T.J. Makutoane & J.A. Naudé

COLONIAL INTERFERENCE IN THE TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE INTO SOUTHERN SOTHO[1]

ABSTRACT

Bible translation in South Africa was initially conceptualised and executed by either missionary societies or Bible societies. This paper aims to investigate the nature of the translators' encounters and negotiations between the source text culture and the culture of the target audience. For purposes of this study, the translation of cultural terms of two translations of the Bible into Southern Sotho will be considered. The first translation to be discussed was published in 1909 by the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society representing colonial empowerment of the dominated target culture by the hegemonic culture of the translators. The second translation discussed was published in 1989 by the Bible Society of South Africa. It represents a process of indigenisation of the source text culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

The explosive expansion of Christianity in Africa and Asia during the last two centuries constitutes one of the most remarkable cultural transformations in the history of mankind. Because it coincided with the spread of European economic and political hegemony, it tends to be taken for granted that Christian missions went hand-in-hand with imperialism and colonial conquest. However, the precise connections between religion and empire have yet to be fully delineated by historians (Etherington 2005:1-18). This paper aims to make a contribution to the very small shelf of literature devoted to exploring those connections in a vast library of scholarship on the history of the Christian religion. Much work remains to be done.

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@ufs.ac.za.

Lamin O. Sanneh (1990) has emphasised the centrality of translation to the Christian religion. Key concepts of the faith had to be conveyed in many different languages to a multitude of cultures, otherwise Christianity would never have spread beyond Palestine. While utilitarian theorists argued strenuously for English as the language of education in the British colonies, missionaries argued that it would be easier to get their sacred texts into the hands of their converts by translating them into indigenous languages.

Bible translation in Southern Africa was initially conceptualised and executed by either missionary societies or Bible societies. This paper aims to investigate the nature of the translators' encounters and negotiations between the source text culture and the culture of the target audience.

For the purpose of this study, the translation of cultural terms of two translations of the Bible into Southern Sotho will be considered. The first translation (as well as its predecessors and revisions) was published by the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society in 1909. This translation is well known and is still in use as the "Old Translation". The second translation to be considered is the new Southern Sotho translation, published in 1989 by the Bible Society of South Africa. It was based on the principles of Nida and Taber (1974) and the product exhibits a dynamic equivalent translation. Cultural terms of the two translations will be analysed and compared to determine the translation style employed by missionary and Bible societies, respectively. It will further be shown that the readers of the Southern Sotho translations are held prisoner by Western translators by denying them the right to biblical texts received and interpreted on their own terms as religious artefacts from the ancient Mediterranean world.

Bible translation practice tends to focus on the actual source text although many diverse, yet interrelated, contextual factors may also interfere (see Baker 2006 on framing of translations). This article illustrates some of these situational variables and potential influences, by using a multidisciplinary approach to the task. This complex process of intercultural, interlinguistic communication involves sociocultural, organisational and situational factors (see Wendland 2008; Wilt 2003). Some of these aspects are described in the next section.

2. FRAMING BIBLE TRANSLATION INTO SOUTHERN SOTHO

2.1   The Basuto

Basutoland, currently known as Lesotho, the home country of the Southern Sotho-speaking people, was opened to Christian missionary work in 1833/ 1834. The Basuto originated from remnants of other tribes scattered by the

wars and raids of the Zulus under king Tshaka. In about 1822, Moshoeshoe gathered them together, building a stronghold on the summit of Thaba Bosiu. By cooperating with other chiefdoms and extending the influence of his own lineage, he was able to create a Sotho identity and unity, both of which were used to repel the external forces that threatened their autonomy and independence (Rosenthal 1970:45-46; see also Casalis 1997 and Ellenberger 1997). Moshoeshoe also acknowledged the importance of acquiring the skills of farmers, settlers, hunters, and adventurers, who increasingly moved across his borders from the south. He therefore welcomed the missionaries from the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (Société des Missions Évangéliques) when they arrived at Thaba Bosiu in 1833 as a source of information about the rest of the world (see also Harries 2007). He placed them in strategically important parts of the kingdom, where they gave the Sotho their first experience with Christianity, literacy, and commodity production for long-distance trading. They had respected him, helped him, and even loved him. Later the missionaries from Catholic and other churches were allowed to carry on with their work, but without prejudicing the independence of the tribe. However, Moshoeshoe placed himself under British jurisdiction in 1868. In 1884 Basutoland was granted the status of a protectorate. In 1966 the country attained full independence.

2.2   The missionaries

It was during the period of missionary arrival that Lesotho was opened for Christianity (Smit 1970:211; Reyneke 1987:1). Eleven mission stations had been founded towards the end of the 1940s, of which the best-known, besides Morija itself, were Bethulie, Bersheba, Thaba Bosigo, Hebron and Bethesda. For 36 years the missionaries of the Paris Society had formed an excellent relationship with Moshoeshoe, to whom Eugene Casalis (1812-1891) served almost as a confidential counsellor.

The place of the older missionaries (Thomas Arbousset, 1810-1877, and Casalis) was taken by Adolphe Mabille (1836-1894) and Francois Coillard (1834-1904). Mabille was largely responsible for the territory of the mission, inaugurating a native pastorate, and starting a normal school, a printing establishment and a book depot (Latourette 1978:364). Coillard succeeded Casalis as confidential advisor to Moshoeshoe. Coillard's peculiar combination of patience, persistence, ability to understand the African humour and radiant sanctity, made him one of the dominant figures in the African scene for 40 years (Neill 1965:371-372). By their counsel, their schools and the Christian faith of which they were the channel, the French missionaries had a large share in enabling the Basuto to accommodate themselves to the white man's world (Latourette 1978:364). In 1914 the church, founded by the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, numbered 22 233 communicants.

Moshoeshoe welcomed the first Roman Catholic missionaries in 1862. They entered a small country in which the French and Swiss Protestants had already been at work for 30 years and had already made a deep impression on the lives of the people. The Roman Catholics regarded this as their chief bastion in Southern Africa. The Protestants and Anglicans with their severely limited resources have found it hard to stand against the Roman Catholic wave (Neill 1965:433).

As can be expected, these French missionaries pioneered the translation of the Bible into the language of the Basotho. Arbousset, in particular, distinguished himself in becoming a first-rate authority on the Southern Sotho language. The history of the origin of the translation of the Bible into Sesotho is intertwined with the arrival of the missionaries in the Mount Kingdom of Lesotho during the first half of the 19th century (1833-1834). The two main groups of missionaries who pioneered Bible translation work in Lesotho were the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society as well as the French Missionary Society (Smit 1970:210).

2.3   The nature of Bible translation in Southern Africa

Orlinsky and Bratcher (1991:179) divide the history of Bible translation into the so-called Four Great Ages of Bible translation. The First Great Age (about 200 BCE-fourth century CE) has a Jewish setting (Alexandria and Western Asia) and the target languages involved were Greek (Septuagint) and Aramaic (Targums). The Second Great Age (fourth century-about 1500 or the Middle/Dark Ages) was Catholic in origin with its main centres Palestine and the emerging 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; thus new meaning and nuances were read into Hebrew and Greek-Septuagint words and phrases. The Third Great Age (about 1500-1960) has an essentially Protestant setting. The target languages were English, German, French, Dutch, Spanish, etc. The main centres of activity were located in those regions where the (essentially Protestant) trade communities were developing at the expense of the old (essentially Catholic) feudalist establishments. In the process of translation there was a noticeable adherence to the word-for-word philosophy of translation and to the old-fashioned vocabulary and style. The translations were characterised by transference of the forms and structure of the source text, insofar as was possible, both at the macro and micro level. The pragmatic functions of the source text were not taken very seriously. Famous translations of this era are the King James Version or Authorised Version, the American Standard Version, the Dutch Authorised Version, etc. It is unanimously agreed that the Revised Standard Version (1952-1975) was transitional towards the Fourth Great Age/Epoch/Phase in Bible translation. 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 cooperate interconfessionally. Secondly, the RSV represented the end of the mechanical, word-for-word reproduction of the Hebrew and Greek text, a procedure that had haunted Bible translation from the outset. Instead, the focus was to make accessible to their readers the plain meaning intended in the source texts. Amongst those who played a pivotal 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 (1974) view translation as reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source text first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. A translation is the dynamic equivalent of the source text if the message of the source text has been transported into the receptor language in such a way that the response of the receptor is essentially that of the original receptors.

In Southern Africa, the Bible translation process went through two main periods, namely the Missionary Society Period and the Bible Society Period (see also Bessong & Kenmogne 2007).

2.3.1   The Missionary Society period

As in other parts of Africa, the history of expansion of Christianity in Southern Africa began with different missionary societies working among different tribes (Kollman 2005; Majola 2007). Bible translation was undertaken by an individual or group of missionaries from the same society. Missionaries had to study Greek, Hebrew and Latin to be able to work on Bible translations (Hermanson 2002:7). They translated using formal equivalence, in the same way as they had been taught to translate the Classics, matching word-for-word and structure-for-structure wherever possible. Sometimes they created a translation which is more idiomatic (reproducing the message of the original, but tending to distort the meaning by adding idioms which do not exist in the source text), rather than literal (source language grammatical constructions were converted to their nearest target language) equivalents, whereas lexical words were often translated singly, and out of context (Newmark 1988:45).

Missionaries also used translations in their own languages to guide them in the translation process. This technique was actually misguiding, and resulted in *colonial interference* during the translation of the Bible into indigenous languages. The translations were mostly published by the mission itself, either on a mission press or a commercial press.

The Missionary Society period links up with the Third Great Age of Bible Translations as described above.

2.3.2   The Bible Society Period

The Bible Society of South Africa became an autonomous body on 1 November 1965, although the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) was present in South Africa since 1820 (see Batalden, Cann & Dean (2004) for the cultural impact of the BFBS). During this period, parts of the Bible were translated and/or published in a variety of Southern African languages.

The process of translation involves an Editorial Committee which then hands the translation draft over to a Review Committee and a Consultative Committee. Translators include missionaries and indigenous ministers.

Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence translation was introduced as the correct methodology for translating the Bible and is now routinely used in the translation projects (Hermanson 2002:20). Previously existing revisions and translations committees were introduced to his theory and as a result the churches and the missions felt the need for new translations. Training seminars were held to give practice to the application of the theory and to select competent translators who were acceptable to the churches, who would be using the Bible once it was published. The Bible Society Period links up with the Fourth Great Age of Bible Translations as described above.

Dynamic/functional equivalent translations in South Africa's languages, which were published by the Bible Society of South Africa during this period, include the Southern Sotho Bible in two orthographies — that of Lesotho and that of South Africa (1989).

3.   THE SOUTHERN SOTHO BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

The Paris Evangelical Mission commenced their missionary work at Morija, Lesotho, during 1833-34. The first Gospels in Southern Sotho were Mark, translated by E. Cassalis, and John, translated by S. Rolland; both 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 (Schutte 1974:310-311). The complete Bible in Southern Sotho was published in France by the BFBS in 1881, but because of the Basotho War, it reached its prospective readers only in September 1883 (Smit 1970:210). During this two-year delay, Mr. Mabille, one of the indigenous pioneers of the translation of the Bible into Southern Sotho, undertook a new and more thorough revision of both the New and the Old Testaments. He changed not only the orthography, but also improved the text itself, where necessary.

The first revision of the 1881 version was published in 1899. A new edition in revised orthography was printed in 1909, with the main focus being to change the orthography that was oriented to French e.g. the letter l was changed to d,

kh to kg, etc. This edition 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, both at the macro and micro level. The pragmatic functions of the source text received scant attention. Various revisions followed.

In 1970, a large project to translate the Bible into Southern Sotho was pioneered. The coordinator of the project was Dr. B.J. Odendaal. It was in this endeavour by Odendaal that different churches were invited to take part in the translation of the Bible in their own language. The fact that the prospective audience was involved demonstrates that the "Old Translation" was functional. The Anglican Church was represented by Mr. Khaketla, the Catholic Church by Father Marole and Father Stevens, and the Lesotho Evangelical Church by Rev. Thakgudi and Rev. Rudge. Rev. D.T. Keta represented the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. The project was completed in 1976. Although completed in that year, this translation consisted only of the New Testament.

Most members of this team knew the basics of the source languages, Greek and Hebrew. They also made reference to other versions, like French, German, English, Afrikaans and Latin. They were not in favour of a word-forword translation, but wanted to produce the deeper meaning that was functional. In this way they corrected the literal translation of the 1909 version, which was based on the traditions and norms of the readers of that time. The 1976 translation was not a revision, but an independent translation. It was only years later that the Old Testament was included in this version. This gave birth to the new translation of 1989.

When comparing the 1976 version with the 1909 version, two issues are raised: the 1909 version was revised many times, including the 1976 version, and in 1976, a half complete translation (only the New Testament, including Psalms) was introduced.

The question remains why so many revisions were done to the 1909 translation. Dr. D.T. Keta (in an interview with the authors) gave the following as an answer to this question:

- A translation needs to have a revision(s) to correct the literal translation made by the previous translators e.g. the 1909 translation was more literal than dynamic. Through revisions a translation was developed that would be more explicit but also dynamic.
- Language change gave rise to the necessity to review the 1909 version.

- Language is an important element of culture and is not stagnant. It is controlled by changes in culture and environmental developments e.g. people adopting the western culture.
- Changes in Sesotho as a language, e.g. orthography.
- To create a deeper and understandable theological meaning to the prospective audience with new cultural background.
- To deal with the concept of colonial interferences.

Whether a new translation would be necessary for the Sesotho-speaking audience, the answer is undoubtedly yes, due to the abovementioned reasons. There should be no further revisions, but a new translation.

Such a new Southern Sotho translation was published in 1989 as described above. It was based on the principles of Nida and Taber (1974) and the product 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.

4. TRANSLATION AS AN IMPERIALIST TOOL IN THE COLONISATION OF PEOPLES

As part of the basis for ordinary, everyday communication, translation remains an integral component of the colonial power differentials that shaped it in the first place (for example they control what gets translated and how). Hermans (1999:62) points out that language is subjectively coloured and emotionally charged, rather than neutral and impassive. Robinson (1997:31), in turn, points out that translation has often served as an important channel for empire and has a threefold importance in this regard: (i) as a channel of colonisation, parallel to and connected with education and the overt or covert control of markets and institutions; (ii) as a "lightning-rod" for cultural inequalities persisting after the demise of colonialism; and (iii) as a channel of decolonisation. Jacquemond (1992:139-158) offers four main hypotheses regarding translational inequalities: (i) A dominated culture will invariably translate far more of a hegemonic culture than the latter will of the former; (ii) when a hegemonic culture does translate works produced by the dominated culture, those works will be perceived and presented as difficult, mysterious, inscrutable, esoteric, and as requiring a small cadre of intellectuals to interpret them, while a dominated culture will translate a hegemonic culture's works with a view to easy accessibility for the masses; (iii) a hegemonic culture will only translate those works by authors in a dominated culture that fit into the former's preconceived notions of the latter, and (iv) authors in a dominated culture striving for a larger audience will tend to write for translation into a hegemonic language, and this

will require some degree of compliance with stereotypes. Unfortunately, these hypotheses do not state how translations are performed, i.e. the macrostructural (global) and microstructural translation strategies (see next section) are not explicated and must be refined. The analysis of the Southern Sotho translations in the next section will illustrate some of these strategies.

The concept of "colonial" in "colonial interferences" means the use of foreign linguistic items or words which had interfered with the process of translation, in this case the translation of the Bible in Sesotho. It should not be understood in a more universal or general manner that carries a negative connotation of "the oppression of Africa by the Western Superpowers" or "the imposition of Western values and institutions on indigenous African system" (Adamo 2001:2). The concept of *colonial interferences* or *foreign ideas* as Masoga (2004:155) defines it, is to be understood in a positive sense because during the translation of the Bible in Southern Sotho, these *interferences* became part of the culture and language of the prospective audience, i.e. the translated text is indigenised. The notion of an *indigenous* text was advocated by Masoga (2004:143): "The Bible relates to the communities that read it, using their indigenous contexts to interpret this indigenous text". Masoga was emphasising the notion that the indigenous wisdom, knowledge, science and technology that the indigenous communities bring to the text (Bible) must also be acknowledged. Adamo (2001:3) agrees with Masoga when he says, "… the value of any Biblical studies depends on its relevance to the life of the members of the communities where it is applied", but it must be understood as the way in which the missionaries had empowered Sesotho as a language. This outcome of empowerment will be demonstrated in the next section by contrasting the 1909 and the 1989 translations.

5. COLONIAL INTERFERENCES: INDIGENOUS BUT STILL COLONIAL

Consider the examples of colonial interference in the following table:

Table 1: Examples of colonial interference

	Biblical Hebrew	1909	1989
Proverbs 31:10	Pünînîm jewels	*diperela* pearls cf. pêrels (Afrikaans)	*mabenyane a bohlokwa* valuable stones
Exodus 35:6	tôlaºˋat scarlet	*sekareleta* scarlet cf. skarlaken (Afrikaans)	*masela a maputswa* greyish cloths
Exodus 35:14	münörat hammä ´ôr lampstand	*kandelara* chandelier cf. kandelaar (Afrikaans)	*sedulwana sa lebone* lampstand
Judges 17:2	Keºsep silver	*dishekele* shekels cf. die sikkels (Afrikaans)	*tjhelete* money
2 Chronicles 16:10	Bêt hammahPeºket the house of the stocks	*teronkong* prison cf. tronk (Afrikaans)	*tjhankaneng* prison
1 Samuel 17:5	kôºbaˋ nüHöºšet helmet of bronze	*heleme ya koporo* copper helmet cf. koperhelm (Afrikaans)	*katiba ya lethose* the hat of copper
1 Samuel 3:3	Bühêkal yhwh (´ädönäy) dwelling place of Jahwe/the Lord cf Sesotho indigenisation: Bodulo ba Morena Dwelling place of God	*Tabernakele ya Jehova* Tabernacle of Jehova cf. Tabernakel van Jehowa (Afrikaans)	*Tempele ya Morena* Temple of God

Nehemiah 10:39	lübêt ´élöhê°nû lüšäkôt lübêt hä´ôcär to the house of our God, to the chambers of storehouse	*dikamoreng tsa ntlo ya Morena* to the storerooms of the house of our God cf. die kamers … (Afrikaans)	*ka matlung a polokelo a tempele ya Morena* in the storing houses of the temple of our God
Ezekiel 1:22	räqî͏ª` Kü`ên haqqe°raH han-nôrä´ nä†ûy The likeness of an expanse, shining like awe-inspiring crystal	*Tse tshwanang le kristale* Like an expanse of crystal cf. soos 'n uit-spansel van kristal (Afrikaans)	*ntho e kang loapi e benyang jwaloka leqhwa* Something like an expanse shining like ice

By comparing the Biblical Hebrew words and phrases in Table 1 to the 1909 Sesotho translation it is clear that the Sesotho are not loan words from the Biblical Hebrew source text or are related directly to it, nor are they direct translations of the source text culture. They seem rather to be related to the Afrikaans language as the comparable Afrikaans expressions show. The 1989 Sesotho translation involves explications in the form of phrases rather than single words. They have clear indigenous features and the English back translations demonstrate that they belong to the target culture.

Examining some of the examples in Table 1 will make this generalisation clearer. In 1 Samuel 17:5 the Biblical Hebrew kô°ba` nüHö°šet (bronze helmet) is translated as "heleme ya koporo" (copper helmet) in the 1909 translation. The word "heleme" is derived from the Afrikaans word, "helm" and "koporo" from the Afrikaans word, "koper". It is similar in sound to the Afrikaans "koperhelm". The Biblical Hebrew refers to bronze and not copper. The 1909 translation is not reflecting the source text culture and therefore cannot be a foreignisation. The 1989 translation uses the indigenous "katiba ya lethose" (the copper hat). The same situation is repeated in the following cases: The word "dikamoreng" (Nehemiah 10:37) is a derivative of the Afrikaans word "kamers" (Nehemiah 10:37). The word "kristale" (Ezekiel 1:22) is related to "crystal" in English and "kristal" in Afrikaans. The word "teronko" (2 Chronicles 16:10) is derived from the Afrikaans word "tronk", is used in 1909 despite the available indigenised word "tjhankane" (prison).

In 1 Samuel 3:3 the phrase, Bühêkal yhwh (´ädönäy) (the tabernacle of the Lord), is translated as "tabernakele ya Jehova" (1909) and "tempele ya Morena" (1989) reflecting the Afrikaans interferences. A better indigenised translation of this phrase can be suggested: "leaho/sebaka sa boteng/bodulo ba Morena" (dwelling place of God).

The colonial interference in idiomatic expressions resembles that of words and phrases. Consider the idiomatic expression in Isaiah 25:10:

Hebrew: wünäºdôš mô´äb TaHTäyw KühiDDûš matBën (Bümê) [Bümô] madmënâ"

English: "and Moab shall be trampled down in his place, as straw is trampled down in a dunghill"

Sesotho 1909: "o tla hatakelwa jwaloka setroi sa"

English: "will be trampled like trampling on the straw of wheat"

Sesotho 1989: "a ba hatakele sa mooko"

English: "trampling on him, like trampling on dust (1989)"

The phrase "setroi sa koro" (straw of wheat) of the 1909 translation is again related to the Afrikaans words, "strooi" (straw) and "koring" (wheat). A direct translation of the Biblical Hebrew source text can be translated "straw is trampled down in a dunghill". Again the 1909 translation is not reflecting the source text culture and cannot be a foreignisation. The 1989 translation uses the indigenous "mooko" (dust).

As indicated in Section 2 Moshoeshoe acknowledged the importance of acquiring the skills of farmers, settlers, hunters, and adventurers, who increasingly moved across his borders from the south. For commodity production on farms and for trading, a kind of pidgin language developed to achieve communication between Dutch/Afrikaans-speaking farmers and the speakers of Sesotho. When translating the Bible into Sesotho this was the terminology the translators of the 1909 translation used. It presents colonial empowerment of the dominated target culture by the hegemonic culture of the translators, whereas the 1989 translation represents a process of indigenisation of the source text culture.

The Bible is an indigenous text, read by indigenous people, from an indigenous perspective and has at least two indigenous levels. The first level concerns the indigenous process that led to the creation of the Bible as a text. Most of the biblical text originated through oral communicative processes and finally reached the point of being fixed in written form. At a second level, the Bible relates to the communities that read it, using their indigenous contexts to interpret this indigenous text. The interferences in the translation became part of the culture and language of the prospective readership. It represents a process of indigenisation of the source text culture and translated text.

The colonial interference is clearly noticed in both of the two main translations of the Bible in Sesotho, namely the 1909 as well as the 1989. The use of foreign words, phrases or sentences is more prominent in the 1909 translation than in the 1989. This made the 1909 translation more difficult and complex

than the 1989 translation. In trying to deal with the problem, the 1989 translation used a more simple language although not simple enough, because it was only meant for readability.

6. CONCLUSION

The Old Translation (1909) reflects an adherence to the word-for-word philosophy of translation and to pristine vocabulary and style. The main translation strategy is explication. It represents colonial empowerment of the dominated target culture by the hegemonic culture of the translators. The New Translation (1989) exhibits a dynamic equivalent translation. The primary concern of the latter translation is meaning and readability. The main translation strategy is generalisation. It represents a process of indigenisation of the source text culture. Both translations have come to prescribe and dominate biblical dialogue in the Southern Sotho community.

With regard to the future, the precise power relations/connections between religion, empire and Bible translation of other South African cultures must still be fully delineated. Descriptive and corpus based translating studies of various translation traditions (including Tswana, Southern Sotho, isiXhosa, etc) are necessary.

Bible translations have focussed on written language. It is necessary to find ways to utilise the oral culture of among others Southern Sotho. The indigenous users of the Bible should have the right to translate/interpret on their own terms the religious artefacts from the ancient Mediterranean world.

Bandia (2008) views translations and other intercultural writing practices that challenge the canons of colonial linguistic propriety through the subversion of social and linguistic conventions as pathways for developing new insights into the ethics of translation. By raising issues related to the politics of language, ideology, identity, accented writing and translation affirm the importance of translation in the circulation of texts, particularly those from minority cultures. This trajectory must also be pursued for Sesotho in the future.

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