

<i>Language</i>	<i>Portion printed</i>	<i>Where spoken</i>
Keapara	Mt. to Romans, Eph., Phil., Col., I John	Hood Lagoon
Kunini	Matthew	Fly River
Mailu	New Testament	Toulon Island
Suau	Mt. to Rom., Eph., Phil., I and II Thess., I and II Tim.	South Cape, etc.
Tavara	Matthew, Mark	Milne Bay
Hula	Matthew	Hood Lagoon
Wedau	Pent. and New Test.	Goodenough Bay
Bwaidoga	Mark	Ferguson and Goodenough Islands
Mukawa	Bible	Cape Vogel
Binandere	Luke	Mamba River, etc.
Notu	Mark	Oro Bay, etc.
Dobu	Bible	Normanby and Dobu Islands
Tubetube	Luke	Slade Island
Misima Panaeati	New Testament	On Misima, Sudest and Rossel Islands
Manus	Mark	N. E. Admiralty Group
Kiriwina	Gospels, Acts	Trobriand Group
New Britain (Blanche Bay Dialect)	Gen., Exod., Deut., Joshua, Ezra to Est., Psalms, Prov., Is. to Lam., Dan. to Malachi, N. T.	New Britain
Duke of York Island	Mt., Mark	Duke of York Island
Omo	Mark	New Ireland
Patpatar	John	Central New Ireland

Lexical Problems in the Kipsigis Translation

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The Kipsigis language is spoken by approximately 125,000 people in Kenya, Africa. This tribe, whose center is about seventy-five miles to the east of Lake Victoria, is rapidly growing and is one of the most vigorous of the Nilotic (or Nilo-Hamitic) groups in East Africa. Eight other tribes have closely related dialects, but there are marked dialectal differences.

The Kipsigis social structure has been molded by a type of nomadic, grazing culture, and the economy is based very largely on the possession of sheep, goats, and cattle. In many ways they possess the conservative viewpoint held by so many "cattle cultures," and changes are not readily introduced. However, on the whole they are very much more progressive than their Nilotic kin in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

Their indigenous religious practices are highly developed and center in sun worship. Their ceremonial sacrifices and propitiatory rites are comparatively elaborate, and the social cohesion resulting from such extensive and well-organized religious practices is a factor which missionaries must take into consideration, if they are properly to evaluate and work with such peoples.

As in the case of every translation, the Kipsigis has presented a number of difficult lexical problems. Many of the words used in the translation reflect important social and religious attitudes and practices. Accordingly, it was necessary to make a thorough study of the indigenous culture before adopting any term. We would not claim that all the decisions reached are completely valid, for one is constantly discovering improvements in any translation, and the areas of meaning which some words have are difficult to ascertain and define. However, we have attempted through a period of a number of years to check such terms with numerous informants. Furthermore, we have found that only by the process of testing words in native context and by the exclusive use of the native language can we even be reasonably sure that we have arrived at the proper evaluation of an idiom. Work done through interpreters or in a trade language is completely hopeless, for often the denotation of words is of secondary importance in comparison with the connotation.

The Name for "God"

The first major difficulty in translating the Scriptures into Kipsigis was encountered in the selection of a word for "God." The early missionaries soon discovered that the people were sun worshipers. The name for the sun god was *asiis*, the indefinite form of *asiista*, the word for "sun." Since the Kipsigis had originally come from farther north in Africa, many people have felt that the Kipsigis *asiis* may have had some connection with the name of the Egyptian goddess Isis. Missionaries were of course unanimous in regarding any such term as *asiis* as completely unacceptable for the name of "God." After much general inquiry the old Kipsigis men finally suggested the word *jeptaleel*, and all the first hymns and early evangelistic work made use of this word for God. Apparently, however, the missionaries did not make an adequate investigation of the background, for *jepto* is the Kipsigis word for "girl" and *leel* means "white." Literally, they were using "white girl" as a name for God. Furthermore, this name has a significance in the indigenous legends, for according to the Kipsigis belief it was a "white girl" who was found to appease the wrath of the sun-god *asiis*, who had brought drouth upon the land. The "white girl" was to be sacrificed by being carried into Lake Victoria and there abandoned as a propitiatory offering to the sun, but according to the legend she was rescued by a man who with his sword split the lightning sent to consume the sacrifice, and who then carried the girl away. As soon as the missionaries realized that their word *jeptaleel* was actually the name for this "white girl," they abandoned it, and tried to introduce the English borrowing *Jehovah*. Some of the older Kipsigis immediately took up

this name, for it was so similar in form to their native term *Jehoba*, used as a title for God and meaning literally "the great ruler." According to their understanding of the term it was composed of a prefix *je-*, a feminine prefix to a proper name (but in allied dialects used quite regularly for masculine names, so that there was no difficulty with mistaking God for a female deity), *o* meaning "large" or "great," adding *h* for euphony and *boi* meaning "to rule." On the whole, the term *Jehoba* has proved to be a very satisfactory term for "God."

The Word for "Lord"

An indigenous equivalent for "Lord" was likewise very difficult to find. Finally, the term *Kiptaiyat* was adopted. The term is made up of *kip-* the masculine name prefix, *tai* meaning "in front" or "leader," and *-at* the proper-noun suffix. This word is used by the nationals to designate their army leaders who have absolute control over strategy and discipline. To an extent, the military connotation of the term produces some difficulties, but for the most part it is very usable, especially in such contexts as "Lord of my life," for the term implies complete and absolute control, and hence indicates that the Christian must be completely obedient to the Lord.

Terms for "Demon"

The words for "Satan," "devil," "demon," and "spirit" all present their special difficulties, and their usage still causes controversy among indigenous Christians, who differ in their opinions as to which indigenous word should be used to correspond to a particular Biblical term. This is only natural, for the background of belief is quite different, and words only have meaning in terms of the culture of which they are a part.

Two words have been used to translate "demons"; these are *oindet* and *masambwanindet*. The first term *oindet* is composed of *yaa* (or an alternate form *iyoe*) which means "to be dizzy" or "to make dizzy" and the suffix *-indet*, a nominalizing suffix added to basic verb roots. The root *yaa* describes the actions of a demented person. The word *masambwanindet* is a type of borrowed word from a neighboring Bantu tribe and has the meaning in the "lending" language of "witchcraft." However, one of the difficulties with both of these terms is that they are so closely associated with "the spirits of the departed dead." Nevertheless, both of these terms have been used as translations of "demons" (or "devils," A.V.); but it is difficult to determine the precise contextual setting which would justify the use of the one or the other.

The Kipsigis have another word for "Satan," namely, *Seetaniat*. This term was obviously suggested by the similarity to the pronunciation of the English equivalent. The Kipsigis word has the meanings of "ugly" and "sneaking," and it is obviously only a type of descriptive title; but there was some pre-Christian justification for such a descriptive name of "Satan," and so the name has stuck. At present it is becoming dissociated from its original meaning, and for many people it is probably only a proper name.

Abstract Terms

The Kipsigis cultural background appears to be very inadequate when it comes to describing abstract ideas of "goodness," "righteousness," and "holiness." For "grace" the native equivalent is *mieindo*, based on the root *mie* meaning "good" or "fine." "Holiness" is translated by *tililindo*, from a stem *tilil* meaning "shiningly clean." A metaphorical association is of course necessary but has not appeared to be too difficult for native readers. For "righteousness" a phrase has been used which means literally "the doing of truth." It is true that such a term emphasizes the moral factor of righteousness, rather than the forensic or imputed righteousness, but it is rarely possible to obtain a term which implies both, and the phrase adopted in Kipsigis has proved to be a very satisfactory base. In the first translations the word *talosiet* was employed to express the idea of "righteousness," but when it was found that a cow could possess the characteristic denoted by the root *tala-*, the word was dropped. The root *tala-* actually means nothing more than "mildness" or "tameness." The quality of a "tame, gentle" animal is certainly not the character of Biblical righteousness. In such a sentence as "all our righteousness is as filthy rags" a translation using *tala-* would either be incomprehensible or vastly different from the intent of the original.

Expressions for "Sin"

Although the Kipsigis language is deficient in words to define various features of goodness, it appears to excel in describing different sins and wrong deeds. As a general word for "sin" the Kipsigis *chalwokta* has been used. It consists of *char* "to draw blood" and *mokta* "throat." However, in order to understand how such a compound can possibly mean "sin," one must understand the cultural background which gives such an expression its technical meaning. In previous times blood featured as a most important part of the culture, not only as the most important constituent of sacrifices but also as an important source of human food. To obtain the blood from a victim a small bow and arrow was used, and the arrow had a special blocked head in order to prevent its cutting too deeply into a large vein in the neck. It actually required a great deal of skill to draw blood out of the neck of an ox and not kill the animal. Even greater skill was required to draw the blood from a sheep or goat, and novices made many mistakes. For the most part a certain quantity of blood would be drawn and then the incision was permitted to heal. However, if the animal was to be used as a sacrifice, then it was strangled first and the throat was cut, after which all the blood was drained out. The word *chalwokta* designates this latter type of "drawing the blood from the throat" and implies the death of the victim. This is an irremedial action and denotes the seriousness of the offense. In contrast with this word the Kipsigis also use *chalgatan* from the constituent parts *char* and *gat*, meaning "to draw blood from the neck" (in this case not the "throat"). This type of process is healable in an animal, and it means that the offense committed by the person is very minor, for example, something which might be done by children. Part of the background

implied by the metaphorical expressions for "sin" lies in the belief of the Kipsigis that the life is in the blood, and that blood is the essential element in any sacrifice and propitiation for sin. Some sins were thought to require the total blood of an animal to cleanse them and others only a token amount. Hence the nature of the sacrifice and the quantity of blood implied by the particular type of sacrifice become the principal features by which sins are described and classified.

Related to the words for "sin" is the expression "to forgive." The Kipsigis phrase contains the verb *nya* "to heal" and *gat* "neck." To say "forgive me" one would say literally *nyoiwan gat* "heal my neck." The offense implies a propitiation by the offender, and forgiveness indicates that the offended person makes no "blood" requirement, but rather heals the neck.

In addition to the two words for "sin" discussed above, there is still another *tengekto*, consisting of *ten*, meaning "completely," "entirely," or even "never again," and the element *gekto*, which is difficult to define but which is probably related to the root *gis*, meaning to slit an animal's throat without previously strangling it and without any of the customary preliminaries. This word *tengekto* is used to denote the greatest sins, which carry with them a definite connotation of finality of judgment.

Somewhat related to the above words is one which means "missing the mark." This word *lelutiet* is derived from the root *eel*, meaning literally "to bend." Such a root is used to describe the action of an arrow which "bends" from its track and strikes where the one who shoots it has not intended. A person killing another by such an accident is required to pay blood money to the relatives of the deceased, but it is clearly understood that the death was purely accidental and in no way premeditated. Note that this Kipsigis word, though it is literally an equivalent of the Greek *hamartanō*, does not have the same connotative meaning. Translators must necessarily look to the cultural background of a word and not to the literal correspondences.

Illustrative Descriptive Equivalents

There are a number of equivalents in Kipsigis which are highly descriptive. The following may provide some idea of the extent to which such expressions occur and something of their psychological and sociological background:

Ng'etkonda "jealousy" consists of *ng'et* "to break (as a string)" and *konda* "eye." Jealousy is thus to the Kipsigis a process of "breaking the eye."

Ng'oknatet "stinginess" is derived from a root meaning "dog." A stingy person is "dog-like."

Kaliilan, literally "I am dazzled," constitutes the base of an expression for "annoyance."

Nyalilda "sorrow" is derived from the elements *nya* "to heal" and *lil* "to dazzle" (also occurring in *kaliilan*, just above). "Sorrow" then is "a dazzle (or annoying trouble) needing healing."

Keremet "perplexity" is derived from *kerer* "to tear" and *met* "head." "Perplexity" is literally "to tear the head."

Closely Related Terms

Translation requires constant attention to the context. For example, in translating those portions relating to the feeding of the multitudes, two words had to be used for "multitude." When a multitude is walking or standing, it must be referred to as *tuiyosiek*, from *tuiyet* "to meet together." The plural of this form is practically equivalent to "a number of meeting-togethers." However, when a multitude is seated, it must be called a *kaburetwek*, from the verb root *buur* meaning "to sit." A seated multitude is thus "a number of sittings."

There are two different words for "salvation" in Kipsigis, each with its own special sets of connotative values. The verb base of *sarunet* implies primarily a "rescue" from physical harm, and the verb base of *yetunet* means literally "to make large, important" or "to make grow up." The Kipsigis employ this expression in a rather strange manner, for when one wishes to say that he has been rescued from a difficult situation (not physical), he says, "I have been made important," meaning that he has been made to grow up, and by implication thus rescued from his childish foolishness. Accordingly, one may say that *yetunet* indicates more what one is rescued *to* than what one is rescued *from*. The word *yetunet* may, for example, be used to describe what happens to a man of another tribe who is rescued from his standing as a foreigner (in earlier days resulting in death), and established as an adult who has passed all the tribal initiation rites. A drowning man would shout *saruan*, meaning "rescue me" (i.e. from physical danger), but a man before a judge would ask for acquittal or release by saying *yetwan*. When one speaks of Christ rescuing us from sinking into an eternity of condemnation, then *sarunet* is the proper term for "salvation"; but in saying that Christ paid the penalty for us when judgment was pronounced against us, one should use the term *yetunet*.

Illustrative Literal Translation

In order to give some rather vague idea of how a translation in Kipsigis is constructed, it is possible to compare the following semi-literal rendering of Romans 10 : 9—10. Of course, the rendering into more or less literal equivalents in English is only partially valid as a basis of comparison, for the cultural backgrounds are so utterly different. Certainly, "thinking black" has far more ramifications than anyone realizes until he has actually done so on the basis of many years experience and constant touch with the people.

Romans 10 : 9—10:

"If you shall with your mouth bring out into the open Jesus as your absolute leader, and shall agree in your heart that 'The Great Ruler' raised Jesus from those who have died, you shall be rescued. Because a person agrees with the heart and receives the doing of truth, and the mouth brings it out into the open and he receives being rescued."
