

that the subjective element is absent from the external evidence. It is not a matter of either/or, but of both/and. Thus we are affirming that a system of checks and balances is required in textual criticism to avoid rigid artificiality on the one hand, and unrestricted supposition on the other. It appears that the N.E.B. New Testament tends toward the latter extreme.

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## SOME POINTS OF INTEREST AND DIFFICULTY EXPERIENCED IN TRANSLATING GENESIS INTO BARI

Work on the present translation of Genesis into Bari was begun in February 1961, and the first draft completed in May of the same year.

The initial stages of the translation proceeded smoothly because Daniele Wani and I were using a collection of Old Testament stories in Bari as a basis, and so many of the main narrative portions of Genesis were already prepared and had been in use for some years. Nevertheless it was necessary to revise and check the original, as it had been prepared in the first place as a book of stories (i.e. fragmentary Scripture portions) for schools. This meant that the different units had not been co-ordinated in vocabulary and spelling. In many ways it was very helpful to have so much of the work already done, though in a few instances we felt a little chary of making changes in a passage that was very well known, such as the stories of the Garden of Eden and the Fall. Our efforts too, to co-ordinate the spelling of names by a consistent transliteration met with some resistance, as people did not like to have changes made. Much of Genesis still remained to be translated for the first time and this material was of a less exciting nature, such as the long lists of genealogies which require careful transliteration.

When the revision committee met, we had to recruit some villagers to come and sit in, people who had probably not heard the book of Genesis before. I noticed how intently they listened to the reading, and asked Daniele afterwards what they had thought of it. He said that they were so interested because of the detailed descriptions of the famine and the search for food, which was so real to them. Both Daniele and I often found ourselves remarking on how vividly this book portrays life as Bari people know it, with those stories from the beginnings of time, of the movements of tribes, and the search for pasturelands, of life in a polygamous family, of journeys through the bush, of tall trees as landmarks, of disputes over wells, of flood and famine, of the migration of a family, of betrothal and marriage by tribal custom, of the making of a covenant using the partition of birds; and through it all the story of God's dealings with man. The Old Testament certainly speaks to those whose life and environment are so similar in many ways.

It was interesting to find how similar some of the Hebrew ways of expression are to Bari idiom, no doubt because they both share the same primitive background.

Some of the points which I noticed were:—30: 30 ‘. . . the Lord hath blessed you wherever I turned.’ Bari can say, as the Hebrew, ‘. . . blessed you to my feet’.

32: 20 Hebrew uses the expression ‘I will cover his face’ for ‘to appease’, and Bari speaks of ‘covering the eyes’. Gifts of appeasement are *rapesi ti konyen*, ‘coverings of the eyes’. (But in 20: 16 where a slightly different Hebrew expression ‘covering of the eyes’ is used for the vindication of a woman from a sexual offence, Bari then has to say *lalayet*, ‘washing’, as this is the correct term in such circumstances.)

49: 14 ‘Issachar is a strong ass’—Hebrew literally ‘a bony ass’. In English this would convey the opposite meaning, as we associate ‘bony’ with ‘thin’; but when we came to translate this, Daniele told me that Bari says ‘You are a man with bones’, or ‘You have ribs’, meaning that you are strong. So it seems that it is the bones and ribs in Bari which denote strength, as seems to be the case in Hebrew, rather than the muscles, as in English.

50: 21 ‘Joseph spoke kindly to them.’ Bari follows Hebrew in saying that he spoke ‘to their hearts’.

16: 7 In this verse I learnt that Bari calls a spring by the same word as that for a woman’s breast, but in 24: 13, where ‘fountain’ or ‘spring’ is also used, we could not use the same word *kinati lo pion*, literally ‘breast of water’, as the context implies that the spring was rising within a well. We were puzzled to know what to say other than the usual word for well, until I noticed that the same word *ayin* is used for ‘well’ here as for ‘eye’ elsewhere, even though the Oxford Hebrew Lexicon says that the connection between the two is dubious. Daniele immediately said that Bari speaks of the ‘eye of the water’ in referring to water rising in the depths of the well, so we were able to find the right expression for this passage.

If only it were possible to translate directly from the original I am sure that we should find very many more instances where a closer understanding could be reached in Bari, rather than having to come through English.

Translation grows ever more interesting as one discovers how people think and the idioms they use, so that where possible ideas can be got across in their local dress. For instance:

29: 15 This verse speaks of the ‘wages’ Laban should have paid Jacob, but in Bari the ordinary word for wages cannot be used, as there is no question of hire between relatives. The reward for work done is called *doket*, ‘gift’, or *yariet*, ‘help’.

34: 12 This refers to the gifts given in betrothal or marriage. In Bari custom these are separate from the dowry as such. Certain members of the bride’s family have to receive prescribed gifts. These have a special name, not *dokesi*, the usual word, but *kukesi* from *kuk*, ‘to honour or reverence’.

31: 15 Rachel and Leah complain that their father has been using up ‘the money given for us’. The checkers of this MS. wondered why we had not used the ordinary word for money here, but it was because this refers

to the dowry for which there is a special word, and we have used a phrase that is often heard, that 'he has eaten our dowry'. This quite often happens to a girl who is in the process of betrothal; if her father is unscrupulous he will arrange a marriage and receive and use up the dowry without giving the girl a proper chance to refuse, unless she is able to repay the money herself. (This actually happened to a teacher in my school.) This parallel does not go the whole way, I know, but the idea behind the complaint is similar and very real in Bari.

Sometimes the explanations which emerge when one is searching for an exact meaning are very vivid:

49: 7 We were looking for a word to express 'wrath', and eventually Daniele gave me an expression meaning 'to break out'; 'the sort of anger,' he said, 'that bursts out as bees from a hive against an intruder, the sort that doesn't stop to ask questions but rushes into the fight'.

1: 2 We were trying to get a better word for 'move' than *wōwōrō*, 'walk', for the phrase '. . . the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters'. The Bari word which seemed most nearly to give the right thought is *bibirtō*, which is used of a bird hovering over its nest or fluttering round a bunch of ripe bananas.

1: 20 'Every living creature . . . with which the water swarms.' After a prolonged discussion a word was found for 'swarms' which is used not only of fish swarming, but also of buffalo herds teeming on the plain.

There is always the need to test the meaning of words and not to take them at their face value, as I found in the following places:

2: 2 'He rested on the seventh day.' The normal word for 'rest', *yukan*, which had been used originally had to be rejected, because, as Daniele pointed out, it also means taking a rest or 'breather', and so implies the resumption of work after a pause. As the point here is the cessation of work, we had to use a different term altogether, literally 'God stood from work'. (*In Ex. 31: 17 God is said to have 'rested' and to have 'refreshed himself' (same verb as in Ex. 23:12) after the labours of creation. Ed.*)

23: 10 'all who went in at the gate of his city'. If we had translated this literally we should have conveyed the opposite meaning, i.e. that it was the country people coming in to market from outside that was intended, instead of the people of the place. So we have used a word meaning 'to gather together' in place of 'went in', 'those who gather together' by implication being the inhabitants of the city.

29: 17 Leah is said to have 'tender (weak) eyes'. After some questioning I thought I had got the right word from Daniele for 'myopic' and was about to write it down, when something made me ask a further question. It was as well I did because otherwise we should have given her a squint!

Some words which are used generally presented us with difficulty in getting close to the usage of the original, as came out when checks were made in the Translations Department. The word for 'earth' was one of these. *'ereṣ* and *'adāmā* cannot be represented consistently by any one word in Bari, as so much depends on context. *Kak*, the general word for 'earth', has a very wide meaning, covering 'world/earth' and 'ground' (though not

'soil' as such), 'floor', 'down' and sometimes 'under'. The checkers of the MS. had a difficult task trying to sort this out, and their troubles were increased by finding that this word *kak* appeared also in time phrases such as 'the cool of the day' (3: 8), literally 'the cooling of the earth', and 'as soon as the morning was light' (44: 3), literally 'the splitting of the earth'.

As time goes on one comes increasingly to value working with an informant who will disagree and be ready to suggest alternatives, because it is then that there is hope for an accurate translation. A small case in point was, the word for 'sepulchre' in 23: 6. I wanted to use *gulöm*, the word used in the New Testament for our Lord's tomb, but Daniele was very insistent that it should be *dili*, 'hole'. I knew that a grave is often called a hole, but pressed him for the reason why he was so anxious that I should use *dili* here, and then I learnt that in Bari a distinction is made between the empty and the filled-in grave. *Gulöm* is only used when the grave has received its dead, the earth has been shovelled in and the top smoothed over and beaten hard. *Dili* is used of the unfilled grave waiting to receive its dead, which is of course the meaning needed for this particular verse.

The various footnotes on the meanings of names in Genesis (e.g. Jacob's sons) did not mean a great deal to me as an ordinary reader of the Bible, but when it came to translating these passages Daniele and I became very interested to notice the way in which names grew from allusions and happenings, because this is very much the case in Bari custom too. Children all have home names which signify their place in the family, e.g. Ladu, a second-born son, or Laku, a son born after the death of other children; Kiden, a girl born after several boys, etc. They are also named after events which happened at the time of their birth, or seasons, e.g. for girls, Meliñ, 'dry season', Yawa, 'beer' (much beer was drunk at the feast), Mandu, 'hatred' (i.e. her parents were at loggerheads when she was born), Koloñ, 'sun' (i.e. born at mid-day); and for a boy, Taban, 'weary' (i.e. mother had a difficult time in childbirth). So the meanings and reasons for names in Genesis have significance for Bari people and we have made quite a list of explanatory footnotes for these.