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The Role of the Heart in the Translation of Acts in Some Northern Bantu Languages

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The languages of the southern area of the French Cameroun, which are included in the northern border of the Bantu group, display a rich vocabulary of emotional expressions relating to the 'heart'. These terms reflect a deep sense of the necessity of "feeling values" as contrasted with "thinking values." In terms of Jungian psychology, the thinking type is conspicuously absent as the speakers of those languages seek to express their evaluation of situations in terms of feelings which are centered about the heart. While there is great diversity in the actual terminology with which these languages formulate their values, these "heart terms" can be classified into five groups.

A Classification of 'hearts'

1. Size. Kaka: *ddoko témo* 'a big heart' (i.e. being deceitful); Mpompom: *dyaala liem* 'a long heart' (i.e. slow to anger), *tsil liem* 'a short heart' (i.e. quick to anger).

2. Quality. Kaka: *bbibbina témo* 'a thick heart' (i.e. trust and confidence), *dditina témo* 'a hard heart' (i.e. courageous), *témo ne djeou* 'a light heart' (i.e. fearful), *weina témo* 'a cool heart' (i.e. peaceful); Mpompom: *etsal e liem* 'fragile heart' (i.e. easily angered), *etiak e liem* 'a weak heart' (i.e. nauseated), *pipla liem* 'a thick heart' (i.e. indifferent to pain); Bangando: *hanya sea* 'angry heart' (i.e. courageous), *hasa sea* 'a light heart' (i.e. one who cannot keep a secret), *gelele sea* 'a clear heart' (i.e. one who likes everyone), *silili sea* 'a hot heart' (i.e. one who is extremely occupied).

3. Animal characteristics. Mpompom: *liem mpié* 'a dog heart' (i.e. a gluttonous person), *liem nkoé* 'a leopard heart' (i.e. cruel), *liem po* 'a mouse heart' (i.e. to be frivolous), *liem mouma* 'a woman's heart' (i.e. to have little intelligence), *liem kou* 'a chicken heart' (i.e. to be afraid); Bangando: *sea wéwé* 'a bird heart' (i.e. to be easily upset and bothered).

4. Position. Bulu: *tyele nlem yôp* 'to hang up the heart' (i.e. to be nervous and anxious); Mpompom: *liem be koñ* 'heart on the back' (i.e. to lose consciousness), *liem toño medion* 'heart in the water' (i.e. to be forgetful), *liem ziandj* 'a slanting heart' (i.e. to be out of one's senses), *liem toño asés* 'to have the heart in one's leg' (i.e. to think no evil).

5. Actions performed on the heart. Kaka: *bendidye témo* 'to lift up the heart' (i.e. to be proud), *pidye témo* 'to lower the heart' (i.e. to be humble); Mpompom: *gonôl liem* 'tie up the heart' (i.e. to withhold confidence), *mand liem* 'to squeeze the heart' (i.e. to be surprised); Bulu: *koñelan nlem* 'to turn over the heart' (i.e. to be repentant), *volô nlem* 'to help the heart' (i.e. to comfort someone), *ve ngule nlem* 'to give strength to the heart' (i.e. to confirm or strengthen one).

These five classes of hearts serve for the most part to group heart expressions that have been encountered in the languages listed above, as well as a number of related languages. These figures of speech differ greatly from one language to another in the south Cameroun. However, there are certain similarities which stem largely from the animal characteristics group, where the leopard is looked upon as cruel, the turtle as a trickster, the bird and chicken as afraid, and the dog as a gourmand par excellence. Each language likewise displays sets of opposites. These differ considerably in meaning, and the translated meanings are not always opposites. Kaka has the hard vs. soft (courageous vs. fearful), heavy vs. light (lacking in confidence vs. untruthful), lifting vs. lowering (pride vs. humility), hot vs. cool (anger vs. tranquility); Bangando has heavy vs. light (keeps secrets vs. divulges secrets); Mpompom has thick vs. thin (indifference to pain vs. easily angered).

If one compare these figures of speech with equivalent expressions in English or Greek, the following results may be noted. 1. These languages use the word 'heart' in most of the New Testament passages where the English and Greek use *heart* and *kardia* when these refer to thinking, feeling, volition, moral virtues, emotions of love, and the locus of spiritual strength. 2. English *heart* and Greek *kardia* meaning the center, core, or essence of a material or nonmaterial matter are not translated by 'heart' in these languages. 3. In addition to the equivalences of (1) these languages employ 'heart' in numerous contexts where the English and Greek do not. These include (a) expressions of emotional actions and reactions, e.g. amazement, anger, comfort, tolerance, courage, (b) repentance and conversion, (c) oneness or agreement of spirit or mind (there is no term equivalent to English mind, and the term for spirit reflects a much more tangible kind of spirit idea than the English and Greek), and (d) mental qualities such as wisdom and intelligence.

The Uses of the Heart in Acts

The King James version employs the word *heart* approximately twenty-one times in the Book of Acts, the Bulu translation uses the word *nlem* 'heart' eighty times in the same New Testament book. In

the process of translating the Book of Acts into Kaka it has been necessary to examine the adequacy of these Bulu heart figures and to avoid meaningless literal translations of them in the Kaka translation, which has made considerable use of the Bulu scriptures. What follows is a description of these terms used in the Bulu and Kaka Acts where the English and Greek do not use the term heart. All references are from the King James Version.

4:24, 5:12, 7:57, 8:6, 12:20, 15:25, 18:12 "one accord" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'one heart'.

2:4, 4:31, 6:3, 6:5, 7:55, 13:9, 13:52 "filled with the Holy Ghost" or "full of the Holy Ghost" becomes 'the Holy Spirit filled their hearts'. These languages must specify that this is active and that something specific was filled, viz. the heart.

2:38, 3:19, 8:22, 11:18, 13:24, 15:3, 17:30, 19:4, 20:21, 26:20. These verses use the English "repent," "conversion," and "repentance," and become in Bulu and Kaka 'turning over the heart' and 'the turning over of the heart'.

2:7, 2:12, 3:10. English "amaze" and "amazement" become Bulu 'ceasing to think with the heart' and Kaka 'surprise in the heart'.

2:12, 5:24, 10:17 "doubt" becomes in Bulu 'not to think in the heart' and in Kaka 'to become without thought in the heart'. Both of these expressions are negative action.

9:31, 16:40, 28:15 "comfort" and "take courage" become in Bulu 'to help their hearts' and in Kaka 'to cause their hearts to rest'.

15:32, 15:41 "confirm" becomes in Bulu 'to give them strong hearts' and in Kaka 'to make strength in the heart'.

27:22, 27:25, 27:36 "be of good cheer" becomes in Bulu 'help the heart' and in Kaka 'to cause the heart to rest'.

Other references which occur only once are the following. 5:17 "were filled with indignation" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'indignation filled their hearts'. 6:10 "the spirit by which he spoke" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'he spoke, the spirit sitting in his heart'. 7:10 "wisdom" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'heart thinking'. 8:7 "unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'bad spirits in their hearts came out'. 9:1 "Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'Saul was with ferocity in his heart'. 9:35 "turned to the Lord" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'turned over the heart and believed the Lord'. 14:15 "we also are men of like passions with you" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'we also are men with hearts like yours'. 14:15 "turn from these vanities" becomes in Bulu 'turn over your hearts' and in Kaka 'turn over your hearts and leave these vanities'. 15:24 "subverting your souls" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'ruining your hearts'. 'Soul' and 'spirit' are one in these languages. Since the context refers to the upsetting of their spiritual lives in this world, the term *sisiñ* 'spirit' or 'soul' is here inappropriate.

17:11 "these were more noble" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'these had better hearts'. 17:11 "with all readiness of mind" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'their hearts were quick to believe'. 18:5 "Paul was pressed in the Spirit" is rendered as 'Paul had strength in his heart', but the

Bulu translation is inadequate at this point. The Kaka translation translates Greek *sunechō* here as 'Paul was with a full heart' (i.e. absorbed in preaching Christ).

22:17 "I was in a trance" becomes in Bulu and Kaka 'my heart was swinging back and forth'. 23:1 "I have lived in all good conscience before God" becomes in Bulu 'I have lived with a good heart before God' and in Kaka 'I have lived with a good heart in the eyes of God'. 24:25 "temperance" is translated in Bulu and Kaka 'a cool heart'. 28:25 "they agreed not among themselves" is rendered in Bulu as 'they did not mix their hearts', i.e. bring their hearts together, and in Kaka 'they did not encounter one heart'.

Conclusion

There are several conclusions which may be reached in relation to the above kind of phenomena. However, these cannot be stated aside from a presentation of a full cross section of the ways in which these languages are forced to express the New Testament writings. "Primitive languages" are quite often criticized for their lack of generality or abstractness. Weakness in the vocabulary of aboriginal languages is no doubt a serious setback in certain kinds of expressions. On the other hand, there is another point which should be mentioned in this connection. Modern "civilized languages," which live in the throes of a rapidly moving series of historical events, tend to create very descriptive and picturesque metaphors at one stage of the language and later, as culture changes rapidly, these descriptive and emotional expressions become dead metaphors and lose much of their color. In the world of the "folk man," where culture undergoes a slow unconscious evolution, language does not tend to get out of gear with history as much as it does in the case of modern societies. Consequently the obsolescent metaphor is conspicuously less frequent—at times almost completely absent. The emotional expressions related to the heart in these African languages are felt to be extremely descriptive and colorful, and depict those situations in a way in which dead metaphors would be incapable of doing. Matthew 13:19 "that which was sown in his heart" is a good example of an agricultural metaphor which is not used in most American speech aside from such exclusive contexts as this verse. The absence of these obsolete metaphors in so-called folk languages dealt with here is fortunate for the translator and the reader, for this fact greatly simplifies the process of making the Scriptures intelligible to the people.
