

A Semi-Literal Translation of Mark 1 in Shipibo

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(The following semi-literal translation of Mark 1 in Shipibo, an Indian language of eastern Peru, illustrates a number of important syntactic and lexical problems which are discussed more or less fully in the footnotes. Translators will discover in such literal translations a surprising number of parallels in meaning and structure to languages with which they are more familiar. — Ed.)

The Good Word

Written by Mark ¹

1. Here begins the good word, the good word regarding ² God's child Jesus Christ.

2. Thus it is written in the book of Isaiah, a teller of God's word. ³ Look! The taker of my word I send before you, to arrange your path before you. 3. This is the word ⁴ of one calling where no house is: Arrange Owner God's ⁵ path for him. Straighten his little paths.

4. John appeared. Having appeared, where no house is, he washed them. ⁶ He told them a word regarding being washed, having made the mind another, so that sin(s) be wiped away for them. 5. Then all those of Judea land, all the Jerusalem people, they used to go to John. Then he washed them, at the Jordan stream, when they said: It is true. We have sinned. ⁷

6. Then John was dressed in camel ⁸ fur, loin-tied with a skin belt, ⁹ eating grasshoppers, drinking bee liquid. 7. Then he told them a word: Back of me comes one surpassing me in strength. I am not equal, though I bend down, to untie his shoe string. 8. I have washed you merely with water. But he will wash you with the Spotless Spirit. ¹⁰

9. Then during those days Jesus came from Nazareth which is in Galilee. When he came from there, John washed him, at the Jordan. 10. Then just as he walked up out of the water, he saw the sky opening up. He saw the Spotless Spirit coming like a dove and falling on himself. ¹¹ 11. Then a word ⁴ appeared from the sky. You are my loved son, it said. I am very happy toward you.

12. Just then the Spotless Spirit made him go where no house is. 13. Then he was where no house is, forty days. While there, Satan wanted to make him do evil. He was also among biting things. ¹² Then the word bringers ¹³ made him eat.

14. Then back ¹⁴ of John being shut in, Jesus went back to Galilee. Going, he told along the good word regarding Ruler ¹⁵ God coming. 15. Thus he said to them: The when-it-is ¹⁶ is already coming-up. Make the mind another. Be strong on the good word. ¹⁷ 16. Then, edging-along Galilee lake, Jesus saw Simon. He saw Simon's brother Andrew

also. They were cast-netting¹⁸ in the lake. They were fish getters. 17. Then he said to them: Come ye behind me, he said, I will make you enter¹⁹ as people getters. 18. Just then they abandoned the nets. Having abandoned them, they went with Jesus.

19. Then going a little farther on, he saw Zebedee's child James. He saw his brother John too, when they were mending cast-nets in the canoe. 20. Just thereupon he called them. Then they left their father Zebedee seated in the canoe. Together with the workers they abandoned him. Having abandoned him,²⁰ they went together behind Jesus.

21. Then they arrived at Capernaum. Then on the very day to rest,²¹ having entered into the small house to praise God in,²² he taught them. 22. Then, when he was teaching them, they were all startled. He taught them like one who had strength, not as the book wise ones did.²³

23. Just then too a certain man was in their small house to praise God in, a ruinous demon possessor.²⁴ Thereupon he screamed. 24. Ari! he screamed.²⁵ What will you do to us, Nazareth Jesus? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the spotless man, him of God.²⁶ 25. Then Jesus scolded him. Be silent, he said, Come out of him. 26. Then the ruinous demon twisted him. Having twisted him,²⁷ it screamed out greatly. It came out of him. 27. Then all were amazed. Even amazed they asked one another: What is this? Is it a new taught word? Being a strength possessor he tells even the ruinous demons to go out. When he tells them,²⁸ they hear his word.

28. Just then the word they spoke regarding²⁹ Jesus widened out, to every place, circling the whole Galilee land. 29. Just then they went out of the small house to praise God in. Having gone out they went and arrived at the house of Simon and Andrew. James, John with them arrived.³⁰ 30. Then Simon's mother-in-law³¹ was laid down, doing a fever. Just then they told Jesus regarding her. 31. Then Jesus having neared her, raised her up, having hand-grasped her. Just then, having left the fever,³² she made them eat.

32. When it was late, when the sun had already entered, they brought to Jesus,³³ all the sick, the demoned ones. 33. All those of that village were gathered at the door. 34. Then he arranged many sick ones, those with mixed sicknesses. Thereupon he expelled many demons. He did not permit the demons to speak, since they knew him.

35. Then very at dawn having risen, Jesus went out, while it was still night. He went to where no house is. Being there he spoke to God.³⁴ 36. Then Simon and those (who) were with him went to seek him. 37. Having gone and found him, they said: All are seeking you, they said. 38. Then he told them: Let's go to the not-far villages; that there too I speak the word. Actually to do that I have come-out.³⁵ 39. Thus, everywhere in Galilee, he spoke-along³⁶ the word in their small houses to praise God in, expelling demons all along.

40. Then a certain Lazarus sickness possessor man³⁷ came to Jesus, to ask. Having come and knelt down before him, he said: You wanting to, you can arrange me,³⁸ he said.³⁹ 41. Then pitying him he extended his hand. Having extended it, he touched him. He said: I want to. Be arranged, he said. 42. Just when he spoke, the Lazarus sickness went

out of his body. Then he was arranged. 43. Then even speaking to him strongly, Jesus sent him away. 44. Sending him away he said: Look! he said. A single one a single thing do not tell. Just go. Having gone, make the man who speaks to God for them ⁴⁰ see you. That which Moses told to give, give; that they might know. 45. But having gone, he began to speak much to them. He began to widen that word out. When he did thus, Jesus could not arrive visibly at any village. But he was where no house is. Then they came to him from every place.

Footnotes

1. As a rule (and a concession to criticism from bilinguals) proper names have been spelled as in Spanish. Otherwise, Spanish *Marcos* would be *Marakos*; *Jesucristo*, *Jisokiristo*; *Isaias*, *Hisaias*; *Juan*, *Joan*; *Judea*, *Joria*; etc. One exception is *Pedro* ("Peter") which the native has so changed that now he pronounces it *Pikero*, and we write it as such.
2. This little word is actually a past participle of the verb "to be" in Shipibo. But because of the extreme complexity of translating this literally (and the consequent unreadability), we have used the normal English equivalent. In the same way, although most transitive constructions are passive in Shipibo, we have rendered them by actives. For example, a strictly literal rendering of verse 31 would be: "Then by-Jesus by-*the-one-by-whom-she-was-near*ed *she-was-raised-up*, by-*the-one-by-whom-she-was-hand-grasped*. Then-even fever by-*the-one-by-whom-it-was-left*, they were-made-to-eat". Everything connected by hyphens is a single word. Italicised words are additions in English to make the Shipibo somewhat intelligible.
3. "Prophet" is translated by "a teller of God's word". In a sense this is very similar to "preacher", but it is preferable to some phrase which might imply practices of divination, and such would be the case if we used a common term for someone who could foretell the future.
4. "Word" has a wide range of meaning including: voice, pronunciation, intelligible sound, word, sentence, utterance, speech. Cf. vs. 11.
5. The phrase "Owner God" is used as an equivalent of "Lord". It would be inadequate to employ simply "Owner", as this would be no more than the owner of some large grant of jungle land. However, in combination with "God" the phrase denotes one who controls and directs. Culturally, it is a very close equivalent to the Greek *kurios*, but of course is dependent upon teaching to provide it with the richer spiritual values included in the term "Lord" as we know it in religious contexts.
6. The use of "to wash" does not eliminate immersion. This is actually the Shipibo way of describing the process of immersion which is practiced in the area.
7. Processes which involve speaking or declaring are frequently turned into sentences of direct discourse. Rather than "confessing their sins" the Shipibo way of discussing such an act is to describe it in

- terms of a direct statement, i.e. "they said: It is true. We have sinned". By stating specifically that "it is true", the Shipibo phrase becomes a functional equivalent of the English "confessing".
8. This is a new loan word. Therefore, we have spelled it as in Spanish.
 9. The Shipibo *sintora* is an old Spanish loan word meaning a "belt" or "girdle", with the pronunciation changed somewhat more than normal. Therefore we have spelled it according to Shipibo pronunciation. The Spanish spelling would have been *cinturón*.
 10. The term for "holy" is essentially a negative one meaning "spotless". It does, however, have important metaphorical meanings and is quite satisfactory. It does not have the meaning of "separateness", except perhaps indirectly, in the sense that anything that is spotless must be removed from contamination from that which is dirty, but any term with the meaning of "separateness" alone would run the risk of close association with amoral taboo. The term "spotless" avoids this danger and still provides a very adequate basis for proper teaching and for the expansion and deepening of the meaning content.
 11. This term translated "himself" refers to the subject of the main verb "saw" and not the dependent verbal "falling".
 12. It would seem a foregone conclusion that the forest-living Shipibos would have a word for "beast" or at least for "animal". But such is not the case. There is a specific name for each living creature, but no generic classification that we know of. They do abstract from this mass of species three very practical classes of living beings: (1) forest creatures used for food, (2) domesticated plants used for drink, (3) sweet fruits used for their acid, vitamin, and sugar content. It is impossible to use the first term for the wild beasts the Lord was among, as the Indians would wonder at the amount of game and at the Lord starving in the midst of plenty. Therefore, we have used a common phrase which is used to indicate spiders, snakes, alligators, and possibly tigers.
 13. The "word bringers" are the "angels". This is the common term for "messengers". The orientation of the phrase is from the viewpoint of the recipient of the message and not from the sender.
 14. Relative time is expressed graphically by such a term as "back of". If an event occurs "back of" something else, it follows that happening.
 15. The use of "Ruler" is an attempt to translate "kingdom of God" (following the Spanish de Valera text). A simple term for "kingdom" is not easily available, for there are no kingships among the Shipibos, who have a basically hunting and fishing culture, with very limited agriculture. They do, however, have rulers, and hence this term is employed in order to approximate the meaning of the Greek.
 16. This derived form "when-it-is" designates the time of occurrence of any happening. Such a term in this context stresses the immediacy of the event.
 17. "To believe the gospel" is in Shipibo "be strong on the good word". The phrase "good word" has proved to be a very natural equivalent of "gospel", and "to be strong on" has functioned quite well as an

equivalent for "believe". This expression implies more than admitting the truth of something; and because of the associated meaning of "reliance upon" or "dependence upon", it is very satisfactory as a translation of "believe".

18. The processes of fishing become quite specific in Shipibo and one must distinguish precisely between the various techniques. For this reason we chose here the term "cast-netting".
19. "To make a person enter" is equivalent to saying "to make a person become".
20. As may be noted in the manner of relating various sentences (cf. verses 13, 18, 22, 26) the main verb of one sentence is repeated as a kind of verbal in the following sentence. This repetition of the verb is the functional equivalent of "and". In fact, there is no other way of properly relating such processes than by repeating the verb in a dependent form.
21. "The very day to rest" is the Shipibo equivalent of "Sabbath". To have borrowed the Spanish *Sábado*, which means "Saturday", would not have meant much to the Shipibo people, since there is no way for them to understand why one should not work on Saturday.
22. "The small house to praise God in" is the translation for "synagogue". The attributive word "small" is employed in order that this phrase may be distinguished from the "temple" which may be rendered as "the big house to praise God in".
23. "The book wise ones" are the "scribes". It is not sufficient, it seems, to use a translation "writers", and so we have employed this somewhat more expanded paraphrase in order to indicate the educational leadership which the scribes possessed in their day.
24. "A man with an unclean spirit" has been translated into Shipibo as "a ruinous demon possessor" meaning of course "one who possesses a ruinous demon". We are obliged to distinguish between "spirit" and "demon", and so use the term which designates only an evil spirit personality. The term "unclean" (or "dirty") would not indicate that the demon made the possessor unclean, in the sense of being ostracised from the socio-religious group. Hence, we have attempted to translate this term "unclean" by a verb which denotes a more active process.
25. The repetition of the verb "screamed" is required by the syntactic construction.
26. "The Holy One of God" must be made somewhat more specific in Shipibo by the use of "man" and "him". This specific reference and the use of personal pronouns rather than an indefinite "one" is a completely regular type of syntactic adaptation.
27. Note the repetition of the verb "to twist", as a means of linking the two sentences.
28. The initial clause "when he tells them" is a kind of linking from which is functionally equivalent to "and".
29. It may seem that the expression "the word they spoke regarding Jesus" is a rather heavy paraphrase of "fame". But where there is no specific generalized equivalent, we are obliged to use a descriptive

- phrase which will describe the situation in terms of its various components; e.g. in this instance (1) the people who spoke, (2) the fact of their speaking, and (3) the one of whom they spoke.
30. A literal translation of this passage would be impossible, for we would not be able to indicate clearly that the house did not belong to James and John, but that James and John simply went along. However, by employing a separate sentence, containing its own verb taken from the context, we are able to say substantially what the original means.
 31. See Note 2.
 32. The Shipibo look at the cessation of fever as a reverse process from what the Greek says. The Greek says "the fever leaves her"; the Shipibo says "she leaves the fever".
 33. This is potentially ambiguous; it could also mean "they came to Jesus".
 34. "To speak to God" seems to be the most adequate equivalent of "pray". We distinctly wanted to avoid any word with the sole denotation of "begging", a meaning which is too easily related to the process of praying in Roman Catholic countries.
 35. This verb also means "to appear"; thus the ambiguity of the Greek is preserved in Shipibo.
 36. The process of "going", which in English and Spanish is expressed by a separate verb, may be included as a dependent element in the verb "to speak". Often where Greek, English, or Spanish are obliged to employ two verbs, the Shipibo uses only one.
 37. "Lazarus sickness possessor man" means "a person who possesses the sickness of Lazarus". This is understood to mean leprosy, and is of course borrowed from the Spanish.
 38. The process of healing is regularly spoken of as "arranging".
 39. It is quite idiomatic to repeat the verb of speaking, once before the direct quotation and again after it.
 40. "The man who speaks to God for them" is the descriptive phrase employed to translate "priest". There are local medicine-men in the tribe, but they do not have the functions or attributes of biblical priests. Hence, we are attempting by this term to provide a better basis of teaching and understanding of the significance of a priest in the Bible.
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