T.J. Makutoane & J.A. Naudé

TOWARDS THE DESIGN FOR A NEW BIBLE TRANSLATION IN SESOTHO

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to suggest a means of translating the Bible and other religious texts to provide for the needs of a community consisting to a large extent of members not able to read written texts. Colonialism in Southern Africa introduced the Bible and Western text-based literacy. Bible translators have focused their efforts on preparing a clear, natural and accurate written/printed text, with the expectation that audiences will understand the message if it is in their own language. Such translations depend on the reader's ability to understand a written text. Literacy is essentially about control of information, memory, beliefs and distribution. Users still living in an oral culture are excluded. Continuing oral traditions and indigenous forms of cultural expression were and still are beyond the control of literacy. Within these communities, the African oral story-telling tradition survived in several forms within the narrative discourse. In view of the fact that these religious communities consist predominantly of members not able to read writen texts, another vehicle for the transfer of religious thought in Bible and religious translation is suggested. A new trend in Bible translation will consider the requirements of the hearer as well as those of the reader. (The translation has to be read out aloud, heard and listened to.) This trend is reflected in the recently published *Contemporary English Version* (1995), *Das Neue Testament* (1999), *The Schocken Bible, Volume 1* (1995) and the *Nieuwe Bijbel Vertaling* (New Dutch Version) (2004). This article's key issue is that of a translation strategy applicable to the audiences in question. Walter J. Ong mentions nine qualities of oral culture in which he characterises orally expressed thought and expression as opposed to literate thought and expression. The implementation of the features pertaining particularly to the Sesotho oral culture is suggested for the Bible and the religious translation process in Sesotho. These features will assist hearers to grasp the meaning when the translation is read out aloud to them in church or privately.

Rev. T.J. Makutoane and Prof. J.A. Naudé, Department of Afroasiatic Studies, Sign Language and Language Practice, University of the Free State, P.O. Box 339, Bloemfontein, 9300, South Africa. e-mail: naudej.hum@ufs.ac.za. *The authors wish to express their thanks to Ms. Marlie van Rooyen for her endless assistance and input to edit the text and technical matters of this article.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over many decades the Sesotho-speaking community has proved to be an avid religious (Christian) audience. They use two Sesotho translations of the Bible, namely the so-called old translation of 1909 and the new one of 1989. The former is the product of a word-for-word approach to translation. The primary concern of the latter was meaning and readability as a written text. Consequently, both translations depend heavily on the reader's competence to understand a written text. This constitutes a serious problem in a religious community in which many of its members are not able to read written texts. The clergy transmits the message to them in one way or another, but when it is read out aloud to them, they find it difficult to master the contents of the Bible. This situation urged the authors to suggest other vehicles to communicate religious thought in Bible translation.

The purpose of this article is to devise a Bible translation adapted to the needs of a community, who only experience the Bible as it is recited to them during church sermons or recorded on a tape. This article champions a translation which users may both recite and comprehend with ease. Briefly, translators must give preference to a participatory mode of communication, which entails a translation from the source text with meticulous consideration for rhythm and sound. The principles of orality as they pertain to these specific audiences are paramount. Translators must thus use the correct translation strategies to produce a translation that is easily audible and comprehensible when recited to the Sesotho-speaking audience.

First, the article provides a framework of the stages and various generations of Bible translation. The Sesotho Bible translations feature in this historical and typological framework. Secondly, the article aims to provide the characteristics of oral communication as drawn from original recorded Sesotho stories told by traditional narrators to the researchers. A selection from the 1909 and 1989 translations of the Sesotho Bible is analysed to determine whether there are oral features present. Thirdly, the article illustrates a proposed translation adapted to the demands of oral communication.

Since the second half of the 20th century, the communication of Bible translation throughout the world has changed dramatically. Orlinsky and Bratcher (1991:179) view the 1960s as the advent of a new epoch in Bible translation, called the Fourth Great Age of Bible translation.

2. THE FOUR GREAT AGES OF BIBLE TRANSLATION

2.1 First Great Age

The First Great Age (about 200 BCE to the fourth century CE) has a Jewish setting (Alexandria and Western Asia) and the target languages were Greek (Septuagint) and Aramaic (Targums) (Orlinsky & Bratcher 1991:179).

2.2 Second Great Age

The Second Great Age (fourth century CE to about 1500 or the Middle/Dark Ages) was Catholic in origin, with its main centres being Palestine and the burgeoning Christian communities in the Roman Empire. The target language was Latin (Jerome's Vulgate). A salient feature of this age is the Christianising of the Hebrew source text, which implies reading a new meaning and nuances into Hebrew and Greek-Septuagint words and phrases (Orlinsky & Bratcher 1991:179).

2.3 Third Great Age

The Third Great Age (about 1500-1960) essentially bears the stamp of Protestantism. The target languages include English, German, French, Dutch, Spanish, etc. The main centres of activity were located in those regions where the (essentially Protestant) trade communities ousted the old (essentially Catholic) feudal establishments. In the process of translation, there was a noticeable adherence to the word-for-word approach to translation and to pristine vocabulary and style. A desire for the greatest possible transmission of the forms and structure of the source text at both the macro and micro levels characterises the products of translation. Little attention was paid to the pragmatic functions of the source text. Famous translations of this period are the *King James Version* (KJV) or *Authorized Version* (AV), the *American Standard Version* (ASV), the Dutch Authorized Version, etc. The Old Afrikaans Version (1933/1953) and the Dutch Bible Society Version (NBG, 1951) reveal the characteristics of this era.

The *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) (1952-1975) represents a transition to the Fourth Great Age/Epoch/Phase in Bible translation (Bruce 1978; Daniell 2003). This period introduces a significant change in the overall philosophy of Bible translation. It shows the unprecedented attempt on the part of the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant communities in the United States and Great Britain to co-operate interconfessionally. Secondly, the RSV heralded the demise of the mechanical, word-for-word reproduction of the Hebrew and Greek

text, a procedure that haunted Bible translation from the outset. Instead, the focus was to render the plain meaning intended in the source texts accessible to their readers. Among those who played a key role in the development of the theory and practice of Bible translation at this stage are Eugene A. Nida and his colleagues of the American Bible Society and the United Bible Societies. Nida and Taber (1969) view translation as reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source text, firstly, in terms of meaning and, secondly, in terms of style. A translation is dynamic equivalent to the source text if the translator conveys the message of the source text into the receptor language in such a way that the receptor's response is essentially similar to that of the original receptors.

2.4 Fourth Great Age

2.4.1 The first generation: Corporate Bible translations

The latter half of the 20th century witnessed the advent of a large number and variety of new English versions of the Bible amounting to approximately 27 English renderings of the entire Bible (Metzger 2001:117). The important translations were invariably new and not revisions. This represents a distinctive departure from the KJV-RSV tradition of the preceding era. Exceptions were the *New American Standard Version* (NASB), a revision of the ASV of 1901, sponsored by a private foundation, the *New King James Version* in 1982 and the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) in 1989.

A second definitive break with the KJV tradition was the nature of the translation committees. The new translations emanated from corporate committees consisting of eminent scholars from many denominations. However, as a natural product of the common body of scholarship on which the translation work has been based, interdominational co-operation was slow. The *Jerusalem Bible* (JB) was a Catholic project, the *New Jewish Version* (NJV) Jewish, and the *New English Bible* (NEB) (Barr 1974:381-405), the *New International Version* (NIV) and *Today's English Version* (TEV) Protestant. Only the *New American Bible* (NAB) resulted from active collaboration between Catholic and Protestant scholars. The style and vocabulary of JB and NEB are British, and those of the others American.

Today's English Version (TEV) (known as the *Good News Bible*) (1976) is a prototype of what may be called the first generation of Bible translations of the Fourth Age. The American Bible Society commissioned it as a completely modern translation as far as the language usage is concerned. It could be readily understood by any reader of English, regardless of his/her educational background (Lewis 1981:261-291; Kubo & Specht 1983:171-197). There was a

demand for a translation especially designed for those who speak English as an acquired language. It was published in what is termed "common language" (the overlap between the literary and the colloquial) in order to reach a largely secular constituency. This was the first English translation to make consistent use of advances in general linguistics and in translation theory. Translators did not represent any denomination, but concurred with the principles of the project and professional experience. They based their translation theory on the scholarship of Eugene Nida, and the product exhibits a dynamic equivalence translation. Other examples are the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* (Bible in Today's Dutch) (1983) and the *Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling* (New Afrikaans version) (1983).

2.4.2 The second generation: Simplified versions and paraphrases

Various revisions and variations of the main versions were produced (cf. Coleman 1989). Attempts were made to produce paraphrase translations, translations concerned primarily with translation meaning, translations reflecting contemporary Biblical scholarship, and translations using inclusive language to reduce the sexist language of the Biblical text. These translations have communication as their primary objective. They are in general a rewrite of an existing translation in a modern vernacular, produced by a single translator/editor (Metzger 2001:175-185). Some translations seek to serve the needs of a specific population group: children, the youth, women, Christian converts and speakers of dialects. This large clientele should not find the Bible disturbing. The following belongs to the second generation of Bible translations of the fourth era: the *Living Bible, Paraphrased* (LB) (1967, 1971) by Kenneth Taylor, used the *American Standard Version* of 1901 as source. The *Reader's Digest Bible* (1982) by Bruce M. Metzger is an abridgement of the *Revised Standard Version* (1952). The vocabulary and language structures of these eminently readable versions reflect the language usage of the average person. The result is that they are simplified versions at a reading level of third or fourth grade and are intended as a stepping stone to the more formal/traditional versions. For example, the *New International Reader's Version* (1996/1998) is a simplified version intended as a stepping-stone to the *New International Version* (Barker 1999). The translators were most sensitive to gender-inclusive wording. For example, the term "brothers" is rendered as "brothers and sisters". In *The Message* (1993, 1997, 2000), Eugene Peterson refrained from choosing simple English words, but rather chose words that forcefully convey the meaning to the reader, for example "addendum", "consummate", "embryonic". He often dissociated passages from their first century Mediterranean context so that Jesus, for example, sounds like a 20th century American. In Matthew 5:47

Jesus states, "If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that." One salient feature of these versions appears to be the use of interpretive selection. In all instances in which the Hebrew or Greek texts are ambiguous, one view is adopted and rendered clearly. True paraphrase involves not only the modernised English equivalent of what is in the text itself, but also introduces something that is not there in order to elucidate the meaning of what is there.

The *Contemporary English Version* (CEV) (1996) by Barclay M. Newman (editor) was an exception. Translated directly from the original texts, it is not a paraphrase or modernisation of any existing traditional version. As the majority of people hear the Bible being recited rather than read it themselves, Newman and his colleagues set themselves the task to listen carefully and decide on the way in which each word in their version would be understood when read out aloud. This translation sets the stage for the third generation of Bible translations of the Fourth Age.

2.4.3 Towards the next generation of Bible translations of the Fourth Age

(i) To be read out aloud: *Contemporary English Version* (CEV)

The CEV was translated in an effort to produce a text which is faithful to the meaning of the original and easily readable and comprehensible by readers of all ages. The CEV clearly positions itself within the mainstream of modern linguistics with its assertion of the primacy of the spoken over the written word (Newman 1996). The "welcome" page of the *Contemporary English Version* (1995) describes it "as a 'user-friendly' and 'mission-driven' translation that can be *read aloud* without stumbling, *heard* without misunderstanding, and *listened to* with enjoyment and appreciation, because the style is lucid and lyrical." These important points are lacking in other translations of the 20th century.

This translation was originally designed for children (at a fourth grade reading level). However, it appealed so to adults that the translators (American Bible Society) decided to direct it to this enhanced readership. It was derived directly from the original languages of the Scriptures and is by no means an adaptation of any existing translation. The translators carefully studied every word of the source text in order to find the best way to translate the verse and render it more easily readable and understandable (Porter 1999:18-46). Poetic sections were expected not only to sound, but also to look good. Poetic lines were carefully measured to assist oral reading and to avoid awkwardly divided phrases and words, which clumsily spill over onto the next line.

Did you ever tell the sun to rise?
And did it obey?
Did it take hold of the earth
and shake out the wicked
like dust from a rug?
Early dawn outlines the hills
like stitches on clothing
or sketches on clay.
But its light is too much
for those who are evil,
and their power is broken. (Job 38:14-15)

However, for all practical purposes, many Biblical distinctions and concepts are omitted from the CEV. For example, the CEV translators held the view that the Biblical way of saying God spoke *through* the prophets was too difficult for children, and so the very concept was eliminated (e.g. Hebrews 1:1 "God's prophets spoke his message to our ancestors" instead of "God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets.") Key theological words, including "grace", "justification", "righteousness", "sanctification", "redemption", "atonement", "repentance", and "covenant" are avoided in the CEV. The CEV cautiously steers young readers away from the old "sexist" interpretations found in all Bibles prior to their generation. In Genesis 2:18, Eve is called not a "helper" but a "partner" of Adam; in 1 Peter 3:1, Colossians 3:18 and Ephesians 5:22 women are advised to "put their husbands first" rather than told plainly to "submit" to them (rendered "obey" elsewhere in the CEV). The CEV also avoids the word "Jews" wherever it is used in reference to opponents of Jesus. So instead of "Jews" they prefer "the people" or "the religious leaders".

The CEV fails to withdraw from the language of the *New York Times*, which characterised the language usage of the second generation of Bibles of this era. As illustrated above, this custom suppressed the linguistic and cultural differences of the source text, assimilating it to dominant values in the target language culture, making it familiar and therefore ostensibly original. It creates the impression that Bible personalities share the same popular culture as the readers. A new trend in Bible translation is to instil a new sensitivity among readers to the socio-cultural gap between them and the original contexts of the Bible. The socio-cultural distance is somehow achieved in *Das Neue Testament* (1999).

(ii) Bridging the cultural gap: *Das Neue Testament* (1999)

The cultural distance between the author of the source culture and his/her forms of expression (verbal and non-verbal), on the one hand, and any target culture audience, on the other, is ever present, even though, in some specific instances, it may not be relevant to the specific communicative act in question or relevant to such a minimal extent as to warrant no consideration. The intense

experience of a gap between cultures results in two scenarios (Nord 1997:98). First, the lack of culture-specific background knowledge makes it impossible to establish coherence between what is said and what is known. Secondly, non-verbal and verbal behaviour do not match because the non-verbal behaviour cannot be interpreted correctly. These two factors impede coherence, or even render it impossible, in the reception of Biblical texts, i.e. texts from which the target audience is separated by a wide cultural gap.

Nord (1997:24-25) defines the culture barrier between two groups as consisting of rich points where differences in behaviour may cause communication conflicts. This implies that, when confronted with a particular translation task, a translator has to be sensitive to the rich points between the groups or subgroups on either side of the language-and-culture barrier, even though it may well be decided to leave the barrier intact and merely try to assist people on either side to peep across and understand the otherness of what is happening over there (Nord 1997:104-106). This means that there may be some situations in translation where it is essential to bridge the cultural gap and others where the translator is supposed to leave the gap open and insist on the cultural distance between source and target cultures (cf. postcolonial translation studies and the resistive approaches to translation). The actual choice is pragmatically defined by the purpose of the intercultural communication.

In *Das Neue Testament* Berger and Nord (1999) present an alien culture in a way that allows readers from a culture remote in time and space to understand and appreciate its otherness. Nord (1997:110) illustrates the way in which the lack of cultural knowledge diminishes the appellative function of a passage in the following description of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21: 18-21). The readers of the source text knew the colours of the precious stones mentioned, whereas this is not the case with the readers of the target text. This is the reason why the colours of the stones are added. *Today's English Version* treats the source text like a technical description.

- *Today's English Version*

> The wall was made of jasper, and the city itself was made of pure gold, as clear as glass. The foundation-stones of the city wall were adorned with all kinds of precious stones. The first foundation-stone was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh yellow quartz, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chalcedony, the eleventh turquoise, the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls; each gate was made from a single pearl. The street of the city was of pure gold, transparent as glass.

- *Das Neue Testament*, 1999 (translated into English)

> The city wall is made of jasper, and the city itself of gold that is as pure as glass. The foundations of the city wall are of great beauty, for they are built out of precious stones in many different colours. The first foundation-stone is green jasper, the second blue sapphire, the third red agate, the fourth light green emerald, the fifth reddish brown onyx, the sixth yellowish red carnelian, the seventh yellow-gold quartz, the eighth beryl as green as the sea, the ninth shining yellow topaz, the tenth chalcedony, shimmering green-golden, the eleventh deep red turquoise, the twelfth purple amethyst. The twelve gates are twelve pearls; each gate is made from a single pearl. The main street of the city is of gold as pure as glass.

Although it addresses the socio-cultural distance, *Das Neue Testament* is directed towards the reader and not the listener. An example where the demands of the listener, as well as the bridging of the socio-cultural distance (although in another way than in *Das Neue Testament*) are achieved, is found in *The Schocken Bible Volume 1*.

- Facilitate reading and restore cultural knowledge: *The Schocken Bible Volume 1*

In the *Translator's Preface* it is stated that the purpose of this work is to draw the reader into the world of the Hebrew Bible by means of the power of its language (Fox 1995:ix-xxvi). The reader thus encounters a text that challenges him/her to rethink what these ancient books stand for and what they signify, and thus hopefully is encouraged to become an active listener rather than a passive receiver. This translation is guided by the principle that the Hebrew Bible, like much of the literature of antiquity, was meant to be read out aloud, and that consequently it must be translated with careful attention to rhythm and sound. The translation therefore tries to mimic the specific rhetoric of the Hebrew whenever possible, preserving such devices as repetition, allusion, alliteration, and wordplay. It is intended to echo the Hebrew and to lead the reader back to the sound structure and form of the original. Such an approach was first espoused by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig in their monumental German translation of the Bible (1925-1962). The *Five Books of Moses* is in many respects an offshoot of the Buber-Rosenzweig translation.

Fox (1995:xv-xviii) also propounds three innovations characteristic of his translation. First, the general layout, i.e. the idea of presenting each clause on a separate line in order to create the impression of blank verse as opposed to prose. His practice of dividing the text into lines (so-called cola divisions) indicates a striking departure from the concept of the Hebrew Bible as a written book and restores the sense of it as spoken performance. Cola divisions facilitate reading aloud and make it possible for the listener to sense the text's

inner rhythm — and only at that point can the text begin to deliver its message with full force. Secondly, the restoration of personal names and place names to a form more closely resembling the Hebrew original. Thirdly, there is a concentrated effort to reproduce the *Leitwort* (leading word) technique. Metatexts include notes and commentary.

Personal names are important in the text of the Hebrew Bible, because they were given to the characters, who cause or experience the events forming the plot. As opposed to English or Afrikaans where very few people even know the original meaning of a proper name, in Hebrew the naming of a person is meaningful and is usually associated with a particular event. Until recently these names were adjusted so as to blend into the English or Afrikaans phonological and morphological structure. In this process many connotations were lost. Fox transferred such names into English where at all possible. Consequently, for example, the Hebrew *Avraham* instead of *Abraham*, *Moshe* is retained instead of *Moses*, *Kayin* instead of *Cain*, *Rivka* instead of *Rebecca*, *Havva* instead of *Eve*, and *Bil'am* instead of *Balaam*. However, the transcription fails to differentiate clearly between a *he* and *het*-sound, for example *Hevel* and *Havva,* on the one hand, and *Hanokh* and *Noah,* on the other. The meaning of a name is often explained directly in the text itself. This is indicated by a slash in the text.

> May God extend/yaft
> Yefet,
> let him dwell in the tents of Shem,
> but may Canaan be servant to them! (Genesis 9:27; Fox 1995:27)

Especially in oral culture, key words are repeated within a text to signify major themes and interests. Operating on the basis of sound, the repetition of a word or word root encourages the listener to relate diverse parts of a story to one another and to follow a particular theme. If the key words are substituted while carefully observing the sound in the target text, the oral character is given prominence. The same applies to wordplay, allusion and small-scale repetition. Contrary to traditional translations where key words were omitted at random, Fox's strategy of substitution is a resounding success. In the story of the meeting between Jacob and Esau, the motif of face occurs at crucial points in the story.

> For he said to himself: I will wipe (the anger from) his face
> with the gift that goes ahead of my face;
> afterward, when I see his face,
> perhaps he will lift up my face!
> The gift crossed over ahead of his face... (Gen. 32:21-22; Fox 1995:153-155)

Fox uses specification as a device to transmit cultural activity, and accomplishes this by means of hyphenation to produce single English words (or so-called phrasal words) (Newmark 1988:147) for single Hebrew terminology with double meanings. The Hebrew word "ruach", meaning both wind and spirit, is rendered by "rushing-spirit" (Gen. 1:2), "rushing-wind" (Gen. 8:1) and "(breath of) the rush (of life)" (Gen. 7:22).

Das Neue Testament and *The Schocken Bible* can be classified as exotic. They have an exclusive readership.

- Middle-of-the-road position: *Nieuwe Bijbel Vertaling* (NBV) (2004)

The new Dutch translation, *Nieuwe Bijbel Vertaling* (NBV), is an interdenominational Bible translation with the aim of providing a standard translation for all Dutch speakers. The next Bible translation in Afrikaans (contemplated for 2016) follows similar trends in its planning phase. The basis for the NBV approach is as follows: It is not merely the message that needs to be communicated. There is a growing interest among Christians worldwide in the ways in which Biblical texts are structured, the beauty and impact of poetical language, the rhetorical features of texts, etc. Consequently, there is an ever-increasing demand for middle-of-the-road translations. This new approach acknowledges the great diversity within the Scriptures of style and genre with its characteristic forms, structures and themes. All of these must be reflected in the translated text, taking full advantage of the contemporary linguistic and literary resources of both the source and the receptor languages. The translation will not merely copy source language forms and structures, because the translation aims at contemporary, natural Dutch. The pragmatics of the receptor language take priority in the translation.

Given the growing interest in the Bible as an ancient literary and inspirational document, the view developed that this single translation would meet the needs of the church community and society at large (prospective literary uses of the translation). This broad approach to the issue of target audience in translation constituted yet another factor that contributed to the diversity in style, language level and extent of restructuring the translated text. The NBV may presuppose a somewhat broader spectrum of background knowledge of the Bible and the Biblical world, which is addressed to assist the reader.

The NBV can be read out aloud in church (recitable) and lends itself to chanting purposes. It provides helpful notes for the reader; reflects the literary forms and structures of the source texts, and retains as much Biblical imagery and metaphor as possible, provided these are functional in contemporary Dutch and express the correct intended meaning. Notes are available in case of alternative translations of the source text, if linguistically and exegetically sound; translations of names understood or alluded to in the text, which would

be disturbing if incorporated in the text itself; and, play on words and other text features with an important function, but incapable of meaningful and natural expression in translation. These notes, as well as text criticism, form an integral part of the translation and appear in all the editions of the NBV Bible, whether Netherlands Bible Society, Catholic Bible Society or licensed editions.

The intended liturgical use of the translation implies that marked style in the source text at the rhetorical, syntactic and lexical level is reflected somehow in the translation. Functional repetition of Biblical "motiv" words in rhetorical texts is therefore recognisable in the translation with as little variation as possible. The translation refrains from spelling out contextual implications and stresses the explications of the Biblical text. Many people are conversant with the Biblical text and its background and do not expect a high level of implicit information being clarified. Moreover, it is typical of language to imply information to a greater or lesser extent, because the intended message can to a large extent be inferred from the textual context. With regard to the Pauline epistles, more justice is done to Paul's condensed style by leaving implicit information in certain Greek genitive constructions more "open" than was the case in more meaning-based approaches. Although one of the aims of the project was to translate natural, contemporary Dutch, this does not mean that for instance technical terms such as "praetorium", "centurio", "legio" and military jargon used by the author of Acts, must be avoided.

The translation team includes professional translators and linguists. Approximately 60 external reviewers represent the various church denominations, including the Jewish religious community, who form book teams. A "book team" consists of two translators, two reviewers and a Biblical scholar and language expert from the co-ordinating staff group. At least two writers and/or literary critics are hired to review each Bible book from a literary perspective. The co-ordinating staff group reviews the contribution made by these external reviewers in accordance with the project's principles and proposes changes in the translated text for ratification by the project board.

2.4.4 The historical and typological frame of the Sesotho Bible translations

In 1833-34 the Paris Evangelical Mission commenced its missionary work at Morija, Lesotho. The first Gospels in Sesotho were Mark, translated by E. Cassalis, and John, translated by S. Rolland, and these were published in 1839. The translation of the New Testament was completed in 1843, but due to a number of setbacks, it was printed at the mission press of Beerseba, near Smithfield, and published in 1855 (Smit 1970:310-311). The complete Bible in Sesotho was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society and printed

by William Clowes and Sons (London) in 1881. A revised version of the Bible was published in 1899, followed by a new edition in revised orthography in 1909, and further revisions in 1942 and 1987. This is known and is still used as the Old Translation. It reflects an adherence to the word-for-word approach of translation and to the pristine vocabulary and style similar to the Third Great Age of Bible Translations. It is characterised by a desire for the greatest possible transmission of the forms and structure of the source text, at both the macro and micro levels. Little attention was paid to the pragmatic functions of the source text.

A new Sesotho translation was published in 1989. It was based on the principles of Nida & Taber (1974) and exhibits a dynamic equivalence translation similar to the Bibles of the first generation of the Fourth Great Age of Bible Translation. The primary concern of the last mentioned translation is meaning and readability.

There are no Sesotho translations reflecting the second generation, i.e. translations with communication as its primary function, normally a rewrite of an existing translation in a modern vernacular.

Therefore, both translations rely heavily on the reader's competence to understand a written text. However, some members of this religious community cannot read written texts. A preliminary study of illiteracy in Bloemfontein's congregations has shown that 11% of the church members cannot read or write. It is presumed that the figure would be higher in the rural communities. Although the message has somehow been transmitted to them, they find it difficult to understand the content of the Bible due to the complexity of the vocabulary and language structure of the text when read aloud. This state of affairs prompted us to investigate other vehicles for the transfer of religious thought in Bible translation. The third generation of Bible translations of the Fourth Great Age is important. In this regard, the CEV with its emphasis on an audible translation sets an example.

The recorded version of the New Testament in Sesotho is an audible version, recording the original 1909 and 1989 Sesotho translations, respectively and therefore not a truly oral translation. The researcher, T.J. Makutoane, was involved with recording the 1989 New Testament in January 2008 at the Bible House in Bloemfontein. These recordings are still being developed. The principles of orality, discussed in the following section, and examples from the 1909 and 1989 versions will indicate that these translations (even if recorded) do not meet the requirements for an oral translation.

The following section discusses some features of the concept of orality, which could be applied in a Bible translation designed for recitation.

3. ASPECTS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION

3.1 Background

Communication in the first-century Mediterranean world was predominantly oral. In the 20th century a considerable amount of scholarship was acquired about oral societies in both the ancient and contemporary worlds, and this has been applied to Biblical studies over the past decades. Goody and Watt (1963), Havelock (1963) and Ong (1967) pioneered the research in the 1960s, examining the effects of writing on cognitive and social processes. Scholars such as Cole & Scribner (1974), and Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1981) continued the work in the 1970s. The work of these scholars confirmed many aspects of orality, namely mnemonic devices by means of formulas, the performance-composition as opposed to *verbatim* memorisation, and the use of themes. They demonstrated that oral epics were not only memorised but also reconstructed at each telling by the imposition of formulaic phrases. For example, children acquire language by using formulas. Fillmore (1979) advocated this notion by demonstrating that children do not learn the meanings of individual words along with rules for putting them together. Rather, they learn strings of words associated with fixed intonation and other paralinguistic features.

In her contribution towards the existence of oral communication in Africa, Ruth Finnegan (1970) highlighted other facets of oral cultures. She insisted on placing oral communication in a social setting. She notes the importance of ritual settings but also the variety of settings depending on the seasons, geographical location, and the disposition of the audience. For example, since a piece of ritual language is something valuable, it was performed, and listened to repeatedly. Her main discussion emphasises the role of the audience in the oral performance. This means that oral communication is not uniliteral, but multiliteral as the performing artist takes on his/her cues from the moods and reactions of the audience. In simpler terms, what a performer does is a monologue, with minimal feedback and no verbal intention.

3.2 Main features of oral communication

Walter J. Ong advocates the notion that all cultures start as oral cultures — and even those who are literate or post-literate, spend their lives primarily in an oral environment. This idea is also supported by Susan Niditch (1996:4-5). Walter J. Ong (1988:69) presents three characteristics of oral culture:

- Personality structures are more communal and externalised — veracity in the oral tradition resides in the common sense reference to experience. In simpler terms, the sense of truth is found more naturally in the oral recount.

- Thought relies on formulaic constructions/expressions (i.e. exactly repeated phrases and set expressions such as sayings, clichés, proverbs, etc.), because knowledge once required must be constantly repeated or it is lost. Formulaic usage of language aids retention of knowledge (Ong 1988:23).
- Communication is always social, involving both a speaker and an audience.

In addition, Ong (1982) also mentions nine qualities of oral culture. He characterises orally expressed thought and expression as opposed to literate thought and expression, as being:

- *additive rather than subordinative* — A proclivity towards simple additive principal clauses rather than subordinative clauses. For example, the first verses of Genesis: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth. And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters. And God said: Be light made. And light was made."
- *aggregative rather than analytic* — A tendency to use formulas, clichés and epithets, such as the "beautiful princess", the "sturdy oak", "clever Odysseus", and "wise Nestor", as aids to the oral expression and memory. Writing facilitates a more analytic process — clichés become odious and epithets melodramatic.
- *redundant or "copious"* — Without the permanence of writing to allow re-reading or referral when necessary, oral expression repeats and re-states in order to reinforce and ensure that the hearer retains his/her perspective and follows the argument. This "copia", as the Greek rhetoricians used to call it, also assists the orator by allowing him/her to re-state while considering the next stage in the argument.
- *conservative or traditionalist* — As orally expressed thought requires effort in its preservation (memorising and subsequent verbal performance), it tends to be held as precious, together with those who are the custodians of wisdom; this discourages intellectual experimentation and speculation. Oral traditions evolve but do not show radical shifts in thinking.
- *close to the human life-world* — Deprived of the distance from living experience rendered possible by written and printed expression, oral expressions tend to revolve around the living human world. For instance, the *Iliad*'s famous catalogue of ships is not a list, but a statement containing the names of the Greek leaders involved in the siege. Furthermore, there are no oral instruction manuals and skills acquired by joining a skilled orator as his apprentice.

- *agonistically toned* — Oral expression tends to situate knowledge in a context of heightened struggle rather than in an abstract, separate realm.
- *empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced* — For an oral culture, learning or knowledge means achieving close, empathetic, communal identification with the familiar, contrasting with the disengaged, objective knowledge of the literate culture.
- *homeostatic* — Oral societies live in the present, sloughing off or evolving memories that no longer have immediate relevance, unlike literate cultures with their dictionaries, encyclopaedias and archives.
- *situational rather than abstract* — Oral cultures tend to use concepts in situational concrete rather than abstract senses. For example, if oral thinkers are given four concepts such as hammer, saw, log, and hatchet, they will be inclined to group them together in terms of situations (with the hammer the odd one out), whereas literate thinkers will tend to group them in terms of categories such as tools (with the log the odd one out). Moreover, logical arguments and inferences have scant relevance in oral thinking. For instance, stating that where there is snow the bears are white, and then asking what colour are the bears in a place that always has snow might evoke the answer: "I don't know. I've seen a black bear."

These qualities contribute to the saliency, enhance memorability of an utterance, and are useful in trying to memorise a poem or narrative. Whereas people from a literate society can always refer to a written text, those from an oral society must be able to process and memorise bits of spoken text. Therefore, utterances, which fit the above description of oral culture, would tend to leave a strong impression on the hearer and facilitate recollection.

3.3 Key indicators of oral performance in literature

Richard Horsley (1999:184) states that the key indicators of oral performance in literature are alliteration, assonance, rhyme, tonal repetition, parallelism, and rhythm. In the Hebrew Bible, traditional style or oral register emerges in the following features:

- Repetition: Repetition, especially in a narrative, contributes towards making a passage communicable. According to Niditch (1989:10), this feature solidifies the work and reiterates the essential messages or themes which the author wishes to emphasise.
- Formulas and formula patterns: Formulas are employed to express similar ideas or images throughout the tradition. For example, when a prophet extols

God's power in nature or a storyteller wishes to portray an autocratic king, certain phrases, vocabulary and patterns of syntax are used.

- The use of conventionalised patterns of content: These patterns were used to describe preparation for war or the birth of a hero.
- Epithets: They play an important role in representing the full extent of a character's personality, presenting qualities beyond those emphasised in the context at hand.
- Longer formulas: The Hebrew Bible is also rich in more complex and longer formulas. Consequently when a Biblical figure at court has a difficult problem to solve, he "sends for" or "calls to" a formulaic chain of advisers and assistants ("So he sent for all the magicians and the wise men of Egypt" [Gen. 41:8]). The formula chains enable the storyteller to bring into the context the notion of contest between those holding the reigns of power and those who are in subservient political positions.
- Motifs: This feature of oral communication illustrates important portions of the Hebrew Bible. For example, Exodus 1-15 contains the story of Israel's escape from bondage in Egypt into the wilderness; chapter 15 contains motifs of challenge, battle/victory; procession, and enthronement.

In Bible translation, orality studies are all too often neglected (Thomas 1990:301-311). In the past, translators worked with the assumption that the Bible has as its origin a written source. Kwame (1995:70) explains that the presence of a vernacular Bible cannot assure the integration of the Biblical message and African traditional religion. Orality as a core element of African traditional religion should be integrated into the Bible — both in its translation and its preaching. This notion is also supported by Wendland (2002:188) who states that "The use of these oral models and stylistic techniques is particularly appropriate for translation of the Bible, which are much more frequently accessed by the ear than the eye." Wendland also states that recent research has confirmed that various documents of the Scriptures were composed aloud and/or written down with an oral-aural transmission and reception of their message in mind. See also Wendland (2004). Therefore, the process of Bible translation in Africa can no longer ignore the natural relation of orality between the ancient Near East and contemporary Africa. Translation into African languages will have to make the most of the oral features of those languages.

For this study, individuals in the oral culture were requested to narrate different stories, which were recorded and analysed according to the culture-specific nature of the universal principles of orality as exposed in the existing literature and above. These oral recordings will be compared with the selection of texts from both the 1909 and 1989 translations. A translation of these texts in Sesotho, based on oral principles, will be proposed (i.e. a translation that

resembles the principles in the recorded stories). This will provide guidelines for the possible features that could be incorporated in Bible translation. It is, however, important to mention, as far as the Sesotho oral world is concerned, the works of among others Mofokeng (1979), Maile (1958), Sekese (1979) and Manaka (1982). Although these oral texts provide a valuable source of information on oral stories, the researchers opted to work with stories retrieved from the primary sources, namely the traditional Sesotho narrators themselves.

The next section illustrates the application of some of the features of orality to Bible translation. As orality is a core element of story-telling, an indigenous African story (with the back translation thereof) is provided, followed by an analysis of the translation according to Ong's (1982) characteristics of oral communication. Given the restrictions of an article a full analysis is not possible. The partial analysis will illustrate some of the features.

4. STORY-TELLING IN THE SESOTHO TRADITION

4.1 Story: Kepi le Kepeng/Twin Brothers, Kepi and Kepeng

1. *Ba re ene re: {qoi} e le Kepi le Kepeng, badisana ba disang dikgomo.*

   Once upon a time, there was Kepi and Kepeng, the herd boys who looked after the cows.

2. *Yaba ba a tsamaya badisana bana, mme ba rera hore ba lo tsoma dinonyana hara mohlaka, mme ba di fumana mme ba tla le tsona.*

   And these herd boys went to the veld and they suddenly decided to catch the birds at the nearby riverbank, and they did catch the birds, and they[1] came along with them.

3. *Yaba ba boetse ba a buisana hape Kepi le Kepeng. Kepi a re: "Kepeng sala o besa dinonyana tsena ke ya tla ke ilo bona diphoofolo."*

   They again talked to one another, and Kepi said to Kepeng: "Put these birds on the fire, I will be back. I am just going to look after the cattle."

4. *Ya ba o sala a besa he Kepeng. Mme ka nakonyana e sa fediseng pelo, Kepi a tla fihla a tswa dikgomong.*

   And then Kepeng put the birds on the fire to be roasted, and in a short while Kepi returned from the cows.

5. *Jwale ke moo a fumanang [Kepeng][2] a jele dinonyana tsena a mo sietse dihlohwana.*

1 "They" refers to the birds.

2 The narrator does not refer to the specific names as the story proceeds. The narrator refers to Kepi and Kepeng as "he"/"o".

He then found out that [Kepeng] had eaten all the roasted birds, only their heads remained for Kepi.

6. *Yaba Kepi o re: "Ke eng o ja dinonyana tsena o ntshiele dihlohwana feela? Ntefe!"*

   And Kepi said: "Why did you eat all the fried birds and leave their heads for me? Pay me!"

7. Y*aba o a mo lefa, a mo fa Kepi. A tsamaya ka kepi ena ya hae, ya ka o dikele ka letswapo, o re (o bontsha ka letsoho moo a neng a dikela teng).* [3]

   And he paid Kepi by giving him a sharp bar-like digging iron. And he took with him this digging iron heading (this way) [4] in the direction of a drift next to the mountain.

8. *Yaba o fumana mosadimoholo a ntse a rafa letsopa ke matsoho.*

   And there he found an old woman busy using her hands to dig up the clay.

9. *Yaba [Kepi*[5]*] o re: "Hobaneng ha o rafa letsopa ka letsoho nkgono. Ha ke o kadime kepi ena ya ka, feela o tla lefa" — a feela a mo kadima.*

   And then [Kepi] said: "Why are you using your hands to dig up the clay? Let me lend you my digging iron. You will have to pay" — and he indeed lent her his digging iron.

10. *O rafile, o rafile, o rafile, ya baneng kepi ena ya robeha. Ha kepi ena ese e robehile, o re: "Nkgono o roba kepi ya ka, kepi ya ka ke e fuwe ke Kepeng, Kepeng a jele dinonyana kaofela a ntshietse dihlohwana, ntefe!" Yaba [nkgono] o mo fa lefiswana.*

    The old woman dug, and dug, and dug, until the digging iron broke. And after it had broken, he said: "Old woman, you broke my digging iron, the digging iron I got from Kepeng, Kepeng who ate all the birds and left the heads for me, pay me!" Then the old woman gave him a clay pot.

11. *O tsamaile mohlankana he, o ile, o ile, o ile, a fumana bashanyana ba dutse letlapang ebile le ena le sekotinyana, ba ntse ba hamela lebese fatshe.*

    Then the boy left, he walked, and walked, and walked in the veld, and met a few boys sitting on the rock that had a small hole in it. They were milking the cows, and the milk was falling on the ground.

12. *Yaba o a ba botsa: "Ho baneng ha le hamela lebese lena fatshe, e reng ke le kadime lefiswana lena la ka.*

    And he asked them: "Why are you letting the milk spill on the ground? Let me lend you my clay pot".

---

3 The narrator indicates with hand gestures in which way Kepi is heading.
4 Same as above.
5 The narrator once again does not refer to the specific name.

13. *O ba neile ruri, ba hamme, ba hamme, mme ha le lokela hore jwale lebese le tlale lefiswana, ya ba [lefiswana] le arohana ka leharele, le a swa. A boela a bua jwalo ka pele: "Hobaneng ha le bolaya lefiswana la ka, lefiswana la ka ke le fuwe ke nkgono, nkgono a robile kepi ya ka, kepi ya ka ke e fuwe ke Kepeng, Kepeng ya jeleng dinonyana kaofela a ntshietse dihlohwana, ntefe!"*

    And he indeed gave them the clay pot, and they milked and milked and when the clay pot was about to be filled, it broke into pieces and all of the milk spilled on the ground. And he said what he said before: "Why are you breaking my clay pot, the clay pot I got from the old woman, the old woman who broke my digging iron, the digging iron I got from Kepeng, Kepeng who ate all the birds and left the heads for me? Pay me!"

14. *Yaba badisana ba fa Kepi kgomo.*

    And the boys gave him a cow.

15. *O tsamaile ka kgomo ena, jwale a fumana hara thota ho ntse ho lengwa ka ditonki.*

    As he walked in the veld with the cow, he met with the ploughers using their donkeys to plough.

16. *A ba neha kgomo ena, ba lema ka kgomo ena, mme ha mosebetsi o ntse o tswella pele kgomo ena ya robeha.*

    He lent them the cow. And while they were busy ploughing, the cow broke.[6]

17. *A boetse a bua jwaloka hwane: "Ke eng ha le roba kgomo ya ka, kgomo ya ka ke e fuwe ke badisana, badisana ba bolaile lefiswana la ka, lefiswana la ka ke le fuwe ke nkgono, nkgono a robile kepi ya ka, kepe ya ka ke e fuwe ke Kepeng, Kepeng a jele dinonyana kaofela a ntshietse dihlohwana, ntefe!"*

    And he said what he said: "Why are you breaking my cow; the cow I got from the milking boys, the milking boys who broke my clay pot, the clay pot I got from the old woman, the old woman who broke my digging iron, the digging iron I got from Kepeng, Kepeng who ate all the birds and left the heads for me? Pay me!"

18. *Ya ba ke tshomo ka mathetho.*

    That is the end of the story.

6 This is a metaphor to say that the cow broke its leg.

4.2 Analysis of an oral Sesotho story

This section analyses the story of the twin brothers using Ong's principles or qualities of orality by identifying the principles and features of orality in the above story.

4.2.1 Additive structure of the oral Sesotho story

The structure of the story reflects simple additive principal clauses rather than subordinative clauses. According to Ong (1982:37), information processing tends to become an accumulation and stringing together of ideas. The additive style keeps the flow of the story. The following conjunctions and techniques reflect the additive style:

(a) The formula: "yaba"/"and then" in lines 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12 and 13.

(b) The conjunctions: "mme"/"and" in lines 2 and 4; and "jwale"/"then" in line 5.

(c) The use of referring expressions and the avoidance of anaphors and pronominals. In lines 5, 6, 9, 10 and 13 the names of Kepi and Kepeng instead of anaphors or pronominals are used. In line 10, the noun "nkgono"/"grandmother" and in line 13, the noun "lefiswana"/"claypot" are used.

4.2.2 Repetition

If knowledge in oral cultures is not repeated aloud and constantly, it will disappear. Oral information processing, therefore, relies on repetition. Repetition can be identified in the following instances:

(a) Nouns such as "kgomo"/"cow" in lines 14, 15 and 16, "badisana"/"herd boys" in lines 1, 2 and 14.

(b) Verbs such as "rafa"/"digging" in lines 8 and 9, and "rafile"/"dug" in line 10, respectively.

(c) Sentences such as "Ba hamme"/"They milked" are repeated twice in line 13. Sentences such as "o ile"/"he travelled" are repeated four times in line 11.

(d) In lines 6, 10, 13 and 17 question-like statements or sentences are repeated, e.g., in line 6: "Ke eng ha o ja dinonyana o ntshiela dihlohwana feela..."/"Why are you eating all the birds and only leave their heads for me ...?" and in line 10: "Nkgono o roba kepi ya ka, kepi ya ka ke e fuwe ke Kepeng, kepeng a jele dinonyana a tshietse dihlohwana ..."/"Old woman, you break my digging iron; the digging iron I got from Kepeng; Kepeng who ate all the birds and left only their heads for me ..." This technique has an interesting style, because the repeated information is consolidated between the lines in which

it occurs (i.e. the repeated long sentences). In line 6, the repeated long sentence of line 10 is consolidated in the mind of the listener. The repeated information in line 13 is also complemented by the information in lines 6 and 10.

In line 17, the repeated information complements and consolidates the repeated information in lines 6, 10 and 13.

4.2.3 Close to the human life experiences

The language and expressions of an oral story will be close to human life experiences. In this story, unusual and strange expressions are used for the written world as the story unfolds, e.g. the expression in line 7 where the narrator uses her "hand movement expression" to show the direction that Kepi followed after parting with Kepeng. The narrator uses the expression, "ya ka … o re ..."/"heading this way ..."

4.2.4 Participation of speakers and listeners

The interaction between the storyteller and his/her audience means that the listener contributes to the production of the work in performance, e.g. in line 1, after the speaker has said the introductory words, "Ba re e ne re ..."/"Once upon a time ...," the audience would say, "Qoi"/"Yes, we are ready to listen". This clearly shows an intimate relationship between the speaker who creates the conducive environment for the audience to listen and understand the story that is about to unfold.

Stories form the oral Sesotho culture, like the one of the twin brothers, Kepi and Kepeng, show that oral principles are present in the culture. It shows that additive style, repetitions, coming closer to human life experiences and the participation of speakers and listeners are important characteristics of the Sesotho oral culture.

5. ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROPOSED TRANSLATION IN COMPARISON WITH THE 1909 AND 1989 SESOTHO VERSIONS

In this section, translations of Genesis 1:1-10 in both the 1909 and 1989 Sesotho Bibles are given and scrutinised in order to determine whether any principles of orality are present.

5.1 Translation of Genesis 1, according to the 1909 Sesotho Bible

Genesis 1:1-10 (1909)

1. *Tshimolohong, Modimo o ne a hlole mahodimo le lefatshe.*

   In the beginning God created the heavens and earth.

2. *Lefatshe le ne le hloka sebopeho, le le feela; lefifi le ne le le hodima bodiba, mme moya wa Modimo o ne o solla hodima metsi.*

   Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3. *Modimo wa re:*[7] *Lesedi le be teng, mme lesedi la ba teng.*

   And God said: Let there be light, and there was light.

4. *Modimo wa bona hoba lesedi le molemo; mme Modimo wa arohanya lesedi le lefifi.*

   God saw that the light was good, and separated the light from the darkness.

5. *Modimo wa bitsa lesedi motsheare, mme lefifi wa le bitsa bosiu. Mme ha eba mantsiboya, ha eba hosasa: e bile letsatsi la pele.*

   God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And there was evening, and there was morning: the first day.

6. *Jwale Modimo wa re: Sebaka ha se ba teng mahareng a metsi, mme se arohanye metsi le metsi.*

   And God said: Let there be an expanse between the waters and separate water from water.

7. *Modimo wa etsa sebaka, mme wa arohanya metsi a ka tlase ho sebaka le metsi a ka hodima le sebaka. Mme ha eba jwalo.*

   So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so.

8. *Modimo wa bitsa sebaka mahodimo. Mme ha eba mantsiboya, ha eba hosasa: e bile letsatsi la bobedi.*

   God called the expanse sky. And there was evening, and there was morning: the second day.

9. *Jwale Modimo wa re: Metsi a katlase ho mahodimo a bokellwe hammoho sebakeng*[8] *se le seng, mme ho hlahe mo ho omileng. Mme ha eba jwalo.*

   And God said: Let there be water under the sky be gathered in one place, and let the dry ground appear. And it was so.

---

7 In the 1909 Sesotho translation no quotation marks were used.

8 The word “sebakeng” is related to “sebaka”, meaning “expanse” or “one place”.

10. *Modimo wa bitsa moo ha omileng lefatshe, pokello ya metsi a e bitsa mawatle, mme Modimo wa bona hoba ho molemo.*

    God called the dry ground land, the gathered waters, the seas,[9] and God saw that it was good.

5.1.1 Remarks on the 1909 translation

Features of orality appear in this section of Genesis 1 in the 1909 Sesotho translation, but these are only remnants of the real principles of orality, as stipulated by Walter Ong. This means that some of the information has been lost during the transition from the oral story to the written text. Although a few repetitions of nouns such as "lesedi"/"light" in verses 3 and 4; "lefifi"/"darkness" in verses 2, 4 and 5; "metsi"/"water" in verses 2, 6, 7 and 9; "sebaka"/"expanse" in verses 6, 7, 8 and 9; and "mme"/"and" in verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, etc. occur, these principles of orality are not as prominent as in oral texts. In these texts, the main purpose is to keep the flow of the story as constant as possible in the ears of the oral community and the readers at large. In this case, only the written world is catered for.

5.2 Translation of Genesis 1 according to 1989 Sesotho Bible

Genesis 1:1-10 (1989)

1. *Tshimolohong Modimo o ne a hlole lehodimo le lefatshe.*

   In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

2. *Lefatshe le ne le sena sebopeho, le sena letho; lefifi le lene le aparetse bodiba, Moya wa Modimo o ne o okaokela metsi.*

   The earth was formless, and had nothing on it; the darkness was over the deep, the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3. *Modimo a re: "Lesedi le be teng!" Yaba lesedi le ba teng.*

   God said: "Let there be light." Then there was light.

4. *Modimo a bona hore lesedi le letle, mme Modimo a le arohanya le lefifi.*

   God saw the light was good, and he separated it from the darkness.

5. *Modimo a re lesedi ke "motsheare" mme a re lefifi ke "bosiu". Ha phirima, ha esa, ya eba letsatsi la pele.*

   God called the light, "the day" and the darkness he called "the night". And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day.

9 The Sesotho word for sea is plural and therefore it is translated here as "seas".

6. *Yaba Modimo o re: "Loapi le be teng pakeng tsa metsi, ho arohanya metsi ho metsi a mang."*

   Then God said: "Let there be an expanse between the waters, to separate the water from the other water."

7. *Modimo a etsa loapi ho arohanya metsi a ka hodimo ho lona le metsi a katlase ho lona. Ha fela ha eba jwalo.*

   God made the expanse that separated the water that is above it from that beneath it. And it was so.

8. *Modimo a re loapi ke "lehodimo". Ha phirima, ha esa, ya eba letsatsi la bobedi.*

   God called the expanse "the heaven". And there was evening, and there was morning, the second day.

9. *Jwale Modimo a re: "Metsi a ka tlase ho lehodimo a bokellane sebakeng se le seng, ho hlaha mobu o ommeng! Ha fela ha eba jwalo.*

   And God said: "Let the water under the sky be gathered at one place, and let the dry ground appear." And it was so.

10. *Modimo a re mobu o ommeng ke "lefatshe", metsi a bokellaneng wona ke "mawatle". Modimo wa bona hore hoo ho hotle.*

    God called the dry ground "land", and the gathered waters he called, "seas". And God saw that it was good.

5.2.1 Remarks on the 1989 translation

The oral principle of repetition also appears in this version, e.g. the introductory formulas, "Modimo a re"/"God says…" in verses 3 to 9. A repetition of nouns such as "lefatshe"/"earth" in verses 1 and 2 also occurs. Repetition of complementary statements such as "Ha fela ha eba jwalo"/"And it was so" also occur in verses 7 and 9.

As the 1909 and 1989 Sesotho Bible translations prove not to adhere to a wide range of oral principles, as proposed by Ong, the authors of this article propose an oral Sesotho translation of Genesis 1:1-10.

5.3 Proposed oral translation of Genesis 1

1. *Pele ho qaleho ya ntho tsohle, ho ile ha etsahala tjena: Modimo a etsa mahodimo le lefatshe.*

   Before anything could come to pass, it all happened like this: God made the heavens and earth.

2. *Mme jwale lefatshe lena le ne le sena sebopeho ho hang, mme ho se letho le neng le ka ka mela ho lona, ebile ho se eng kapa eng e neng*

e ka phela ho lona, le ne le aparetswe feela ke lefifi le leholo, mme Moya wa Modimo ona, o ne o foka hodima metsi.

And the earth was without form at all, barren, no form of life on it, and it was covered with great darkness, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the water.

3-4. *Mme jwale hanghang, Modimo a laela hore kganya e be teng, ka ha ho ne ho le lefifi le leholo mme kganya ya eba teng mme a bona hore kganya ena e ntle haholo, mme yaba jwale o e arohanya ho lefifi.*

And suddenly, at once, God commanded that there be light, because there was great darkness and there was light, and he saw that this light was good, and he therefore separated it from the darkness.

5. *Mme yaba jwale he o bitsa kganya ena hore ke "motsheare", mme lefifi lona a le bitsa hore ke "bosiu". Ha phirima, ha esa, mme jwale he yaba yona qaleho ya letsatsi la pele.*

He called this light "the day" and the darkness he called "the night". And there was evening, and there was morning, and it was the beginning of the first day.

6. *Mme yaba jwale he Modimo o laela hape hore ho be teng sebaka se arohanyang metsi.*

And now God commanded again that there be space that separates the waters.

7. *Mme yaba jwale he o etsa sebaka sena, ho arohanya metsi a katlase ho sona le a ka hodima sona. Mme ha fela ha eba jwalo.*

And God made the space that separates the water under it, from that above it. And it did happen.

8. *Mme yaba he Modimo a re sebaka sena ke "mahodimo". Ha phirima, ha esa, mme he, yaba yona qaleho ya letsatsi la bobedi.*

And God called the space "the heavens". And there was evening, and there was morning, and it was the beginning of the second day.

9. *Mme yaba he Modimo o tswella pele ho laela hore metsi a ka tlase ho mahodimo ke hore sebakeng sela a be nqa e le nngwe, hore ho hlahe mobu o ommeng. Mme ha fela ha eba jwalo.*

And then God continued to command that the water under the heavens be at one place so that the dry ground appears. And it did happen.

10. *Mme jwale yaba he Modimo a bitsa mobu o ommeng hore ke "lefatshe", mme metsi a ka nqa e le enngwe ona a re ke "mawatle". Mme yaba he Modimo o lemoha hore, tjhehe, ka nnete tsohle tseo a di entseng di ntle haholo.*

And God called the dry ground "the earth" and the place where the water was gathered "the seas", and ultimately God realised that everything he had made was good, indeed it was very good.

5.3.1 Analysis of proposed translation

5.3.1.1 Interaction between the speaker and the audience

The processing of oral information involves the participation of both speakers and hearers. This can be noted in line 1 in the sentence: “Ho ile ha etsahala tjena ...”/“It all happened like this ...” The narrator uses an introductory sentence to create a listening environment for the audience. This draws their attention to concentrate on what s/he is telling them. Unlike traditional stories, there is no direct response/audible affirmation (i.e. “qoi”/“we are listening”) from the audience. It is only implied.

5.3.1.2 Additive style

(a) Conjunctions and conjunction phrases: In verses 2 to 10, the conjunction “mme”/“and” is frequently found, while in verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, the conjunction phrases “mme yaba jwale (he)”/”and now then” are found.

(b) Complementing statements: Statements are used to indicate the fulfilment of God’s commands, e.g. statements such as “mme ha fela haeba jwalo”/“and it did happen” in verses 7 and 9.

5.3.1.3 Close to the human life experiences

This principle is present in the following instances:

(a) In verse 2, the phrase “… ho hang”/“... at all” has been added to describe the whole scenario of how the earth was in the beginning. The narrator thus creates a conducive environment for the prospective audience to have a clearer understanding of the creation story in a more simplified way.

(b) In verses 2 and 3, an adjective “le leholo”/“great” is added to a noun, “lefifi”/“darkness”. This adjective, “le leholo”/“ great” describes the noun “lefifi”/“the darkness”.

(c) The sentences “mme jwale he, yaba yona qaleho …”/“and it was the beginning of …” are added in verses 5 and 8, respectively to keep the story flowing and to capture the attention of the audience.

6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

In the second part of the 20th century, the primary concern for meaning and readability profoundly influenced the trends in Bible translations. The first generation translations bear testimony of dynamic equivalence. The second generation represents translations with communication as their primary function, usually a rewriting of an existing translation in a modern vernacular. However, this practice suppressed the linguistic and cultural differences of the source text by assimilating it to dominant values in the target language culture. The third generation accentuates the role of the listener, in other words the emphasis is on the spoken language. Our society is fast approaching a post-literature age. More people hear the Bible being read than read it themselves. New readers tend to "sound out" a written text. Experienced readers often read poetry and lyrical prose aloud to experience the beauty and impact of poetical language. Hearing reinforces comprehension and assists the process of memorisation. Any text that expresses its message in a manner that is easy for the ear to follow can be clearly rendered into print, but the reverse is not always true.

New Bible translation projects will need to account at least for the following aspects (cf. also Kee 1993):

1. Meet the need to be read out aloud in church (recitable) and to be adaptable for chanting purposes;
2. Meet the need to fulfil prospective literary uses of the translation;
3. Add notes to clarify socio-cultural aspects of the source text;
4. Record Bible translations by teams, including vocal artists.

These aspects are important, but are ignored in most of the translations of the 20th century.

Furthermore, a translation designed for oral communication should have suitable rhythm and sound forms. It must also be easily understandable and incorporate features of orality such as an additive style rather than a subordinate style. It must also be aggregative rather than analytic and, to reinforce information, there must be some redundancy. Although the Hebrew Bible reflects an oral culture, attention should also be paid to cultural aspects, which are unfamiliar to a Sesotho community unable to read written texts. Cultural adaptation is thus necessary.

This is a preliminary study. The following aspects will require attention in future research:

- An analysis of the use of vocabulary and structures of the 1909 and 1989 Sesotho versions within corpus-based translation studies;

- An empirical study of the audiences and the problems they encounter in understanding written texts; and
- Research on principles of oral communication applicable to Bible translation.

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Authorized Version (AV). 1881. Oxford: The Bible Societies.

Bible in Sesotho. 1909. Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa.

Bible in Sesotho. 1989. Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa.

Contemporary English Version (CEV). 1995. New York: United Bible Societies.

Das Neue Testament. 1999. Frankfurt: Insel Verlag.

Groot Nieuws Bijbel. 1983. Haarlem: Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap.

Holy Bible. Newly edited by the American Revision Committee A.D. 1901 (*American Standard Version* - ASV). 1901. New York: American Bible Society.

Holy Bible. Today's English Version. 1976. New York: United Bible Societies.

Jerusalem Bible. 1966. London: Darton, Longman & Todd.

Living Bible. Paraphrased. 1967/1971. Chicago: Tyndale Press.

New American Bible (NAB). 1970. New York: American Bible Society.

New American Standard Bible (NASB). 1963. New York: American Bible Society.

New English Bible (NEB). 1970. Oxford & Cambridge: Oxford University Press.

New International Version of the Bible (NIV). 1973. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

New International Reader's Version. 1966/1998. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

New Jewish Version (NJV). 1962/1973. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

New King James Version (NKJV). 1982. Nashville, Tennessee.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). 1989. New York & Edinburgh.

Nieuwe Bijbel Vertaling. 2004. Querido: Jongbloed.

Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling. 1983.

Old Afrikaans Version. 1933/1953.

Reader's Digest Bible. 1982. Pleasantville: Reader's Digest Association.

Revised English Bible (REB). 1989. Oxford & Cambridge: Oxford University Press.

Revised Standard Version. 1952. New York & Edinburgh: Collins.

Schocken Bible, Volume 1. 1995. New York: Schocken Books.

The Message. Translated by E. Peterson. 1993/1997/2002. Colorado Springs: NAV Press.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BARKER, K.L.
1999. *The balance of the NIV*. Grand Rapids: Baker.

BARR, J.
1974. After five years. A retrospect on two major translations of the Bible. *Heythrop College* 15:381-405.

BERGER, K. & NORD, C.
1999. *Das Neue Testament und frühchristliche Schriften*. Frankfurt: Insel Verlag.

BRUCE, F.F.
1978. *History of the Bible in English. From the earliest versions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BUBER, M. & ROSENZWEIG, F.
1925-1962. *Die Schrift. Zu verdeutschen unternommen*. Berlin: Verlag Lambert Schneider.

COLE, M. & SCRIBNER, S.
1974. *Culture and thought: A psychological introduction*. New York: Wiley.

COLEMAN, R.
1989. *New light and truth. The making of the Revised English Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

COOK-GUMPREZ, J. & GUMPREZ, J.
1981. From oral to written culture. The transition to literacy. In: M. Whitman, (ed.), *Writing: The nature, development and teaching of written communication: Vol. 1* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum).

DANIELL, D.
2003. *The Bible in English. Its history and influence*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

FILLMORE, C.J.
1979. On fluency. In: C.J. Fillmore, D. Kempler & S.-Y.W. Wang (eds.) *Individual differences in language ability & language behaviour* (New York: Academic Press), pp. 85-101.

FINNEGAN, R.
1970. *Oral literature in Africa. Backgrounds, characters, and continuity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Fox, E.
1995. *The Five Books of Moses. The Schocken Bible, Volume 1*. New York: Schocken Books.

Goody, J & Watt, I.P.
1963. The consequences of literacy. *Comparative studies in society and history* 5(3): 304-345. Reprinted in: J. Goody (ed.) 1968, *Literacy in traditional societies* (New York: Cambridge University Press), pp. 27-68.

Havelock, E.A.
1963. *Preface to Plato*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Kee, H.W.
1993. *American Bible Society Symposium papers on the Bible in the twenty-first century*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press.

Kubo, S. & Specht, W.F.
1983. *So many versions? Twentieth-century English versions of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker.

Kwame, B
1995. *Christianity in Africa: The renewal of non-Western religion*. Martknoll: Orbis Books.

Lews, J.P.
1981. *The English Bible from KJV to NIV. A history and evaluation*. Grand Rapids: Baker.

Maile, M.L.
1958. *Moiketsi*. Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg: Via Afrika Publishers.

Manaka, V.S.
1982. *Lerole le lefubedu*. King William's Town: Thandapers.

Metzger, B.M.
2001. *The Bible in translation. Ancient and English versions*. Grand Rapids: Baker.

Mofokeng, S.M.
1979. *Pelong Ya Ka*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Newman, B.M.
1996. *Creating and crafting the Contemporary English Version: A new approach to Bible translation*. New York: American Bible Society.

Newmark, P.
1988. *A textbook of translation*. London: Pergamon.

Nida, E.A. & Taber, C.R.
1969. *The theory and practice of translation*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

1974. *The theory and practice of translation*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

NIDITCH, S.
1989. Eroticism and death in the tale of Yael. In: P.L. Day (ed.), 1989. *Gender and difference in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), pp. 43-57.

1996. *Oral world and written world*. Louisville: John Knox Press.

NORD, C.
1997. *Translating as a purposeful activity*. Manchester: St. Jerome.

ONG, W.J.
1967. *The presence of the Word: Some prolegomena for cultural and religious history*. Yale University Press: New Haven.

1982/1988. *Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the word*. Routledge: London.

ORLINSKY, H.M. & BRATCHER, R.G.
1991. *A history of Bible translation and the North American contribution*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

PORTER, S.
1999. The *Contemporary English Version* and the ideology of translation. In: S.E. Porter & R.S Hess (eds.), *Translating the Bible. Problems and prospects* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), pp. 18-46.

SEKESE, A.
1979. *Pitso ya Dinonyana*. Lesotho: Morija Printing Works.

SMIT, A.P.
1970. *God made it grow. History of the Bible Society Movement in Southern Africa*. Cape Town: The Bible Society of South Africa.

THOMAS, K.J.
1990. Seeking a methodology for exegetical checking of audio Scriptures. *The Bible Translator* 41(3):301-311.

WENDLAND, E.R.
2002. Towards a "literary" translation of the Scriptures: With special reference to a "poetic" rendition. In: J.A. Naudé & C.H.J. van der Merwe (eds.), *Contemporary Translation Studies and Bible Translation* (*Acta Theologica Supplementum* 2), pp. 164-201.

2004. *Translating the literature of Scripture: A literary-rhetorical approach to Bible translation*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International.

Keywords	*Trefwoorde*
Bible translation	Bybelvertaling
Orality (Walter Ong)	Oraliteit (Walter Ong)
Sesotho Bible	Sesotho Bybel