

The People of the Aurora

E. Pearson

(A brief background study of the making of the Luchazi Bible.)

When these tribesmen first came into contact with the coastal peoples it was natural that they were asked whence they had come. Their answer was *ku ngangela* (from the Aurora — the East) and as a result they were given the name VaNgangela (the people of the Aurora — or Easterners). Today they have adopted the name as their own and though they still call themselves by some sixteen different tribal names they acknowledge their common origin in this super-tribal cognomen. They occupy the southern part of Angola, beginning near the Kunene River, and stretch eastward for about eight hundred miles into Northern Rhodesia. The general grammatical structure of their languages or dialects is practically identical and though there are local differences in words any one of the dialects is understood by all. Thus no 'trade language' exists as there has been no need for one. Today it is practically impossible to find anyone who speaks a 'pure' language as words from the various dialects have been incorporated into general usage.

Having been asked by my fellow-workers to prepare the New Testament for publication, I did so with reluctance, for eleven years of study of the native languages had showed me something of the intricacies of the grammatical structure and the difficulty of ascertaining the exact meanings of the more abstruse words. However, with the help of the best natives available, the work was completed and the New Testament in the Luchazi dialect was published in 1935. The Luchazi people are the most numerous and the most widely scattered, hence their language seems the best medium for conveying the Word of God to the people of this area.

With the publication of the New Testament there came the demand for the Old Testament and the work on this has been going on steadily until it has now reached completion. Ezekiel was the last book to be translated and as we came to the last verse the final phrase was engraven upon our hearts and minds in a new way — The Lord is there. Thus, as we hope to place the whole Bible in the hands of the Ngangela tribesmen, we pray that they may truly find the Lord therein.

Since the beginning of the study of these languages, I have held to the theory that God must have preserved in every language the words and phrases needed to translate His own Holy Word into that tongue. Words and idioms have been sought for as a prospector might seek for the rare and precious gems of earth, and with a great deal more joy and satisfaction, I dare say. What rejoicing, after months of painstaking labour and research, to find a new gem of an expression that exactly translates the thought expressed in the Scriptures. The language has proved a mine of inexpressible wealth. Let me illustrate:

The word for 'trust' is *tsiliela*. The root is *tsa* (to die). The suffix *ilila* gives the idea of bringing to completion. The vowel infix *e* is used to show intensity or continuity of action. There you have the analysis

completed: *tsiliela* — to die absolutely completely. That is verily 'to stake one's very life' on the one trusted. And when you point them to the Lamb of God you know there is One who is worthy of such trust and Who will never fail them.

A short time ago I was asked by a student to explain the word for 'grave' to the class. He had heard me use it once as an illustration and was greatly intrigued by it. The word is *chihilo* and the root is *hia* which means 'to be condemned'. *Hila* is the applied form of the verb giving the idea of action towards. *Chi* is the ordinary class prefix of inanimate things. Thus the word *chihilo* gives the thought of 'that to which one is condemned'. Truly a recognition of the Scripture, "the wages of sin is death".

The search for the proper word to translate 'atonement' was a long one. Finally we found a gem of a phrase: *minina mata* — to swallow another's spittle. The native thinks of the human bite as being the most poisonous and dangerous and the poison lies in the saliva. So in swallowing another's spittle, one takes into oneself all the poison or evil of the other and thus actually 'becomes sin' on behalf of the other. The substitute then proceeds to deal with the case as though he were the guilty one.

Though the tribesman seems to have a very hazy conception of life after death, he certainly does believe in a future existence. Many times one hears the expressions, 'We shall follow our ancestors', 'We shall follow and find them', 'We shall go to the place were they are'. The idea of a resurrection was foreign to their thought, but the word *sangula* carried the thought of 'changing the state or condition of' and was specifically used in raising up the name of the dead on a newborn child and thus readily lent itself to the thought of 'resurrect'. The *ula* suffix implies 'bringing out of the condition or state'. The stative form of the verb is *sangama* — to be in a state of placidity. *Sangula* thus brings the idea of renewed action.

Mutula is the word for 'altar'. The root is *tula* which means 'to set one's burden down or lay down one's life'. Thus the altar in the native's conception has the meaning of 'the place where one sets the burden down' and 'the place where the life is laid down'. This gives the dual aspect of the cross. I have found these words invaluable in preaching the Gospel and of course they are priceless in the translation of God's Holy Word.

Lizi is 'word' — derived from the verb *iziva* (perfect form: *izi*). *Li* is the class prefix. *Iziva* means 'to know' with the thought of applying the knowledge. *Lizi* thus means 'that which is known about a thing so as to be able to use it'. 'Truth' is *vusunga* (the quality of being straight). 'Righteousness' is *vuviuke* (the quality of being 'right' as to appearance and intrinsic worth).

The search for the names of the Lord has been most satisfying: *Muovole* from *ovola* — the One who saves; *Ngami* from *amena* — the One who delivers; *Nkuli* from *kula* (to redeem a slave or to pay a debt for someone who would otherwise be sold for his debt) — Redeemer; *Mpinge* from *pingana* (to substitute for, to take another's place) — Substitute.

The first word we got as a name for the Lord was *Muyoyesi* (Life-giver) and that was the word that was used for a long time instead of 'Saviour'. Finally, I determined to get at the principle of construction of nouns and I listed the three or four thousand nouns that I had in my vocabulary according to prefixes and suffixes and thus arrived at a fairly accurate picture of the structure of a noun. From this I drew the conclusion that the word for 'Saviour' should be *Muovole*. When I asked my native informants if they had such a word, I was delighted to find that it was well known among them. When asked why they had not given us the word before, their answer was typical, 'How could we know that you wanted that word?' In the early days it was rare to hear any new words in a native sermon. Parrotlike they would repeat the words that they had heard the missionary use in his messages. In those early days I used to sit night after night for hours around the native fires listening to the conversation and trying to learn 'to think black'. Hundreds and hundreds of new words were thus acquired and scores of new grammatical constructions.

The languages are very rich in idiomatic expressions. Here are a few concerned with the heart (*mutima*): *Ku ya ku mutima* (lit. to go to the heart) — to please; *Ku uma mutima* (lit. to dry up the heart) — to be worried, troubled; *Ku lua mutima* (lit. to fight in heart) — to agonize; *Ku zika mutima* (lit. to set heart into) — to rely on, trust in; *Ku lava mutima* (lit. to be black in heart) — to be offended; *Ku tsila mutima* (lit. to die for in heart) — to be single-hearted, of one purpose; *Ku aluluka mutima* (lit. to turn in heart) — to repent.

One word I have failed to find after these many years of search, the word for 'Virgin'. Perhaps this reveals poignantly the bankruptcy of heathen morals. We are using a cumbersome phrase: 'a woman who has not yet been with a man'.

A recent article in *The Bible Translator* dealt with the word for 'hope'. We have several words for this. *Lavelela* — to count on completely; *kengelela* — to look for completely; *kengezioka* — to look for intently or continuously; *talelela* and *talaziela* have the same meaning as the previous words.

The verbal changes are almost unlimited and I have learned to lean completely upon my native assistants for the correct tense structure. By prefix, infix and suffix the primary verb can undergo an almost unlimited number of changes and when you add to this at least nine tense particles in various combinations you feel as though you will never have complete command of any of these rich mediums of expression.

Most difficult of all is the Locative. This can be used as a substantive before almost any other part of speech, as a pronoun, adjective, adverb, preposition or conjunction. As a pronoun it goes through all the metamorphoses of other pronouns. It can be nominative, genitive, objective or stand as absolute. In order to understand it thoroughly one must really learn 'to think black'. In many cases it is without translation into the white man's tongue, yet expresses thought so succinctly that its lack is a distinct loss.

In closing I would like to use an expression that is frequently used

in saying good-night: *Tu ka limona meme* (We shall see one another to-morrow). For these 'people of the sunrise' there is a brighter 'morrow' as they hear and accept the Christian message and the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in its wings.

Principles of Biblical Translation

W. Schwarz

(Excerpts from a Lecture delivered by Dr. Schwarz in the University of London to be incorporated in a forthcoming book, Principles of Biblical Translation, to be published by the Cambridge University Press in 1955.)

Biblical translation offers special difficulties for the translator. The Bible is a sacred text revealed by God in a certain language. Is it permissible to transfer these words into another language by replacing His wording with another text of the same meaning? Can the version into another language reflect all the thought of the revelation, especially as no human being can fully understand its mystery? If a translator sees the implications of these questions, he must, of necessity, fear that his work may impair the importance of His message, or even change it, or, worse still, destroy it through errors in the rendering. Therefore the holiness of His word must needs restrain the translator in the execution of his work so that he may at least be able to avoid a change in the meaning of Holy Writ. It seems that piety and veneration have been instrumental in bringing about two principles of Biblical translation which I would like to call the philological and inspirational principles.

The philological principle

Every modern translation is the result of an interpretation. An interpretation, however, is always closely connected with the currents of thought and with the personal limitations of the expositor. This can be seen in almost every translation of a profane book and it can be recognized in many modern translations of the Bible. The question therefore arises how the subjective views of the interpreter can be eliminated. Two answers have been given in history: the one is the word-for-word translation, the other is the replacement of *one* translator by a committee.

What is a word-for-word translation? The translator recognizes that every word of the original has its special significance. It is therefore important to render everything that is found in the original. The translator changes nothing, omits or adds no word, he merely renders word for word without even changing the order of words. This method was considered to be the surest safeguard against any alteration of the original thought. The word-for-word translation in its strictest meaning is no longer based on an interpretation, but on the assumption of the correspondence between the languages of the original and the translation. Thus interpretation, the foundation of modern translation, is eliminated and therefore the subjective thoughts of the translator are discarded.