

boasting about his conquest. Repetition of the full noun to refer to him brought humor to the situation. Eagle's boasting would be short-lived. The audience knew how the story would end. Through study and discussion, I found that Godie wasn't the only African language with such a use of full nouns as a feature of style. Nyabwa, a related Kru language, and Mambila, a very distantly related Benue-Congo language, used full nouns in similarly mocking ways.

My next discovery had to do with who was referred to by pronoun in stories and who was not. I found that only main and important characters have the "privilege" of being pronominalized, while lesser characters are generally referred to by their full noun referents. Thus, in the story of Viper and Eagle, Viper's wife is never referred to by a pronoun. She appears in full noun form four times in a row, but she is of little importance in the story. The only characters who are referred to by pronoun are Viper and Eagle, the main actors.

Another use of full nouns is related to who is "on stage" at any given time. A full noun occurs in the opening position in a new paragraph, signalling a break in the story flow. Thus, in the story of Eagle and Viper, after Eagle has walked around and around, boasting all day, Viper suddenly enters the picture and promises vengeance—in full noun form. All the later references to Viper within the paragraph are, however, by pronoun, since he is the main character (and he is not being made fun of). Thus, the presence of a full noun is highly significant for the reader, as it introduces a main character on stage.

The application of these discoveries to Bible translation is obvious. I shudder to think how readers could have misinterpreted our attempt at making things clearer in Mark. Is Jesus being mocked? Is Jesus *not* a main character? Is this *another* paragraph coming up? Why is Jesus introduced *again*?

For those who think this may be just a feature of Kru languages, or of African languages, I would like to refer to an interesting paper I just heard. In a study on the role of pronouns in Italian conversation, Duranti notes that main characters are referred to by pronoun, while minor characters are not. Perhaps more importantly, he notes that personal pronouns are used "for characters with whom the speaker identifies or empathizes". Not to use a pronoun is to set up a certain "emotional distance". (Manuscript, "Referential and Social Meaning of Subject Pronouns in Italian Discourse".)

I think the message of this is clear. It is important to find out what the use of pronouns and the presence of full nouns suggest in terms of a character's role in the story, and in terms of the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. We must not let concern about ambiguity hide the real function of the use of pronouns in discourse.

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"The first day of unleavened . . ." Mt 26.17, Mk 14.12, Lk 22.7

The addition of the word "bread" to Matthew 26.17, Mark 14.12, and Luke 22.7, in English versions printed after 1600 has introduced contradictions and confusion into the narrative of the last days of Jesus on earth.

Many critics and writers of commentaries have drawn attention to the problems in these verses, although none have directly connected the problems

with the absence of the word for “bread” from the Greek text. The following quotations are typical of those that recognize the contradictions that exist in the common translation of the text.

- (1) “It is therefore clear that Mk 14.12, which seems to identify the first day of Unleavened Bread with the Passover day, and which suggests the identification of the last supper with the Passover meal, must be corrupt. The primary corruption no doubt lies in the words *tē protē hēmera tōn azumōn*, “on the first day of the unleavened (things)”. Behind this, whether in a documentary or oral source, must lie words which should give the meaning “before the feast of Unleavened Bread”, thus resuming, v. 2, “not on the feast.” The editor having misinterpreted this to mean “on the first day of Unleavened Bread,” is obliged to suppose that the Passover day is intended. The real “first day of Unleavened Bread” would be, as he is aware, too late. He therefore inserts *hote to pascha ethuon*, “when they killed the Passover (lamb)”, thus identifying the last supper with the Passover meal, and introducing hopeless confusion into the succeeding narrative . . . And this preliminary error confuses the whole of the following narrative. In other words, Mk 14.12a is so certainly corrupt that no inference ought to be drawn from it as to the chronology of the succeeding narrative.” (W. C. Allen, I.C.C. *Commentary on Matthew*, pages 272–273.)

- (2) [Matthew 26.17] “The first day of Unleavened Bread ought strictly to mean the fifteenth of Nisan, which begins at sundown on the fourteenth. Jews would prepare . . . to eat the passover on the fourteenth. The meal began toward evening on that day and continued into the night, so that it was concluded on the fifteenth. Matthew, in accordance with ordinary Jewish usage, draws no sharp distinction between the two feasts, and so refers to events on the fourteenth.

This dating, which is also that of Mark 14.13 and Luke 22.7 conflicts with John 18.28, 19.14, 31. According to John, Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation, the fourteenth of Nisan, and the Last Supper was on the evening of the thirteenth-fourteenth. All evangelists, of course, agree that he suffered on a Friday. According to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus’ crucifixion took place at the very time when the paschal lambs were being slain. Most scholars now hold that John’s dating is correct . . .”

(G. A. Buttrick, in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, volume 7 page 572.)

- (3) “The problem is created by a striking conflict between the Synoptic accounts of the date of the Crucifixion and that in the Gospel of John. All agree that Jesus died on a Friday. But Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke, says that this was the Passover while John declares that it was the day before (John 18.28; 19.14, 31, 42.) In this instance John is almost certainly correct.” (G. A. Buttrick in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, volume 8, page 373.)
- (4) [Mark 14.12] “Here, therefore, it would seem to be either a mis-translation from an Aramaic original or else the faulty expression of a non-Jewish author. The words ‘when they sacrificed the passover lamb’ make it quite clear that St. Mark was thinking of Nisan 14th.” (D. E. Nineham,

Commentary on Mark in the Pelican NT Commentaries, page 376.)

- (5) [Luke 22.7] "It is not strictly true to say that the paschal lambs were sacrificed on the (first) day of Unleavened Bread. The Jewish day began at sunset, so that by Jewish reckoning the sacrificing of the lambs in the afternoon fell on Nisan 14th, and the Passover meal a few hours later fell on Nisan 15th, the first day of Unleavened Bread." (G. B. Caird, *Commentary on Luke* in the Pelican NT Commentaries, page 236.)
- (6) "It is true that when Mark 14.12 has (with reference to the previous day ending at sunset): 'and on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the passover lamb', there is a contradiction between the first half of this time reference and the second. According to the usual reckoning Nisan 15 is the first day of the feast of the Unleavened Bread . . . But the second part of the reference to time ('when they sacrificed the passover lamb') so clearly indicates Nisan 14 that only this day can be meant." (J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, page 17.)

Without the difficult words *tē protē hēmera tōn azumōn*, "on the first day of the unleavened (things)", there would be little difficulty with the timing of the events given by Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and their accounts would be in accord with the account given by John. The day "when they killed the Passover lambs" was the day before the Passover feast, the "day of Preparation" as it is called by all four gospel writers, the 14th day of the month Nisan. According to Luke it was when this day "came" that Jesus sent the two disciples to make the preparations, and the Last Supper was held. And by the Jewish method of reckoning this would have been on the Thursday evening, after sunset had concluded the 13th day. As one commentator says:

"The day itself arrived, as distinct from 'was approaching' (ver. 1). This arriving would take place at sunset on the 13th . . . The day on which the lambs had to be killed began at sunset on the 13th, and ended on sunset of the 14th." (A. Plummer, I.C.C. *Commentary on Luke*, page 492.)

On this new day, the last Supper was held and Jesus was arrested, tried, and crucified. This was the day of Preparation, when leaven was removed from houses and the Passover lambs were killed. As it was the day before the Sabbath, and also the day before the Passover, it is clear that the Passover fell on the Sabbath in that year. (See Luke 23.54; John 18.28; 19.14, 31, 42.)

But how can the apparent contradiction between this clear indication of timing and the words "on the first day of unleavened (things)" be resolved? To arrive at a satisfactory solution it is necessary to refer back to the Greek NT. I have translated the words of the first part of Mark 14.12 in a literal way, in order to reflect the Greek text, which does not have the word for "bread" in it. It is true that translators have generally taken this to mean "the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread", even though this conflicts with other references to time in the same text. But the Greek word *azumōn* is just the genitive plural form of the adjective meaning "unleavened" without any noun. It was used without a noun in the Septuagint as the translation for the Hebrew *massoth* which refers to unleavened flat cakes, but its meaning need not be restricted to this. If the intention really was to refer unambiguously to (the Feast of)

Unleavened Bread, then the word for “bread” would have been added. But in its absence we may legitimately take a different sense “the first day of things unleavened”, or “unleavenings”.

As recorded in the three parallel verses of Matthew 26.17, Mark 14.12, and Luke 22.7, the day in question was the day when the passover lambs were killed. Therefore it must have been the day *before* the Passover Feast. But also, in some sense it was a “first day”. This may refer to a count-down of the days before the Feast, when the Jews purified themselves in preparation for it (see John 11.55–12.1). Or perhaps it means “the most important day leading up to the Feast”.

I don’t believe these verses in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are saying, “on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread”; to give such a rendering is to embrace contradiction. They *are* saying that the day was a first day, a day for the unleavening of houses and hearts, a day for preparation, and the day on which the Passover must be killed.

To understand these verses in the way I have suggested is to avoid the position where they are made to contradict themselves, and it is to remain in harmony with the account in John and certain other Scriptures.

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(Adapted from the book “The Bread in the Lord’s Supper”.)

Cut Quotes and Vocative Inversions

It is perfectly all right and natural in English to reverse the order of speaker and quote at times, and have the quote before mentioning the speaker. For example, Luke 7.43 (GNB):

“You are right,” said Jesus.

Or John 9.12:

“Where is he?” they asked.

“I don’t know,” he answered.

In many African languages this is impossible: the speaker must always be mentioned first, then a verb form meaning generally “to speak” or “to say”, often obligatorily followed by a quote introducer particle (“that”), and then the words of the speaker. A copy of the order of the GNB on this point is usually a sure sign that the translator is following his source text too literally.

A natural extension of the reversal of speaker and quote is the cut quote of the type found in Ezekiel 7.21:

“I will let foreigners rob them,” says the Lord, “and lawbreakers will take all their wealth . . .”

Another example is Mark 1.15:

“The right time has come,” he said, “and the Kingdom of God is near!”

In many African languages (as in fact also in Greek), the natural order here will be:

He said, “The right time has come, and the Kingdom of God is near!”

If this is a simple matter of using the right grammatical sentence structure