

ARTICLES

CHAULET'S *HISTOIRE SAINTE*. TRANSLATING BIBLE INTO MARQUESAN*

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Translating Bible into a very remote language spoken by people living in a likewise distant culture is always a serious challenge. This article gives a brief characteristic of the creative effort of Gérard Pierre Chaulet who has translated Bible or rather its key passages into the language of the Marquesans.

Christianization of Polynesia was part of a large-scale social, economic and cultural reorientation that has taken a dramatic course in several Pacific archipelagoes including especially Hawai'i, New Zealand, and last but not least the Marquesas. The beginnings of Christianity in the Marquesas were more than difficult. John Harris' and William Pascoe Crook's attempt to preach Gospel with the assistance of their Tahitian interpreter Hara Ve'a in 1797 was but of a short duration. Harris decided to return on board the ship the very next day, but Crook stayed despite all problems. He has spent about a year on Tahuata and in May 1798 asked the American Edmund Fanning to take him to Nuku Hiva in the Northwestern group. Several months on Nuku Hiva were utilized by Crook to collect data for his Marquesan vocabulary (published in 1947, 1956 and re-edited in 1999). His missionary success, however, was negligible.

In 1838 Mathias Gracia (Congrégation des Sacrés Cœurs) established the first Catholic mission in the archipelago. Catholic missions were more successful. Father Gracia supplied Abbé Boniface Mosblech with some lexicographic material and Mosblech published in 1843 a vocabulary containing both Marquesan and Hawaiian data. In 1845 Ildefonse René Dordillon settled on Nuku Hiva to spend here the great part of his more than forty years in the Marquesas. In 1857 he published a dictionary of the Marquesan language (Dordillon 1857). In 1858 Gérard Pierre Chaulet arrived and was actively involved not only in converting the natives, but also in linguistics. He likewise spent some forty years in the archipelago

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and expanded the lexicological data for Dordillon. Father Siméon Delmas has also contributed to this work. Dordillon's dictionaries published subsequently in 1904, 1931 and 1932 may thus be regarded as a joint work of several compilers. It contains lexical material from both Northwestern and Southeastern groups.

In 1903 one of the first biblical translations into Marquesan was published by R. P. Pierre Gérauld Chaulet. It is no complete translation of any part of the Bible but rather its radically abridged and adapted selection – a “*Biblia pauperum*” of sorts – intended for the native inhabitants of the islands. R. P. Chaulet was well aware of the many hazards and obstacles inherent in his attempt – as documented by the very title of his work: *Histoire Sainte*. Only the subtitle has been translated into Marquesan, namely as *Mei te 'eo 'Enana*. This is one of the early occurrences of the word *'enana* (literally human being) in printed text as meaning Marquesan or rather native of the islands, for there is a parallel in the neighbouring Hawai'i and its language that has contributed the term *kanaka* to the South Seas in general – even outside Polynesia itself, for example in New Caledonia. Chaulet's *Histoire Sainte* is based upon the southeastern dialect, even if not consistently.

The problems that faced Chaulet in his pioneering work were of several kinds. As a translator of biblical texts into Marquesan he had to overcome a variety of serious obstacles. Neither Marquesan and Western culture nor their natural context as such were mechanically and readily compatible. Therefore any attempt at translating the Bible into a Polynesian language may at the same time be considered as a projection of one culture into another.

The observed differences in the environment and nature in question are not negligible. The Bible is a product of the Middle Eastern surroundings. Both fauna and flora of the subtropical and arid Middle East are radically different from that of lush tropical Polynesia. Most of the relevant animals mentioned in the Bible were missing in the Marquesas. The most important exceptions are three mammals for which Marquesan has had lexical equivalents, i.e. *puaka* “pig”, *peto*, *nuhe*, *mohokio* “dog”, *kio'e* “rat”, and one bird, i.e. *moa* “chicken”. These animals have been imported to the Marquesas by the settlers from West Polynesia. However, the repertoire of biblical animals is much richer and in most instances the translator has decided to employ loanwords from French, Latin or English to label them, for example *pifa* “cattle” (from French *bœuf*), *purikau*, *purikao*, *puriki* “ass” (from French *bourrique*), *atene* also “ass” (from Latin *asinus*), *hovare*, *ihevale* “horse” (from French *cheval*), *reone* “lion” (from French *léon*), *kamero* or *kameno* “camel” (probably from Latin or English), *hipa* “sheep” (from English) and *muto* “sheep” (from French). Many of them occur on p. 47 of *Histoire Sainte*. At least two paraphrases are found in Dordillon's dictionary: *puaka piki 'enata* “horse”, literally man-carrying pig, and *puhi fen-ua* “snake”, literally dry-land eel. The latter usage is obviously motivated by the well-known fact that in Polynesian mythology the eel plays a part analogous to the entirely unknown snake in Eastern Polynesia.

Employing loanwords would obviously be in the interest of transferring the sense of the text with a high precision – however, monolingual recipients would

have to pay a considerable price in terms of insufficient intelligibility. Therefore the translators in general tend to restrict borrowing as a method of filling lexical lacunae in the vocabulary to a minimum and Chaulet has decided to use in addition to borrowing an alternative strategy as well. This strategy consists in a semantic shift (usually semantic extension) or a slight modification of the meaning of the native word if necessary. Occurrence of tropes (especially metaphor) deserves to be mentioned. For example, the action of avenging someone is metaphorized as *huke 'i te 'umu* "hollowing or digging out an earth oven" (maybe as an overture to an anthropophagous feast) and dying may be mentioned as *he'e Havai'i* "going to Havaiki".

Havaiki is the legendary country of origin of the Marquesans just as well of other East Polynesians – and at the same time the realm to which they are expected to return after their death. The word *mate* itself would not do as an unambiguous label for death because it refers not only to death, but also (and more often) to disease. Therefore *mate* in the sense of dying often combines with the attribute *nui* "big, great" (i. e. *mate nui*) so as to disambiguate it. Again, we have noticed a parallel to it elsewhere in Polynesia. In Hawaiian one may use *make loa* (*make* die, death; *loa* long, "distant, far, permanent"). Hawaiian *make* without further attributes may refer to "being defeated" and "fainting" or even "desperately yearning for" and *make loa* might be interpreted as "permanent malaise" (Pukui – Elbert 1957: 211, 192).

Marquesan religion was polytheistic and Chaulet has employed the Marquesan word *etua* "god" and applied it to God of the Christians in the shape of *Etua*. Interestingly enough, the recent translation of St. John's Gospel uses the same word in the form of *Atua*, which is a regular cognate of Proto-Polynesian **atua* (Te Evanelia, s. a.).

The word *tapu* was utilized to denote sacredness just as in Maori; however, in neighbouring Hawaiian, for example, the Holy Spirit has been translated as *'Uhane Hemolele* while in Tahitian sacred is denoted by means of *mo'a* and the Holy Spirit as *Varua Maita'i*. Chaulet has created the Marquesan equivalent *Kuhane Meita'i* obviously after the Tahitian model.

The central divine agent in the spiritual history of mankind is the Saviour of mankind, which has been translated by Chaulet as *Ha'apoho'e 'enata*, literally "he who revives/saves people". In Hawaiian the equivalent expression is *Ho'ola*, i. e. "he who gives life or makes alive" (Pukui – Elbert 1957: 260). In Maori the same divine personality is known as *Kaiwhakaora* (*whakaora* "to make alive, make healthy"; *kai-* is an agentive prefix (Paipera Tapu s. a.:104).

If a semantic modification would be perceived as insufficient, a paraphrase might help to solve the problem.

As far as material culture is concerned, we find loanwords from English such as *faraoa* "flour, bread", *ihepe* "ship", *kati* "cask", *moni* "money" as well as from French: *kaleri* "hall, space in front of church", *vino* "wine". Neologisms based upon Marquesan elements are rare and we might mention such expressions as *ke'a patu hamani* "chalk" (literally stone for writing), *papua fa'e* "walled city" (*papua* "fence" + *fa'e* "house, houses"), *fenua ataha* "desert" (*fenua land* + *'ataha* "uninhabited"), *pahina'eo* "servant".

It was especially the social and religious domains that required a considerable amount of new lexemes. The author has used quite a few words borrowed from Latin, for example *atoratio* "adoration", *anera* "angel", *taperenakulo* "tabernacle", *ekaretia* "church", *araka* "covenant", *fariteo* "pharisee", *holokota* in *heana holokota* "sacrifice to be burnt", *karatia* grace, *Metia* "Messiah", *papate-ma* "baptise", *pateriareka* "patriarch", *peato* "saint", *perofeta* "prophet", *penetio* "benediction", *pupuricano* "publican", *taperenakulo* "tabernacle", *tatuteo* "saducee", *virikine* "virgin". English borrowings occur as well, e. g. *eteni* from English "heathen".

Some lacunae in the terminology were filled up by adaptation and modification of the local lexical means. These are much more frequent than loanwords. For example, the heavenly kingdom has been translated as *(te) ao o te 'ani*, shepherds are *fa'etoa tiohi hipa* (literally people watching the sheep), *ha'a'ite* is used not only in the sense of "showing, explaining something" but also in the meaning of "prophesizing". The lexeme *ha'apupua* "parable" is derived by adding the causative prefix *ha'a-* to *pupua* "brilliant, lumineaux, etc.") so that *ha'apupua* means "parler par paraboles" (Dordillon 1999: 240).

King is translated as *haka'iki nui* ("big chief") while viceroy is translated as *haka'iki mae'a* where *mae'a* (or *maeka*) means "less important". The Marquesan word *heaka* or *heana* is used as an equivalent of Christian term sacrifice because of functional similarity, which made it easy to understand. Functional similarity enabled Chaulet to render kissing as *honi* (in Polynesia such a kiss consists in touching the noses). To take revenge is translated by the idiom *huke 'i te umu* (literally "to open the earth oven"). The same noun occurs in the expression *umu mikeo* with the meaning "expiation of sins" (literally oven of the sins).

Two terms for teaching occur in Chaulet's translation, namely *ha'atuhuna*, literally "to make someone learned" and *hakako* (in fact *hakaako*). The semantic scope of *tuhuna* or *tuhuka* is quite wide and includes "savant, instruit, artiste, artisan, habile" (Dordillon 1999: 276). The original meaning of *ha'a'ite* (to show, explain) has been expanded so as to include "to prophesize". Marquesan *kaie* is an equivalent of "blessed" and in this sense combines with the name of Virgin Mary. In Dordillon's dictionary it is defined as "béné, chéri, bien-aimé, chérir, aimer tendrement" (Dordillon 1969: 146). The Holy Spirit has been approximated by means of *'Uhane Meita'i* where *'uhane* (*kuhane*) is defined as "esprit, âme" and *meita'i* as "bon". As for "miracle", Chaulet has decided to use *mana* or *hana mana*. This word has played an important role in Marquesan religion as a manifestation of psychic, power, prestige, authority, force. The translator of Bible into Maori has decided to use the English loanword *mere kara* (i.e. miracle). In the Hawaiian version we have *kupanaha/kupaianaha* "surprising, strange, wonderful, extraordinary, unaccountable, marvellous".

The word *ka'oha* (corresponding to *aro ha*, *aloha*, etc. in other Polynesian languages) does not correspond to love as a romantic and usually transient flood of feelings to a person of the other sex. In addition it includes compassion, friendship, charity, and may also be employed as a greeting.

The Polynesians could hardly know what the Europeans treated as sin in the Christian sense of the word. Chaulet has decided to employ the lexeme *mikeo* defined in Dordillon as “péché, désobéissance, rébellion, offense, faute” (Dordillon 1999: 186). In Maori we find a different equivalent of sin, namely the term *hara* that refers first of all to the violation of tapu. Its cognate is present in the Hawaiian vocabulary (*hala*) but *hewa* has a very similar meaning and occurs in the biblical texts. In Marquesan, *ha’a* has the meaning of anger or discontent, and its reduplication *ha’aha’a* is an analogous encoding of the same mood, i.e. “colère, fâcherie, détestation, haine, impatience” (Dordillon 1999: 124).

Prayers in the strict sense of the word were not known to the Marquesans and Chaulet has chosen the word *pure* that was used in the same sense in Tahitian. The feeling of discontent, worry or sorrow is referred to as “lack of spirit”, i.e. *’uhane ko’e*.

Paradise is paraphrased as *papua meita’i* “good garden” and *papua fa’e* refers to a “walled city”, i.e. houses (*fa’e*) within a fence (*papua*). The locust plague is unknown in Polynesia and the translator has filled up the lexical gap with his invention *manu kaiu* “locust” where *manu* denotes not only birds but any flying creatures while *kaiu* has the meaning “tiny, young”.

In many instances, no substantial semantic shifts were needed and Chaulet could have relied upon standard Marquesan expressions. Thus genealogy could be with a considerable precision translated as *matatetau*, feast as *koina*, to believe as *ha’atika*, light as *ma’ama*, desert as *fenua ataha*, to obey as *aotahi*, servant as *pahina’eo*.

The stability of Chaulet’s suggested equivalents would deserve attention of linguists in the immediate future. Some conclusions might be arrived at after a comparative study of the *Histoire Sainte* with *Te Evanelia i patutia e Ioane* translated by Bicknell.

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