

Language contact and translation in religious context. Comparative approaches

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Abstracts

Jacopo BARON, EHESS; LAS

Continuities and discontinuities. A reflection over a hundred years of documented sand drawing practice on Ambrym island (Vanuatu).

Ni-Vanuatu sand drawing has been declared a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity by UNESCO in 2003, but despite such a recognition – and the fact of having been witnessed by well-trained scholars since the 1910s – this ephemeral art has never undergone an in-depth analysis. Relying on ethnographic and archival data collected during my PhD research, I will try to provide an account of how sand drawing has changed in the last one hundred years, isolating persisting features and recent developments.

Thomas BRIGNON, Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès

Converting Birds. Pragmatic Consequences of Translating an Animal *Exemplum* into Guarani (Jesuit Missions of Paraguay, 1724)

In the Jesuit *reducciones* of Paraguay (1609-1768), the early XVIIIth century is associated with a series of religious translations inspired by didactic purposes and fuelled by local printing presses, growing expectations among indigenous congregations and significant contributions from the Guarani elite. Such is the case of cacique Nicolás Yapuguay's *Explicación del catecismo en lengua guaraní*, issued in 1724 under Pablo Restivo's supervision. By transposing exemplary tales (*exempla*) to their own Paraguayan setting, Yapuguay and Restivo contributed to the emergence of self-referential narratives in Guarani which pragmatic consequences are still unknown, especially when they resort to the Amazonian fauna in order to convince their audience. We will therefore focus on the adaptation of one of these short stories, namely a medieval anecdote that recounts the conversion of a bird. In spite of its literality, the Guarani version remained highly bound to its immediate pragmatic context in terms of redaction, enunciation and reception. Local bird-related agents, discourses, representations or practices were implicitly indexed to a salutary paradigm that redefined non-human but also human relationships in "pastoralist" terms. In other words, we will try to show how collaborative translation promoted a providential vision of both natural and social worlds, in which animal domestication was presented as an equivalent of native conversion.

Philippe CASSUTO, Université d'Aix-Marseille

Targum de l'Ancien Testament, version, traduction ou interprétation

L'Ancien Testament, pour sa plus grande partie, a été récrit vers -200 avant notre ère. Le verset Néhémie 8,8 "Ils lurent dans le livre de la loi de Dieu, distinctement et en indiquant le sens, et ils

comprirent la lecture." (במקרא ניבינו, שכל ושם; מפרש, הלאלים ב תורה בספר ניקרא), est, pour la tradition ancienne, à prendre au pied de la lettre : ils lurent [en hébreu], distinctement [en traduction] et en indiquant le sens [en commentant].

Innocent Himbaza le résume bien dans "La tradition du Targum en Néhémie 8, 1-8" dans Études théologiques et religieuses 2006/4 (Tome 81).

Comme le montrent les écrits classiques juifs, la tradition rabbinique a vu dans le terme *meforash* de Ne 8, 8, l'attestation scripturaire la plus ancienne de la tradition du Targum. Les références que nous connaissons dans les Talmuds (*b.Megillah* 3a ; *b.Nedarim* 37b ; *y.Megillah* 4,74d) ainsi que dans le Midrash (*Ber. Rabba* 36,8) contiennent l'explication suivante « *meforash* c'est le Targum (*meforash zèh targum*) ». L'explication de ces sources juives fait donc remonter le Targum à l'époque d'Esdras après la captivité babylonienne. Selon la chronologie biblique, l'activité d'Esdras est datée du début jusqu'au milieu du v^e siècle av. J.-C., Néhémie étant son contemporain plus jeune, et certains modernes acceptent cette ancienneté.

Au départ, le mot Targum signifie simplement "traduction" sans indiquer la langue. Il serait possible de débattre si les juifs ont d'abord traduit la Bible en grec ou d'abord en araméen, avec en arrière-plan, entre autres, les disputes entre juifs et samaritains ou entre sectes juives. Une traduction en araméen du livre de Job est présente parmi les manuscrits de la Mer Morte sur le site de Qumran : 11QtgJob, 2e moitié du 2e s. avant J.-C. Mais sur le même site se trouvent également bien des manuscrits en grec.

Par quelques exemples tirés des Psaumes, nous montrerons des cas concrets comparant le texte hébreu et le targum araméen.

Bridget DRINKA, University of Texas at San Antonio

Perfets in Contact on the Iberian Peninsula

In recent studies on the distribution of the periphrastic perfect (Eng. *I have eaten*, Span. *he comido*) on the Iberian Peninsula and in Europe in general, a new emphasis on the interactive role of geographical and sociohistorical factors has emerged. This scholarly trend is perhaps best exemplified by the comprehensive dissertation of Javier Rodríguez Molina (2010), who assembles chronologically- and geographically-stratified data, both literary and non-literary, in order to trace the diffusion of the category across space and time. What Rodríguez Molina discovers is that the perfets of the eastern regions of the Iberian Peninsula were the first to undergo grammaticalization and that Frankish influence from across the Pyrenees may have played a significant role in this development. In this paper, I provide support for and expand upon Rodríguez Molina's findings, but take a step beyond his claims in asserting not only that the role of the Franks was essential in providing a model for the development of the periphrastic perfects in the east, but also that Arabic may have played a role in the constrained use of the perfets in the western region.

Timo KALLINEN, University of Eastern Finland

Pagan, Secular, and Christian: modern transformations of a Ghanaian libation ritual

Offering of libations to ancestral spirits and deities has formed an important part of the sacrifices performed during the ritual cycles of different communities in Ghana, West Africa. Accordingly, it was among the ‘pagan’ practices that Christian converts were expected to renounce during the missionary era of the early twentieth century. Despite its antagonism toward all things traditional, the missionary project necessitated a local language and a culture – separate from religion – that could be directed to communicate the universal message of Christianity. Later on, when a modern national identity was shaped parts of this ‘culture’ were used as its building blocks. This permitted the cultivation of national language, history, folklore, costume, and so on, but many ritual forms of the traditional religion were also incorporated. Consequently, the offering of libations could become considered a ‘cultural performance’ separated from its earlier ‘pagan’ connotations. It has become a part of all sorts of nationalistic events, such as Independence Day celebrations, and included in a ‘cultural studies’ curriculum taught in schools. Many Christian groups, particularly those belonging to the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, have refused to accept the libation ritual as a part of secular national culture due to its initial connections to indigenous cosmologies. However, in the spirit of inculturation, Roman Catholics have considered it compatible with Christianity and identified it as a form of prayer. In my presentation I will discuss how the separation of the domain of culture from that of religion enabled a new understanding of ritual primarily as a symbolic activity. When framed within a referential semiotic ideology, the libation ritual is understood as an expression of the thoughts and emotional states of its performers – and not as a sacrificial exchange with spiritual agents. This interpretation has facilitated both its secularization and Christianization.

Maria KHACHATURYAN, University of Helsinki; LLACAN, CNRS

Mediated conversions: of how Mano (Forest Guinea) were converted by their Kpelle neighbors

The first Catholic missionary to dwell among Mano (Guinea) arrived in 1941. It was 27 years after the Mano neighbors, Kpelle, first heard the word of the Lord, and just a year before the first Kpelle priest was ordained. In 1967, the government of independent Guinea, insisting on the Africanization of the clergy (and suspecting a continued influence from the former metropole) chased away all the European missionaries. By that time, the second, who happened to be the last, European apostle of the Mano had already left, irritated by the hostility from those whom he tried to convert. Left to their own devices, and despite all the difficulties that the Guinean independence brought, the Kpelle church flourished, while Mano were never able to catch up with their neighbors. In addition to being already more numerous than Mano, Kpelle became dominant in the church affairs. The Kpelle religious register, shaped by missionary translation efforts, but also by the underlying impact of Maninka, the language of the Islamized neighbors, came to strongly influence Mano, especially through an extensive practice of Kpelle – Mano translations. This talk will focus on a study of a parallel corpus of religious texts where this influence is most clearly seen. Texts produced in Guinean Mano, many of which are

oral translations from Kpelle, are contrasted with texts in Kpelle, as well as with texts in Liberian Mano, which are not (or not as much) influenced by Kpelle.

Andrej A. KIBRIK, Institute of Linguistics RAS and Lomonosov Moscow State University

Russian cultural and linguistic influence upon Upper Kuskokwim

Like other major Christian nations, Russia was involved in massive colonization and Christianization of multiple ethnic groups. The only overseas Russia's effort of this kind was associated with Alaska. This paper addresses Russian cultural and linguistic influence upon Upper Kuskokwim, an Athabaskan tribe/language of interior Alaska. Among the native groups of Alaska, Upper Kuskokwim is distinct in lacking a close contact with Russians at the time of Russian America but still having become devout Russian Orthodox. I discuss various kinds of Russian Orthodox influence, including lexicon, personal names, culture, and discourse genres. A particularly interesting aspect of the Russian influence upon Upper Kuskokwim is that it was largely mediated by coastal native groups, both Athabaskan and Eskimo, which had a more intense contact with Russians.

Cyril MENTA, University of California, Berkeley

Transmitting is translating. Pankararu and Pankararé Indians ways of transmitting/translating ritual chants

In the Northeast Region of Brazil, a process of ritual convergence emerged recently following a historical movement of religious conversion among indigenous populations. Since the 1950s, many populations have come forward on the national political scene to obtain official recognition and territorial demarcation. In response to this, the SPI (Indians Protection Service, that became the FUNAI – National Indian Foundation – in 1967) now requires them to know the *toré* ritual. This ritual is observed by the Pankararu Indians, among others, and by virtue of their common origin – the Jesuit mission of Curral dos Bois –, the Pankararé Indians have requested the Pankararu's help in learning it.

In this talk I analyze the temporal and spatial circulation of ritual chants – whose enunciation is fundamental to ritual practices –, through the lens of the various translation processes involved in their transmission. I'll consider three cycles of transmission: the first is internal to the Pankararu Indians, the second occurs between the Pankararu to the Pankararé Indians, and the third is internal to the Pankararé.

The original owners of ritual chants are invisible entities, with whom certain people have the capacity to interact through oneiric means. Each chant is first enunciated by an invisible entity, yet after some translations has the possibility to include first the domestic repertoire, and then the collective one. Translation is not here restricted to language. Rather it is a wider process in which context translation implies sonorous materialization, asemantization or loss of initial meaning. There is a great diversity of ritual chants, and their transmission is governed by strict rules. My aim is to analyze each transmitting step as a translation and to compare the Pankararu forms of translation to the Pankararés'.

Vladimir PANOV, Vilnius University / Institute of Linguistics of Russian Academy of Sciences

Buddhism and literary Buryat language

In Russia, there are four regions where Tibetan Buddhism (Gelug) is traditionally practiced, Buryatia being the most populated and influential among them. Tibetan Buddhism arrived to Buryatia in the 17th century through Mongolian missionaries. Together with Buddhism, two literary languages were brought to Buryatia: classical Tibetan, which was primarily associated with religious practices, and classical written Mongolian. The latter, being a cognate of colloquial Buryat dialects, had been extensively used by laypeople until the creation of the Soviet state. It appeared in various written genres such as religious texts, housekeeping manuals, personal correspondence, poetry, and also “European” genres such as newspapers (in the latest period). In the framework of the Soviet language policy, there were two attempts to create a new literary Buryat language. The first (1920s – 1930s) was a version of classical Mongolian with some influence of colloquial, primarily southern (Tsongol) idioms and used a modified Latin alphabet, while the actual standard (since 1930s) is based on colloquial Khori dialects and uses a modified Cyrillic alphabet. Both varieties were trying to break away from the classical Mongolian written tradition, which was associated with religion (Buddhism in the Buryat case).

However, in the new post-Soviet context of contemporary religious and national revival, the question of standard Buryat language resurfaced in the context of a language shift (many Buryats are switching to Russian). The Traditional Sangha, which is the most influential Buddhist organization of Russia, particularly its leader Khambo Lama Damba Ayusheyev, is promoting a new literary standard of Buryat. The latter reflects the new role of Buddhism as an ethnic religion of Buryats, which is also meant to incorporate Buryats into the “pan-Mongolian” cultural space. Although the newly created literary standard is claimed to represent the Tsongol dialect, which is believed to be the closest one to standard Mongolian among Buryat dialects, it actually combines various features of different origins. The linguistic characteristics of this idiom and their nature will be analyzed in my talk.

Elena PARINA, University of Marburg / Institute of Linguistics of Russian Academy of Sciences

Translations of religious texts from Latin into Middle Welsh: a specific language? a specific genre?

The main data for my paper comes from Middle Welsh religious texts found in the manuscript Oxford, Jesus College 119 (also known as The Book of the Anchorite of Llanddewi Brefi, dated 1346). Within the prescriptive linguistic paradigm of the end of the 19th century, the following judgements were passed on these texts by their first editors: ‘The texts, being translations, cannot be regarded as the best models for Welsh prose’ (Morris-Jones & Rhŷs 1894: v) and ‘The greatest value of the text to the grammarian lies in the light it throws upon the effect upon literary Welsh of translation from Latin’ (Morris-Jones & Rhŷs 1894: xxvi). Quantitative studies of several parameters (such as the adjective-noun agreement in the plural or the usage of certain discourse particles) in the texts of the manuscript and in comparison with the language of the ‘standard’ native prose allow us a more

precise assessment on whether direct Latin influence has to be taken as an explanation for specific features. Our study shows that the parameter of text origin ('native' vs. translated) is not the only one affecting the frequency of certain features, and the parameter of genre / register should also be taken into account. This case study is important within the context of a larger question of the influence of source texts upon the language of translated texts and their subsequent influence on the receiving language in general. These are crucial issues for the history of the Welsh language and will be addressed in the talk.

Morris-Jones, John; Rhŷs, John (1894): The Elucidarium and other tracts. in Welsh from Llyvyr agkyr Llandewivrevi A.D. 1346 (Jesus college ms. 119). Oxford: At the Clarendon Press.

Victor PORKHOMOVSKY, Institute of Linguistics RAS and Lomonosov Moscow State University

Bible translations and language standardization

The formation of the written norm in the languages without established written traditions present special aspects for the studies of language evolution¹. The role of canonical religious texts should not be underestimated within the framework of these studies in view of the special role and place of such texts in the socio-cultural paradigms of the respective societies. It is quite evident that the consecutive diachronic analysis of the formation of written standards must be based on series of texts, presenting different stages of this evolution.

Within the framework of this analysis Bible translations make a case study par excellence for presenting the primary data in order to examine the formation of the written norm in the languages with recent written traditions. It is evident, that these languages do not possess large corpora of written monuments reflecting diachronic periods of the language norm formation. The translations of canonical texts pertaining to the different stages of this process have granted a unique possibility to study the formation and evolution of the standard norms, since the aim of these translations is the most adequate rendering of the same canonical text in the target language. Here one can single out two main types of the correlation between the development of the written norm and the versions of canonical texts in target languages, i.e. active and neutral. In the former case the language of the Bible translation serves as a base and a model for the standard written norm of the respective target language. The most evident example is the Martin Luther translation. The latter case is presented in the situations, where the written norm is formed in the general perspective of the language evolution. Here the Bible translations made in different periods of this development become good indices of the formation and development of the language norm. Three different independent Hausa versions of the Bible have evidenced this situation: 1. LITTAIFI MAI TSARKI. Tsofon Alkawali da Sabon Alkawali. Lagos. The Bible Society of Nigeria. (First published 1932). 2. LITTAIFI MAI TSARKI duk da AFOKIRIFA. Lagos. The Bible Society of Nigeria. (First published 1980). 3. LITTAIFI MAI TSARKI. Juyi Mai Fitar da Ma'ana. The Bible Society of Nigeria. 2014.

The first one was made in the initial period of the formation of the standard written norm. The second and the third reflect two consecutive later stages of this development. Hausa society is predominantly Muslim. Thus, Bible translations could not play a significant role in the formation of the new written

standard. On the other hand, these translations are important stages of this process. This paper will handle some of these details.

1. Porkhomovsky Victor. « L'oral et l'écrit dans la perspective synchronique et diachronique » // Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Comptes rendus des séances de l'année 2016; juillet - octobre. Publication trimestrielle. Fascicule III. Pp.1229-1256. Paris. Diffusion de Boccard.

Mikhail SELEZNEV, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow

Metaphors they lived by: the metaphors of the Hebrew Bible in the Old Greek and modern Russian translations

My paper deals with the problem of treating metaphors in translation, especially in translation of sacred texts. It consists of two parts. First, I turn to the history of Bible translation and look at some aspects of dealing with metaphors in the Septuagint. Next, I will speak about treatment of metaphors in modern Bible translations and share my own experience (I was the Editor of the Contemporary Old Testament translation into Russian, published 2011).

I will focus on application of modern theories of metaphor, especially the conceptual metaphor theory, to the specific case of the LXX, where two different worldviews, reflected in different strategies of metaphorical transfer, interacted with each other.

Roula SKAF, SEDYL, CNRS

Peshitta Bible, translated version

Peshitta (ܦܶܫܷܵܬܾ) is one of the existing Syriac translations of the Bible which is considered to be the closest to the Greek text. As for the New Testament part of *Peshitta*, it is not a new translation from Greek, it is only a revision of the "old Syriac versions" which was done in order to bring it into closer conformity with the Greek source. The other old versions are Curetonian and Sinaitic manuscripts, whose dating is uncertain, most likely extending from the end of the 2nd century to the beginning of the 4th century, with the completion of both manuscripts dating back to the fifth century (Brock 2006: 33). While *Peshitta* was produced around the beginning of the fifth century AD, in the 7th century, Thomas of Heraclea tried to correct the New Testament part to bring it even closer to the Greek original. Thus, we have four Syriac New Testaments: Curetonian, Sinaitic, *Peshitta*, and Heraclean.

As for the Old Testament part of the *Peshitta*, it is in turn a translation from Hebrew, during the 2nd century of our era (with the exception of three books, Daniel, Ezra and Jeremiah, which were written in Aramaic).

The translation of the Bible does not only have a religious dimension: it gives rise to a language modeled on Greek and cannot be understood outside the linguistic implications or constraints related to each language. Indeed, Greek and Syriac are different languages, which do not have the same syntax and the same precision in terms of vocabulary. Moreover, a difference might even exist within the Syriac

versions that spanned over several eras; e.g. the agent is marked differently in Mathew 8:17 in the three Syriac versions (*Peshitta*, Sinaitic and Curetonian, see Skaf 2018).

A parallel comparative study of some quotations from the Psalms in the OT of the Peshitta, in the four Syriac versions of the NT, as well as their equivalents in Greek shows, in some respects, the authenticity of the Syriac language and, in some other, the influence of morphosyntactic system by the source language.

Dmitri SITCHINAVA, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow

Church Slavonic elements in Ukrainian and Belarusian: between markers of "culture" and "Russianness"

Church Slavonic, a common medieval heritage of *Pax Slavia Orthodoxa*, had different impact in different Eastern Slavic territories. Its role in the development of the Standard ("literary") Russian is well studied, whereas in the territories that largely fell under the dominance of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and where Ukrainian and Belarusian languages developed Church Slavonic underwent a rather dramatic cultural change. In the 16th and the 17th centuries a local version (*izvod*) of Church Slavonic pronunciation flourished in Ukraine and Belarus alongside with the Polish, Latin, and Ruthenian (*prosta mova*) tradition; this was the area where Church Slavonic was first described in a grammar as a language of culture, including secular one (Smotrytsky's verse). The Church Slavonic elements were often used together with the local elements of *prosta mova*, thus contributing to the earlier versions of what can be considered standardized Ukrainian and/or Belarusian. The Ukrainian/Belarusian Church Slavonic is known to have affected deeply, in the 17th century, the Russian (Muscovite) Church Slavonic norms to the degree of convergence. However after the imperial unification of the East Slavic territories the specific traits of the local versions were lost, and the new Standard Ukrainian and Belarusian, developing since the 19th century, included far less elements of the Church Slavonic, that were often perceived as too "Russian" (as they mainly were present in Standard Russian). However many such elements, albeit rejected by purism (such as participles), persist in Ukrainian and Belarusian literature, including classics and religious texts, and will be subject of a corpus study in the present talk.

Valentina VAPNARSKY, Centre EREA du Laboratoire d'Ethnologie et de Sociologie Comparative

The conversion of the future: of how the missionaries translated their future into Yucatec Maya and what happened next

Although Yucatec Maya is predominantly aspectual, the missionaries of the early Colonial period looked for tense markers to fit the Latin model of their grammar. They reduced the rich aspectual system to a few tense markers. For the future, they chose a prospective marker, which was a grammaticalization from the root *bin* "go". This form was then systematically used in their translation of evangelic and biblical writings, as well as in their creation of new texts such as sermons. Whereas the prospective form got associated to new envisions of the future in the context of these innovative Maya genres, a comparison between its uses in a varied corpus of Colonial documents and today's

practices tends to show that it underwent a strong restriction of its semantic and pragmatic values. From a generic prospective it became a predictive-prophetic future. We have analyzed elsewhere the specificities of this form in contemporary Maya. In this talk, we will attempt to better understand its occurrences —and more generally the use of future expressions— in the Colonial texts produced by the missionaries, but also those written by the Mayas. One of the underlying questions is how the apocalyptic future of the missionaries entered into dialogue with the Maya future of history and prophecies.

Andrei ZNAMENSKI, University of Memphis

"'In the Beginning There Was No Word': Spiritual Dialogues between Athabaskan and Russian Missionaries, 1840s-1920s"

My paper explores the ways of spiritual communication between the Dena'ina Athabaskans of south-central Alaska and Russian Orthodoxy from the 1840s to the 1920s. By the 1920s, the Dena'ina, whom old Russian sources describe as the Kenaitze, embraced Orthodox Christianity that they came to view as part of their indigenous tradition. Although scholarship (Townsend 1974; Fall 1981; Znamenski 2003; Boraas 2013) examined well the general historical circumstances that contributed Dena'ina conversions (trade relations with newcomers and the effect of epidemics of the 1830s and the 1880s), it did not explore communicative tools that helped create a spiritual "middle ground" between Russian Orthodoxy and the Dena'ina. Moreover, existing literature on Native American conversions and conversions in general paid little attention to non-verbal communicative tools of missionization. In my paper, I focus first on the role of visual, sound, gesture tools of a spiritual encounter between two distinct religious traditions. The Dena'ina case represents a unique opportunity to examine the significance of non-verbal elements in a conversion process because, from the opening of the mission in 1845 to its end in the 1920s, none of the Russian missionaries to the Dena'ina spoke or understood this Athabaskan dialect. Neither were any Orthodox texts published in Dena'ina. Second, I also discuss the role of esoteric language chanting in current Dena'ina setting (reciting Church Slavonic prayers without understanding their meaning). Third, I seek to identify the background of lay people who served as middlemen between the missionaries and the Dena'ina in communicating Orthodoxy. The paper is based on archival records (missionary journals) and my own field research among the Athabaskans of the Lake Clark, Tyonek, and Anchorage areas in the 1990s.