a few days, "because there was no spelling to learn," that is because the system was so close to the actual pronunciation of the language that students did not have to memorize arbitrary writing conventions. Non-Christians were curious about it too, and some learned to read. Young (*ibid.*) asserts that since religious texts were the only available reading material, learning syllabics hastened conversions. Whatever the case may be, the Cree soon started using the system towards their own ends, writing letters to relatives and friends, and noting down events such as births and deaths in their family bibles. Some even wrote up their daily diary. Rather than remaining a mere missionary tool for evangelizing Aboriginals, syllabics thus really became the people's own way of communicating among themselves.

From Norway House, the syllabic script was rapidly disseminated among surrounding Algonkian-speaking populations. Missionaries working in various regions adapted it to the phonological specificity of the dialects spoken in their area, and within twenty years of its invention, it was used, amongst other groups, by the Western Cree, Plains Cree, James Bay Cree, Oji-Cree, Naskapi, and Northern Ojibwa. Besides Wesleyan Methodists, other denominations adopted syllabics, most notably the Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Around 1855, the British and Foreign Bible Society started printing syllabic bibles in various Cree and Ojibwa dialects (Pilling 1891). At the same period, the script was adapted to two non-Algonkian languages: Chipewyan (a Dene form of

speech) and eastern Canadian Inuktitut (on the history of syllabics among Inuit, see Harper 1983).

Besides these adaptations, there were imitations (Walker 1996). In the early 1880s, Algonkian speakers from the Great Lakes area, in both Canada and the United States, devised a syllabic script whose look was completely different from that of Cree syllabics (which some of them probably knew), as it was based on the Roman alphabet. Speakers of the Fox, Sauk, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Winnebago and Odawa languages adopted this Great Lakes Algonkian Syllabary, and during the 1990s, it was still known to some people belonging to the first four of these nations. Another syllabic script was devised around 1885 for the Carrier Dene language of northern British Columbia by father Gabriel Morice, a Roman Catholic missionary (Morice 1890). It followed the same principles (shape and position) as Cree syllabics, but the look of its symbols was partly different. It seems to have been abandoned during the 1930s.

This was not the case with the system invented by Evans and his collaborators. Nowadays, more than 160 years after its invention, the syllabic script is still alive among a majority of its original users, where it is known by 30,000 individuals at least. Its usage may have declined a bit among some Cree, Ojibwa and Chipewyan groups, due to the onslaught of formal education which, from the 20th century on, was entirely conducted in English, but for other groups—the Inuit and Naskapi for instance—it still constitutes the principal mean of written communication in the Aboriginal language. Even in those areas where they had started to decline, syllabics are now making a return of sorts. The reawakening of Aboriginal identities during the 1970s led to the development of formal education in Native languages, which entailed a revival of the use of syllabics for teaching children to read and write. The web site of a Canadian publisher in Aboriginal languages (www.nortext.com/schoolbooks/language) lists no less than 12 different versions of the syllabic script—including four versions of Cree syllabics, three of Inuktitut, and one each of Ojibwa, Oji-Cree, Innu, Naskapi, and Chipewyan—in which they currently publish school books. Syllabic fonts for the computer are in common use, and a font (Unicode Standard 3.0) including all existing syllabic symbols was devised a few years ago.

Some consider syllabics as far from perfect. Walker (1996) has criticized the shape of its symbols which, in his opinion, would be answerable to two different geometrical logics. The fact that bilingual readers are generally slower in syllabics than when using the alphabet has often been attributed to the allegedly cumbersome shape of syllabic characters. The difference, however, seems due to a lack of practice in reading

syllabics on the part of those who are literate in English; monolingual readers in the syllabic script can be as fast as any user of the alphabet (Dorais 1990). According to Murdoch (1981), the pedagogical qualities of syllabics far exceed its weaknesses. Be that as it may, the only three Canadian Aboriginal languages with excellent chances of surviving up to the end of the 21st century—Ojibwa, Cree and Inuktitut—are most often written in the syllabic script (Foster 1982).

Devised at the initiative—and with the technical support—of a British missionary, James Evans, the syllabic script could not have been invented without the input of a very competent team of Ojibwa and Cree speakers. As soon as it became available as a writing system, it was, so to speak, appropriated by its users, who made it totally their own. Nowadays, most Cree, Ojibwa, Inuit, Chipewyan and other users of syllabics genuinely consider it as *the* Aboriginal way of writing, by contrast with the White Man's script, the alphabet. The syllabic script thus really forms a part of contemporary Canadian Aboriginal identity.

As we shall now see, a similar process of devising a writing system in collaboration with its Aboriginal speakers—this system later becoming part of their cultural identity—occurred in a very different area of the world, south-western China, at the beginning of the 20th century. As far as we know, this process was at least partly inspired by the Canadian experience of James Evans and his collaborators.

Samuel Pollard and His Team

The name most closely associated with the invention of the A-hmao script[3] is Rev. Samuel Pollard, a Bible Christian missionary who arrived in Yunnan in 1887. His first significant encounter with the A-hmao people was in 1904, in Zhaotong, north-east Yunnan.

Pollard was born on 20 April 1864 into a Bible Christian[4] family living in Camelford in Cornwall, England. His father was a well-known preacher and his mother a teacher of French-Canadian extraction. Theirs was an itinerant ministry in Cornwall, Surrey and the Isle of Wight, seen as much part of Bible Christian evangelization as missionary activities in Australia, Canada and New Zealand. In 1876 Samuel Pollard went to the Bible Christian boarding school at Shebbear, North Devon, where the quality of instruction and his abilities led him to excel in the 1881 examinations, launching him into a career in the Civil Service. His family's particular evangelical Christian faith and his own personality and abilities gave a foundation to his missionary zeal and his skills in languages.

Between 1881 and 1887 he worked in the Post Office Savings Bank in London where it is probable that he used the Pitman shorthand system, the most common of the time. Equally significant at this time, he

was influenced by one of the 'giants' of the Bible Christian movement, Rev. F.W. Bourne, who combined energetic evangelism with "vigorous intellect and massive moral force," all characteristics which were later attributed to Pollard himself (Grist 1920: 7).

In 1884 the Bible Christians had mooted a mission to China, agreed in 1885 with the founder of the China Inland Mission (CIM), Rev. J.H. Taylor. Although there were Methodists working in South-west China with the CIM, it was agreed that Bible Christian missionaries would be stationed in Yunnan, in an associate capacity. In January 1888 Pollard and his life-long friend Frank Dymond arrived in Zhaotong, a small walled city in mountainous northern Yunnan and located on the main route between Sichuan Province and Kunming. His distinctive qualities had been enhanced at the CIM Chinese language school in Anqing, Anhui Province, where he excelled. Here he studied with a Scottish CIM missionary, Rev. James Adam, who later worked among the A-hmao in Guizhou Province. Pollard had an aptitude for languages. His diaries recorded New Testament studies in Greek and, in 1890, interest in Arabic while he was in contact with Moslem populations in Kunming. His first recorded contact with 'aborigines', the non- Han Chinese, also dates from this time (Pollard Diaries: 6 June 1890).

As pioneers in the hostile and traditional city of Zhaotong, both Pollard and Dymond were confronted by symbols and practices of China's traditional religions, by abject poverty and by the effects of opium use. They attempted to establish the Mission in the city but initially they spent their days in "one continuous grind at language study and evangelism" (Grist 1920: 37). But later, Pollard's competence in Yunnan Mandarin, his knowledge of Chinese religions, and insights into local politics enabled him to engage forcibly with people of all walks of life. Zhaotong had its educated and administrative elite with whom Pollard had good rapport, in particular with the Li family, which played a significant role in the establishment of the church and the development of the script for the A-hmao. It is not irrelevant to notice that Pollard was of small stature and a lively humorist, and he was fearless in adversity, especially when defending the weak. These factors contributed to the ease with which he engaged with people, be they Han or ethnic minority, official or labourer, and may have later been associated with the success of the script for the A-hmao.

Pollard's earliest encounters with the highland minorities in Yunnan and Guizhou provinces occurred on his travels well before 1904. His journeys along the trading artery between Yibin, on the Yangtze, and Kunming in the south, and north-east into the mountain strongholds of the Yi ('Nosu') took him through settlements in which people of different

ethnicities lived and into which he ventured, an explorer as well as a Christian missionary (Pollard 1908). As early as 1892 he was anticipating that he would, sooner or later, engage in work among the 'aborigines' despite his intense commitment to the Chinese (Grist 1920: 156). Evangelization among the Han Chinese had produced few converts and Pollard was an adventurer. He anticipated that this would extend his mission beyond the confines of the fortified cities and their residents.

During 1903, Pollard took three long journeys into north Yunnan with Li Sitifan (Li Guojun), who was a graduate and a son of a well-educated Han family of Zhaotong. He and Pollard had mutual respect, especially in the development of the script and translation. Li Sitifan became a Church leader and worked among A-hmao communities. He disappeared, feared dead, on a journey in 1918.

During these travels, Pollard encountered the mountain minorities, the Yi, A-hmao and Chuan Miao in their scattered mountainous communities (Lewis 2000). He recorded experiences which reflected their independence, resilience, poverty, and the absence of foot-binding of the women (Pollard 1908). The A-hmao are a sub-group of the Western Miao with a unique language and distinctive culture and traditions. It appears that they had no written language but a rich oral tradition of songs and stories, which included accounts of the loss of their writing (Parsons and Parsons 2000). Some claim that remnants of this writing remain in the patterns in their textiles (Enwall 1994: 47; Diamond 1996; Dong Ren Da 2002). Few of the other minority peoples in Yunnan had writing either, yet they were conscious of the power of writing, especially where they were under the control of the powerful Han administration and Yi landlords. The Yi priestly clan of Dalianshan had an ancient writing, in which each character represented a syllable, but this was accessible to relatively few people (Daniels and Bright 1996: 239).

It was not until July 1904 that Pollard was confronted by a group of the A-hmao. They came to him. Four A-hmao elders arrived in Zhaotong in July 1904. They had heard that Pollard was highly respected by the Chinese and Yi and ventured into the city, which was normally contemptuous of them. They arrived with five day's supply of food, intent on learning to read, but it does not appear that they sought religion. Was it only for this that they risked the contempt of the city? A few years earlier, a lone A-hmao had ventured into Zhaotong to make contact with Pollard, but left, unable to take the risk. (Grist 1920: 179) This later group had been directed to Pollard in Zhaotong with a letter from Rev. James Adam of the CIM in Anshun, Guizhou Province (Clarke 1911). In the weeks that followed, new groups of A-hmao arrived regularly, staying in the Mission buildings and wanting to learn to read. Within the first month, a

hundred eager Miao had visited the mission station. Pollard was receptive and ready for the challenge.

Pollard and Li Sitifan attempted to teach Chinese to the A-hmao using simple characters, but this was not effective among people for whom any writing was alien. There was little progress in reading Chinese characters. Pollard and Li Sitifan therefore resolved to learn their language so that they could teach the A-hmao to read and, thence, to understand Christian teaching. Initial progress was made with the help of people such as Zhang Chao Xian (Chang Mo-shee), an A-hmao leader who understood some Chinese (Enwall 1994: 103). Within a few weeks, Pollard and Li Sitifan had mastered enough A-hmao language to give short talks and write simple stories for the A-hmao, but still in Chinese characters. For the A-hmao, the problem of reading persisted. A script had to meet two criteria: the recording of the spoken language and the ease with which pre-literate people could learn it. The barriers to reading and writing for the A-hmao were eventually overcome, initially by Pollard's recognition that the language was syllabic, *i.e.* that word-elements usually ended in a vowel, and that it was tonal. Then Li Sitifan and he determined to devise a new writing system for the language, as neither Chinese nor a romanized alphabet would suffice. Pollard insisted that attempts to create writing "must be as simple as possible" (Grist 1920: 285) and be "absolutely phonetic and easily understood" (Pollard 1906: 174). On these grounds, he rejected the romanized writing system which had been devised by CIM missionaries in Anshun, Guizhou Province, despite the preference of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The A-hmao Script

There is evidence that Pollard had experimented with devising scripts during his travels among the Yi, whose ancient script is syllabic, but no indication that this trial directly influenced the outcome of the A-hmao script, other than the possibility that he was familiar with syllabic writing and had attempted to simplify and make it accessible for the low caste Yi (Enwall 1994: 103). This demonstrates Pollard's prior willingness to make writing accessible to even the poorest and to opt for this solution for the problem of the A-hmao as early as October 1904.

On 12 October 1904 Pollard recorded in his diary the first attempt to devise a script which would be more effective than Chinese writing, a mere three months after encountering the language, and reported that "Mr. Steven Lee [Li Sitifan] and I are attempting to reduce the Miao language to a simple system of writing" (Pollard Diaries: 12 October 1904; Enwall 1994: 105). Their inclination to invent a special script for the A-hmao language and Pollard's memory of a successful syllabic

Figure 2
Sample text in A-hmao script with English gloss and translation. The concluding lines of a song describing the expulsion of the A-hmao from their ancient homeland.

Y⁻ 'Ɔ" Λꞔ Lₐ   Ɔₙ   Tᵘ Λₙ Tⁿ Ɛₙ   ꞁˢ   Lₒ   Sₔ,

A-hmao elder plural descendants able come resemble,

The descendants of the Miao elders were like,

Sₔ   Tᵘ Tⁿ Ϲꞁ   Ɉᵤ   Ϲₙ   Ḽ   Sᵟ   Ɛₙ,

resemble orphan who connector drive away thus,

Like an orphan driven away,

Ɛ'" Λₔ   Ɉᵤ   Tᵘ Tⁿ Ϲꞁ Ɉʳ   Ɔ⁻   ꞁʳ   Λ..

reason was orphan not have father oh.

Because the orphan had no father;

Sₔ   Ɪ"   Ɪ⁻ ϹΔ Ɉᵤ   Ϲₙ   ꞁ   Sᵟ Ɛₙ,

resemble corn ragged is connector winnowed away thus,

Like ragged corn all beaten out,

Ɛ'" Λₔ   Ɉᵤ   Ɪ"   Ɪ⁻ ϹΔ   Гᵟ   Ɉʳ   Ɪₙ.

reason was corn ragged tilled not right.

Because the corn had been tilled amiss;

Sₔ   Ϲ~   Tⁿ Ϲꞁ Ɉʳ   Ɔ⁻   Ϲⁿꞓ.

like calf orphan not have mother.

Like an orphaned calf without a mother.

Ɔ.   Tᵌ Tⁿ   Ɉⁿ   Λ̃.

not be troubled over much.

Yet do not despair.

Ɔ⁻   'Ϲᵘ   Ɛₙ   Ϲ~   Ɉ⁻ Ϲꞁ   Ḽ   Ɛⁿꞓ   Lⁿ Ɉᵌ,

there is day thus calf orphan will live bull,

The day will come when the orphaned calf, grown into a bull,

Ϲɟ̊   ꞁʳ   Sᵟ   Ϲⁿᵓ   Ḽᵌ   ϹƆ⁻   Ɛₙ.

low three times situated room house thus.

Will low three times in its own room in the house.

Ɔ⁻   'Ϲᵘ   Ɛₙ   Ɪ"   Ɪ⁻ ϹΔ   Ḽ   Ɛⁿꞓ   3"   Ḽ,

there is day thus corn ragged will live good seed,

The day will come when the ragged corn will produce good seed

Ϲⁿᵓ   Ϲₙ   ϹТ'ᵟ   Ϲₙ   Ɉʳ   Ɉ".

situated connector loft connector not know.

To be stored in the grain-loft all unbeknown.

Ɔ⁻   'Ϲᵘ   Ɛₙ Tᵘ Tⁿ Ϲꞁ   Ḽ   Ɛⁿꞓ   3"   Ɉ'",

there is day thus orphan will live good guest,

The day will come when the orphan will be an honoured guest,

Ɉₒ   Tᵘ Ɔ⁻   Tᵘ Tₙ   Tᵘ Ɉ" Tᵟ   Ɔₙ,

cause the wealthy the strong the wise plural,

While the wealthy and the strong and the clever,

Tᵌₔ ꞁᵟ   T⁻   ϹTᵘ Ɉᵌ   Ϲₙ   Ɉʳ   Ɉ" Λ..

ashamed come behind connector not know oh.

All unbeknown, will follow behind, ashamed.

orthography persuaded them to experiment with a new script. In corre-
spondence with the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), dated 10
April 1906, Pollard writes: "Years ago I read of the syllabic method
adopted in North America, and of the success of Gospels printed by the
BFBS in this style" (BFBS 1906: 1). The script to which Pollard referred
was the Evans' syllabary (Enwall 1999). The parallels between this
syllabary and the A-hmao script are evident but not close, as the A-
hmao language has a more varied range of initials and finals. Both scripts
answered similar needs: ease of learning and straightforward shapes
for writing and printing. The Cree script had also been successful.

   The principle of the A-hmao script is simple. Each syllabic symbol is
made up of an 'initial' (*i.e.* consonant) and a 'final' (*i.e.* vowel). The posi-
tion of the final identifies the tone. The shape of the 'initial' and the
position (and shape) of the tone final give the pronunciation of the word.
Pollard used his knowledge of Pitman's shorthand to locate the vowel
or 'final' mark at different positions around the 'initial'. Thus a script was
invented which incorporated all the necessary elements of the language,
with a writing which was both easy to learn and straightforward to print
(Pollard 1919; Grist 1920: 287). There are too many variations and
complexities, compounded by the issue of tones, to include a table of
the A-hmao script that would fit into the format of this article; we rather
present a short example of an A-hmao text in parallel translation, show-
ing its wider use rather than as a tool of the missionary (Figure 2). The A-
hmao will welcome the choice. It is familiar and describes a significant
event in their story.

   There are 23 initial symbols and 33 finals, some in combination. Ini-
tially five tones were included, which coincided with the number of tones
used in Chinese language teaching for missionaries at the time (Kendall
1947: 123). Later this was reduced to four tones. Some A-hmao were
using seven tones during the 1940s, as explained to Rev. R.K. Parsons
by Wang Ming-ji (Parsons and Parsons 2000). The A-hmao script is a
"masterpiece of simplicity and the arrangement of the tones was ge-
nius," according to Rev. P.K. Parsons (personal communication, 2000).
This, in 2000, from one of the few remaining scholars of the Pollard script,
is credit enough for an introduction to writing and reading which trans-
formed the lives of many in one of China's distinctive minority peoples,
and distinguished them from their powerful neighbours. The main struc-
ture of the A-hmao writing had been completed by 1905.

Translation and Printing

   Once the script had been created, then translation, literature and
printing followed. The demand for literacy from the A-hmao and the

preachers' commitment to teach Christianity prompted the printing of the first booklets in 1905. Pollard's first translations in 1904 were undertaken with Li Sitifan, "my principal helper in the translation" (Pollard Diaries: 12 October 1904) and Yang Yage, to translate hymns and New Testament stories.

The procedure of translating from the New Testament was for Pollard and Li Sitifan to study the Greek and Chinese texts, then to paraphrase these and, with Yang Yage, put them into A-hmao colloquial in order to achieve both accuracy and clarity. The text was then written in the A-hmao script. This process combined the skills of A-hmao, Chinese and British people; the idioms of custom, people and place were important for understanding and remembering, as was accuracy to the original meaning of the text. In Pollard's Annual Report for 1905, he writes that most of the translation was done by 'Steven Li', and the authors of the first two Primers were 'Bo Geli',[5] Li Sitifan and Zhang Yue Han (Pollard 1906: 108). The first two Primers were printed in 1905 from woodcut blocks in Chengdu, Sichuan, at the West China Union University printing press, with the co-operation of Mr. J. Endicott, a Canadian printer. The second Primer contained hymns, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and outlines of the life of Christ. They became both a tool of literacy and a source of Christian teaching for the enquirers. The demand for these books was considerable, they sold by the thousands. Pollard reported progress on translating Mark's Gospel with Yang Yage and Li Sitifan: "[…] and before long we hope to have this in the hands of the Miao. […] The lion's share of this work has been done by Mr. Stephen Lee. Bro. Lee has been a true helper this year, and has won the confidence of these tribesmen to a great extent" (Pollard 1906: 31).

Others have claimed responsibility for the creation of the script and identify the strong influence of A-hmao traditional textile patterns, which in their view record pictograms of ancient Miao writing. In China, scholars articulate claims that the 'Pollard' or A-hmao script was from an indigenous source. Dong Ren Da (2002) summarizes opinions that "Pollard played an important role in the creation of the script, but that Miao and Han people contributed significantly to its creation. It absorbed the key elements of traditional culture among Nationalities in the South-West, especially the Miao" (translation). In addition, he reports that another person, John Zhang, "enquired about the structure and pronunciation of English and Mandarin and added this to his knowledge of traditional Miao symbols, thus producing the 'Old Miao' script."

Enwall (1994) considers in detail the myths and indigenous writing systems which may have influenced the A-hmao script and reiterates the view that the A-hmao contributed to the invention of the script as

well as to translation, and accepted the script as uniquely theirs from the earliest printing and study. However, the invention of the A-hmao script in 1904 was not without previous thought and influence. How else might the first printing have been completed by December 1904 when Pollard had only encountered the A-hmao six months earlier? However important these contributions are, recognition of the language's syllabic structure and the dated record that Pollard acknowledged of the achievements of Rev. James Evans in Canada, combine to give credit to the first collaborative work of Pollard, Li Sitifan and their A-hmao colleagues, Zhang Yue Han and Yang Yage. The last-named contributed more, and over a longer period, to the translation work than to the devising of the script (Enwall 1994).

At his premature death in 1915, not only was Pollard's reputation significant, but also the main structure of the script, the initials, the finals and the tone notation had remained, essentially unchanged. Modifications to the A-hmao script were made during the next twenty years as knowledge of the language increased and in response to demands for its use for other dialects (Chuan Miao) and languages (Gopu, Lisu and Laka) in Yunnan (Enwall 1994). Translation was undertaken after 1905 by Rev. A.G. Nicholls, from the CIM in Kunming, who studied the language and script with Pollard in order to work among the A-hmao in Wuding county, Yunnan (Enwall 1994; Kendall 1954). By 1907 Rev. Harry Parsons and Mrs. Annie Parsons had arrived, designated to develop work among the A-hmao. They lived at the new Shi Men Kan village, excelled in the language and travelled extensively. During Pollard's absence in 1907, H. Parsons translated the Book of Jonah and after Pollard's death in 1915, he translated the Gospel of Mark into the Chuan Miao dialect. By 1915 Rev. W.H. Hudspeth and the A-hmao translator, Yang Yage, were able to complete and take the proofs of the completed New Testament in A-hmao script to Shanghai to be printed. In 1949, Rev. P.K. Parsons and Rev. R.K. Parsons (sons of Rev. and Mrs Harry Parsons) departed from the region in advance of Communist forces. Although neither of them were translators, they had worked with A-hmao teachers and scholars, such as Wang Ming-ji, a teacher at Shi Men Kan school, and Yang Yung-xin, collecting A-hmao songs and stories. The very existence of the script meant that these songs and stories could be written by A-hmao themselves. They would otherwise have been lost during the political upheavals of the 1950s and to a disappearing oral history (Rev. P.K. Parsons, personal communication, 2000).

The A-hmao script became the vehicle for literacy and was associated with Christianity. The exceptional growth in church membership among the A-hmao immediately after 1904 cannot be dissociated from

the invention of the script and printing (Diamond 1996). However, the surge of activity among the A-hmao in the mission caused threats of insurrection among the Yi landlords and the Chinese in Zhaotong.[6] Pollard became an interlocutor with the authorities. His political actions on behalf of the A-hmao and his travel among them may have contributed to the success of the writing which emerged at this time so that by 1944, high levels of literacy were reported from this area (Lin 1944; Unger 1997) suggesting unusual achievement in an otherwise marginal and impoverished region of China.

Current scholarship and a revival of interest in China are revitalizing study of both the script and the language, and of their evolution during the twentieth century. A translation of the Old Testament is in preparation. Two retired missionaries, the already mentioned Rev. P.K. and Rev. R.K. Parsons, both scholars of the A-hmao language, have now created a web site which records traditional A-hmao songs and stories, a glossary and an active script for new writing. The glossary includes many 'Old Miao' words and phrases that were used only in the Songs and Stories. Had they not been recorded, they would have been lost as these traditions were obliterated in the 1950s. This is an exceptional record of a script, a threatened tradition and a declining language.[7]

Similarities and Differences

In a comparison of world writing systems, none other appears to resemble the Cree and A-hmao scripts (*e.g.*, BFBS 1965; Daniels and Bright 1996: 580-582, 599-611). Despite the apparent visual similarity between these scripts, there is no suggestion here, of course, that the languages themselves are connected. The focus is on the links between the writing systems. The first printing for both the Cree and the A-hmao scripts can be dated. Correspondence and diaries record the experimentation and collaboration in each place. However, given the apparent similarities, the extent of the influence on Pollard by Evans' script for the Cree is an issue. At one level, the likelihood of influence is slight. Evans had died in Britain in 1846, and although he and Pollard were both Methodists, the Bible Christians were fiercely independent. Any communications between Canada and South-west China were slow and the missionary societies were constrained by low incomes. At another level, any evidence for links between the scripts and their 'inventors' must be set against their distance in time and space, and against claims in China for indigenous origins for the A-hmao script.

Recent research in Yunnan shows persistent beliefs that the initials and finals of the script include motifs which were traditionally recorded on A-hmao textiles, as decoration and representation of history and sto-

ries. Although few could be identified, and some simple shapes are widespread, the belief itself is an important part of A-hmao tradition, as it was in the initial acceptance of the script by the A-hmao. Relevant as these beliefs are, the individual representations do not in themselves provide the means for expressing a language, whether as translation or in creative writing. Given Pollard's demand for both Biblical accuracy and for local understanding in the New Testament translations, to the extent of rejecting translations by another missionary, more than a collection of traditional symbols was required.

As the invention of the syllabic Cree script preceded the A-hmao script by sixty-four years, to what extent was Samuel Pollard aware of the existence of the Cree script, of its syllabic structure and of Rev. James Evans? Pollard's family would have had knowledge of Methodist missionary activities in North America and the Bible Christians had a short-lived missionary enterprise there prior to 1886 when they embarked on their activities in South-west China (Shaw 1965). The diet of a devout Bible Christian household might have included information about missions in Canada, including the 'invention' of the writing for the Cree people. The transatlantic traffic of Cornish and Devon settlers and miners, including many Bible Christians, would possibly have brought information to an active Christian household. That missionaries might invent scripts would then have been understood as a possibility.

Once in China, Samuel Pollard had contacts with the West China Union University in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. When printing was required for the first A-hmao script in 1904, Pollard was able to request assistance from the Canadian Mission press at the University, from Mr. J. Endicott. Pollard and Endicott may already have discussed the printing of non-romanized scripts, given Pollard's previous interest in Yi writing systems. As a printer and missionary, it is likely that Endicott was familiar with the script used for the Algonkian and Inuit languages in Canada. Also at the West China Union University was a highly regarded scholarly library, to support the research undertaken by anthropologists, linguists and historians. A copy of Pilling's *Bibliography of the Algonquian Languages* (Pilling 1891) may well have been available soon after 1900. In this there are many references to the syllabic script developed at Norway House, its adaptation for different languages, and the various contributors to the enterprise. This is speculative, but not unrealistic.

A third influence came from the China Inland Mission, which attracted missionaries from North America as well as Britain and elsewhere in Europe. Pollard would have met some of these people during his language training in Anqing, in Kunming, Yunnan, and there were links, albeit erratic, with Christian Missionary activities elsewhere in China, even

Figure 3
Symbols used in British shorthand systems, the Evans syllabic script (1840) and the A-hmao script of Yunnan, China (1904)

Source: R. Alison Lewis. Hull, October 2001.

in 1900. For a person interested in translation and Christian conversion, there were opportunities for Pollard to hear of and enquire about Canadian missions and Cree syllabics.

Both Evans and Pollard sought solutions to similar problems for writing and printing the Cree and A-hmao languages. We have argued that each drew on sources beyond their immediate surroundings, Pollard using Cree syllabics and Evans referring to Taylor's shorthand. Figure 3 juxtaposes Evans', Pollard's and Taylor's writing symbols. There is no relationship between the sounds which the symbols represent, but a clear linkage in the shape of some symbols.

Evans used three of Taylor's symbols, all of which are rotated in the syllabic system, and five additional symbols. Pollard used eight of Evans' symbols, only five of which are rotated in the A-hmao script, in the initials and finals of the syllables. In both scripts, other symbols are used which are not rotated and not found in the other system. We suggest that Pollard took both the idea of rotation of the symbols and some symbols from Evans' script.

A correlation between Evans' and Taylor's writing also indicates similarities in symbol and rotation, as Figure 3 shows. This is sufficient to suggest Evans' direct use of Taylor's symbols for the development of Cree syllabics, especially as no alternative sources have been found.

Earlier and similar influences are noted in the shorthand of Gurney (1756), where there are eleven symbols used in common, two of which are used rotationally. And even earlier, in Willis' shorthand of 1601, three symbols are used rotationally, with an additional four also used in the other scripts. Two symbols, albeit basic ones, are used in all five writing systems. This analysis offers sufficient evidence to argue for a continuity of writing symbols from Willis' 1601 shorthand through to Pollard's script of 1904. Willis, Gurney and Taylor each included symbols unique to his own script, invented to resolve the problems of their purpose and their period. Evans drew on Taylor's shapes and Pollard drew on Evans' symbols and on ideas from Pitman, to resolve their own problems of purpose, writing and printing in their exceptional circumstances.

Evans and Pollard were driven by the need to communicate, in writing, Christian teaching. The Willis, Gurney and Taylor shorthand systems are a minority among a multitude of obsolete shorthand systems. But they were the only ones to use such distinctive symbols and all three, in their time, were the most successful until Pitman's of 1839—too late to influence Evans (Butler 1951). Pollard was influenced by Pitman's shorthand to the extent that marks located around the central line change the vowel. This system offered a resolution to the problem of indicating tones in the A-hmao script. There seems to be nothing equivalent in the traditional pictorial signs in Miao tradition.

The role of Western missionaries is central to this historical account, but not to the exclusion of indigenous people. In each case, Native speakers who were involved in the invention and development of the writing systems can be identified. Ownership of the script was and is important to First People in both South-west China and Canada. In both regions, reports suggest that when the scripts were first used, they were undoubtedly adopted as belonging to the people with whom and for whom they were created. Their effectiveness and this acceptance were confirmed by the achievements in levels of literacy within a short time (Young

1899; McLean 1932; Kendall 1954), by statements that the scripts had been developed for specific people by Native speakers, and by the fact that neither Evans nor Pollard appear to have claimed the scripts as their own.

In both Yunnan and Canada, the adaptation of each system of orthography to other languages followed soon after the introduction of the first. In Canada, syllabics were adapted to other Algonkian languages and were modified for use among the eastern Arctic Inuit and the Chipewyan. In Yunnan, the script was modified for use among the Gopu, the Yi, the Lisu and the Laka, all living in the south-west of the province.

The social and political repercussions of the existence and widespread use of these scripts for pre-literate people were considerable. The acquisition of writing and reading became a means of empowerment for people who were at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy in their respective countries. Not only did new skills give access to Bible study and Christian teaching, a central aspiration for both Western and Native missionaries, they also enabled the readers to experience an unfamiliar independence. They were no longer completely dependent on powerful external groups such as the Hudson's Bay Company, Yi landlords and Han magistrates.

However, there were many tribulations in attempts to reverse long-held attitudes, some of which persist. Stories from both areas describe the dissemination of texts and reading skills among the communities, from the poorest serfs in the Chinese mountains to northern Canadian nomadic hunters, and this in all age groups. Kendall (1947) reports that in the 1940s, a small community of Gopu (Yunnan) was found which had continued to read the Bible, their only book, twenty-five years after their last contact with any itinerant missionary. This level of resilience suggests that literacy was an effective part of missionary activities, but the extent to which it persisted is difficult to establish. Yang Zhongde (1990), in a biography of the eminent A-hmao leader, Zhu Huang Zhang, not only describes this leader's education and achievements, but also the uphill struggle through his life to maintain the momentum of education among the A-hmao people. Chinese authorities introduced a romanized script for the A-hmao language after 1950, but the old script remains in use in Christian communities and among a few older individuals who derived from A-hmao villages (Enwall 1994). In 2000, discussions with local government leaders in the Shimenkan area suggested that in only three 'Christian' villages was the Old Miao script known, and then among Christians only.

Conclusion

Despite the integrity of many world writing systems, there is evidence of inter-influences in the development of scripts, if not in their origins (Daniels and Bright 1996; Tuchscherer and Hair 2002). The juxtaposition of the Cree script of 1840 and the A-hmao script of 1904 suggests influence one to another. Using visual comparison alone, the clues given in the survey of shorthand symbols suggest that Evans was influenced by those of Taylor and indirectly from Gurney and Willis. The qualities of effective shorthand are not dissimilar to those required for Cree and A-hmao literacy—simplicity for both writing and printing, especially in the contexts in which each was created. It can be reasonably assumed that both Evans and Pollard were familiar with and used the shorthand of their times. They had similar commitments to literacy for pre-literate people among whom they worked, and they both appear to have had particular competence in linguistic understanding and a desire to communicate their Christian beliefs through education and literacy.

There may be relevance in the common denominational background of Methodism, for both Evans and Pollard, but they came from different traditions within it. However, each was committed to work with marginal communities and to education, consistent with policy and practices in Methodism, and their own upbringing. The combination of these varied factors does not presume a recipe for the invention of scripts for pre-literate people, but it does give an insight into possible motivations.

Finally, in both cases, the original educational goals of Evans and Pollard which, we should presume, were primarily religious, had unforeseen effects. Probably because the elaboration of the Cree and A-hmao scripts had resulted from team work—involving both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals—the people for whom these scripts were intended appropriated them readily, putting them to usages that went far beyond the mere study of Scriptures, and using them as powerful educational tools. As a consequence, in both northern Canada and southwest China, syllabic writing systems now form an integral part of the cultural identity of several Aboriginal nations. This is probably the greatest tribute that can be paid to those—foreign missionaries and local people—who toiled intelligently to introduce an original form of literacy to two very different corners of the world.

Notes

1. Which may have included "an anonymous report on the invention of the Cherokee syllabary" published in October 1828 in the *Missionary Herald*, "the widely circulating journal of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions" (Tuchscherer and Hair 2002: 431).
2. Nichols (*ibid*.) adds that Evans was also familiar with the Devanagari script of Northern India, an 'alphasyllabary' where vowels appear as diacritics to the consonant symbols (Bright 1996).
3. A-hmao is their own name for themselves. Hua Miao, the Mandarin name for this groups of Western Miao (Miao are also known as Hmong), means 'flower sprout'. The self name will be used here.
4. The Bible Christian Church amalgamated with the United Methodist Free Churches and the Methodist New Connexion to become the United Methodist Church in 1907. For details of the history of Bible Christians, see Shaw (1965).
5. Rev. Samuel Pollard's Chinese name.
6. A fierce conflict in Guizhou 1856-1876 was called the 'Miao Rebellion' and Yunnanese feared its revival (Jenks 1994).
7. This record is now available on-line at www.ecs.soton.ac.uk/~str/miao. Rev. P.K. Parsons and Rev. R.K. Parsons have developed the materials since the 1950s and the site has been devised with the assistance of Dr. S. Rake.

References

BFBS (British and Foreign Bible Society)
1965   *The Gospel in Many Tongues*. London: British and Foreign Bible Society.
1906   *Language Papers: Haw Miao*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Library, Special Collection.
Bright, William
1996   The Devanagari Script, pp. 384-390 in: P.T. Daniels and W. Bright (Editors).

Butler, E.H.
  1951   *The Story of British Shorthand*. London: Pitman.
Clarke, S.
  1911   *Among the Tribes in South-West China*. London: China Inland Mission.
Daniels, Peter T. and William Bright (Editors)
  1996   *The World's Writing Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Diamond, N.
  1996   Christianity and the A-hmao: Writing and Power, pp. 138-157 in D. Bays (Editor): *Christianity in China From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
Dong Ren Da
  2002   *Creation and Historical Appreciation of the Old Miao Script of Yunnan, Guizhou and Sichuan*. Unpublished manuscript. Received and translated from the Chinese, June 2002.
Dorais, Louis-Jacques
  1990   The Canadian Inuit and their Language, pp. 185-289 in D.R.F. Collis (Editor): *Arctic Languages. An Awakening*. Paris: UNESCO.
Enwall, Joakim
  1999   The Bible Translations into Miao: Chinese influence versus linguistic autonomy, pp. 199-234 in I. Eber, S. Wan and K. Walf (Editors): *The Bible in Modern China*. Nettetal, Germany: Sankt Agustin Institut, Monumenta Serica.
  1994   *A Myth become Reality - History and Development of the Miao Written Language, Vol. 1*. Stockholm: Stockholm University, Institute of Oriental Languages (East Asian Monographs no. 5).
Foster, Michael K.
  1982   Canada's First Languages. *Language and Society* 7:7-16.
French, G.S.
  1982   Pahtahsega, pp. 731-732 in W. Brown (Editor): *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Vol. XI*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Grist, W.A.
  1920   *Samuel Pollard. Pioneer Missionary in China*. London: Henry Hooks.

Harper, Kenn
   1983   Writing in Inuktitut: An Historical Perspective. *Inuktitut* 53:3-35.

Hutchinson, Gerald M.
   1988   Evans, James, pp. 298-300 in W. Brown (Editor): *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Vol. VII*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Jenks, Robert D.
   1994   *Insurgency and Social Disorder in Guizhou. The «Miao» Rebellion. 1854-1873*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Kendall, R.E.
   1954   *Eyes of the Earth.* London: Cargate Press.
   1947   *Beyond the Clouds: the Story of Samuel Pollard of Southwest China*. London: Cargate Press.

Lewis, R. Alison
   2001   Bicentenary of Rev James Evans. *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 53(2):38-41.
   2000   The Western Protestant missionaries and the Miao in Yunnan and Guizhou, Southwest China, pp. 79-98 in J. Michaud (Editor): *Turbulent Times and Enduring Peoples. Mountain Minorities in the South-east Asian Massif*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press.

Lin Yueh-hwa
   1944   Social Life of the Aboriginal Groups in and around Yunnan. *West China Border Research Society Journal* 15-16:47-56.

McLean, John
   1932 [1849] *Notes of a Twenty-five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory*. Toronto: The Champlain Society.

Morice, A. Gabriel
   1890   *The New Methodical, Easy and Complete Dene Syllabary*. Stuart Lake, B.C.: Stuart Lake Mission.

Murdoch, John S.
   1981   Syllabics: A Successful Educational Innovation. M.Ed. thesis. Univ. of Manitoba.

Nichols, John D.
   1996   The Cree Syllabary, pp. 599-611 in: P.T. Daniels and W. Bright (Editors).

Parsons, R.K. and P.K. Parsons
   2000   http://www.archives.ecs.soton.ac.uk/miao/.

Pilling, James C.
    1891   *Bibliography of the Algonquian Languages*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of Ethnology.
Pollard, Samuel
    1919   *The Story of the Miao*. London: Henry Hooks (originally published in instalments in the *United Methodist Magazine*, January-December 1909).
    1908   *Tight Corners in China*. London: Henry Hooks.
    1906   *Miao Report, 1905*. Methodist Mission Archives. London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, Reserve Collection.
    1898-1915 *Diaries*. London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, Reserve Collection.
Scancarelli, Janine
    1996   Cherokee Writing, pp. 587-592 in: P.T. Daniels and W. Bright (Editors).
Shaw, T.
    1965   *The Bible Christians 1815-1907*. London: Epworth Press.
Sieciechowicz, Krystyna Z.
    1982   Steinhauer, Henry Bird, pp. 940-942 in W. Brown (Editor): *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Vol. XI*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Tuchscherer, Konrad and P.E.H. Hair
    2002   Cherokee and West Africa: Examining the Origins of the Vai Script. *History in Africa* 29:427-486.
Unger, J.
    1997   Not quite Han: the Ethnic Minorities of China's Southwest. *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 29(3):67-76.
Walker, Willard B.
    1996   Native Writing Systems, pp. 158-184 in I. Goddard (Editor): *Handbook of North American Indians Vol. 17 Languages*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.
Yang Zhongde
    1990   *Biography of Zhu Huang Zhang*. Unpublished manuscript. Received and translated from the Chinese, July 2001.
Young, Egerton R.
    1899   *The Apostle of the North Rev. James Evans*. New York: Fleming H. Revell.