

Between Linguistics Naturalness and Theological Fidelity: Translating Key Terms in the Chumburung Old Testament

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800256>

Received: 19 August 2026; Accepted: 24 August 2026; Published: 01 September 2026

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the linguistic and cultural challenges encountered during the translation of key theological terms in the Chumburung¹ Bible Testament. Translating sacred texts into Chumburung, a Guang language spoken in Ghana, requires navigating deep conceptual mismatches between biblical Hebrew and the receptor language's cultural framework. This study analyzes specific key terms related to the divine nature, ritual purity, and covenantal relationships. The research utilizes a comparative linguistic framework, evaluating the choices made by translation teams regarding literal translation, cultural substitution, and borrowing. Findings reveal that while some terms find natural equivalents within traditional Chumburung religious concepts, others risk introducing theological distortion or syncretism. Ultimately, the paper proposes a methodological framework for future translation projects in related West African languages. This framework emphasizes the balance between dynamic equivalence and contextualized exegesis to preserve both linguistic naturalness and theological integrity.

Research Question

The main research question for this study is:

How do translators navigate the tension between linguistic naturalness and theological fidelity when translating key biblical terms into Chumburung?

However, to fully answer the central question the following sub-questions are asked:

What linguistic strategies ensure the Chumburung translation sounds natural to native speakers?

Which theological concepts risk losing their original meaning during the cultural adaptation process?

How do specific key terms (e.g., God, covenant, sin, and grace) demonstrate this translational tension?

What specific criteria do translators use to resolve conflicts between natural language flow and doctrinal accuracy?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative, descriptive research design utilizing contrastive linguistic analysis to investigate the challenges encountered in translating biblical key terms into Chumburung. The primary data corpus consists of selected key theological concepts, such as *covenant*, *holiness*, and *grace* drawn from the Chumburung Old Testament text. These target terms were purposively sampled based on their theological weight and observed translational complexity.

¹ Throughout this work, the words; Chumburung and Nchumuru are used interchangeably. Chumburung stands for the language and Nchumuru, the people.

Data collection was two-phased. First, a textual comparison was conducted between the Hebrew source concepts and the published Chumburung Old Testament text equivalents. Second, semi-structured interviews were held with three members of the Chumburung translation team and two local language consultants to document the decision-making processes and field-testing feedback. Collected data were analysed thematically, categorizing translation barriers into linguistic, cultural, and conceptual mismatches. To ensure validity, back-translation and participant verification were employed throughout the analysis.

The study also relied on the qualitative, multidisciplinary research methodologies, which blended Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics (MTBH), translation theory, and comparative linguistic analysis to evaluate how sacred terms are converted from ancient biblical languages into Chumburung (a Guan language spoken in Ghana). The core methodological framework consists of the following components: Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics (MTBH), thus contextual theology using mother tongue biblical hermeneutics to read and evaluate the biblical text through the specific cultural lens of the Chumburung people. The study again considered methodologies which relied heavily on the Translation Theory Framework, because the paper evaluated key translation terms by contrasting two major translation paradigms, which are, I. The Theological Fidelity (Formal Equivalence), thus assessing how accurately the source text's historical and literal theological meaning is preserved without distortion and II. The Linguistic Naturalness (Functional/Dynamic Equivalence) assessing how smoothly and naturally the translated text flows according to the grammar, idioms, and speech patterns of the Chumburung language.

The study made use of Morphosyntactic and Semantic Evaluation in analysing theological key words, for example, words such as names for God, covenant, or sacrifice, for their grammatical components and semantic weight before being mapped against their Chumburung counterparts.

The study used qualitative data collection and evaluation and did what is called comparative textual analysis that is, side-by-side linguistic comparisons were performed between the Hebrew source phrases and the final printed Chumburung Old Testament text.

Back ground Information of the Nchumuru (Chumburung)

The Nchumuru are one of several people groups found in Ghana in West Africa. Linguistically, the Nchumuru originated in the Guan cradle, which is located in the Densu Valley. They belong to the Kwa family of the Guan (North) sub-group of the Volta Camoe of the Niger-Congo group of languages (Stewart 1989). They speak a language called Chumburung (*Kyonborong*). The Nchumuru people are located on either side of the Volta Lake in east-central Ghana, primarily concentrated in the Oti, Northern, and Bono East regions. Their geographic territory spans an area of approximately 2,200 (Barker 1986:265) to 2,969 square kilometres, depending on whether you measure the historical tribal homelands or the official government district borders.

Today they are largely located mainly on their lands in neighbouring parts of three of Ghana's Regions: i.e. Krachi Nchumuru and Krachi East Districts in the Oti Region, in Kpandai District of the Northern Region, and in the Pru and Sene Districts, which comprises of Yeji-Prang-Kwame Danso-Bassa triangle of the Bono East Region; in addition, small but organized clusters of migrant Nchumuru work in such urban centres like Kumasi, Accra and Tamale (Barker 1986).

The Foundation of Bible Translation in the Wycliffe world.

A translation must be **accurate, clear and natural**. These basic principles, made very clear in Barnwell (1974, 1980:15), have been applied throughout the Wycliffe world, and remain paramount, whatever the translation theory or model that is presently in favour.

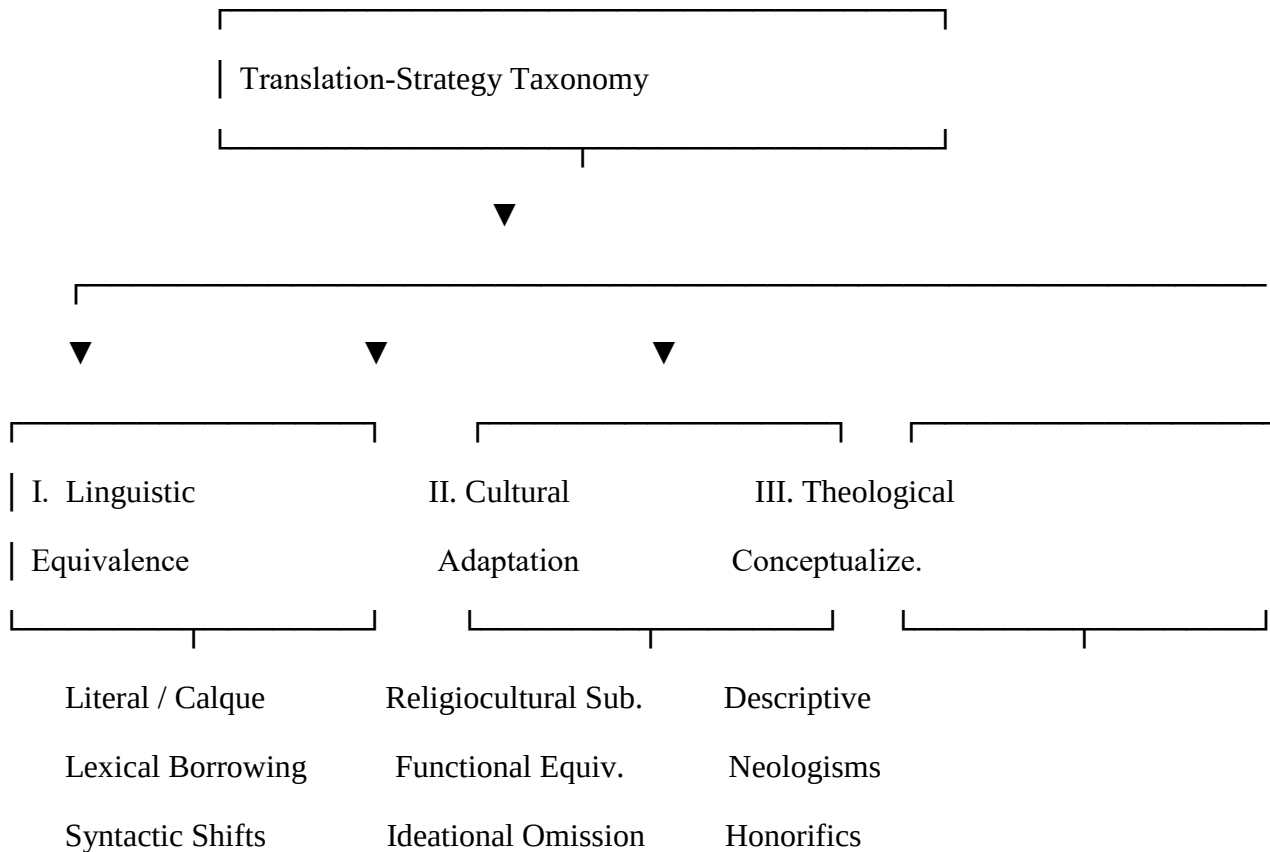
A Translation-Strategy Taxonomy

A **translation-strategy taxonomy** categorizes the precise methods used to transfer complex cultural, historical, and theological source concepts into a specific target language like Chumburung. Because the Old

Testament is deeply rooted in ancient agrarian Near-Eastern culture and Hebrew idioms, direct structural equivalence in a West African Guang language is rarely possible.

The structural framework below details a comprehensive translation-strategy taxonomy designed to analyze linguistic, cultural, and theological key terms in the Chumburung Old Testament.

Structural Framework of the Taxonomy



Linguistic Equivalence Strategies

These strategies focus primarily on word-for-word mechanics, direct structural transfers, or literal preservation of the source text.

Formal / Literal Translation (Calque): Translating words or phrases exactly as they appear in ancient Hebrew, ignoring target-language natural structures.

Application: Used when a Hebrew metaphor is simple enough to be understood raw without confusing the target audience.

Pure Lexical Borrowing (Transference): Direct adoption of source words into the target orthography.

Application: Transliterating phonetic names like Abraham, Israel, or units of weight/measure like Shekel.

Syntactic Shift (Transposition): Changing grammatical structures or parts of speech to ensure natural sentence construction.

Application: Converting passive Hebrew verbs into the active voice to match standard Chumburung structure.

Cultural Adaptation Strategies

These strategies address the massive cultural gap between ancient Near Eastern realities and modern West African experiences.

Religiocultural Substitution (Domestication): Replacing a foreign biblical concept with an existing, highly familiar indigenous target counterpart.

Application: Using local names or cultural roles for complex terms like "priest" or "prophet" based on existing indigenous practices.

Functional Equivalence (Dynamic Translation): Prioritizing the target reader's response and clarity of meaning over rigid word accuracy.

Application: Modifying unfamiliar agricultural metaphors (like threshing floors or specific ancient grains) into items well known near the Volta Lake ecosystem.

Explanatory / Descriptive Translation (Explication): Expanding the text to clearly explain elements completely missing in the target culture.

Application: Translating a single cultural word like "tabernacle" into an explanatory phrase detailing its physical shape and use.

Ideational Omission / Condensation: Safely reducing or streamlining specific structural idioms that carry zero meaning if translated literally.

Application: Omitting redundant structural greetings or introductory idioms that muddy natural narrative flow.

III. Theological Conceptualization Strategies

These strategies tackle abstract, high-stakes religious terms (e.g., God's names, covenants, salvation, sin) where a mistranslation could distort doctrine.

Absolute Descriptive Paraphrase: Using descriptive structural phrases to unpack dense theological realities.

Application: Breaking down abstract terms like "Grace" into functional descriptions like "the unearned, good eye that God looks at us with."

Neologism / Word Coining: Inventing a brand-new lexical item by fusing existing native words to capture an unprecedented concept.

Application: Building a combined compound word to capture the specific Hebrew sense of "Holy" (e.g., combining concepts of pure, taboo, and set apart).

Honorific & Hierarchy Alignment: Applying native stylistic elements of royal praise and high honor when referring to divinity.

Application: Integrating specific linguistic titles reserved for paramount chiefs when translating titles for the divine name YHWH or Adonai.

Direct Comparison Summary Matrix

Strategy Category	Main Objective	Best Used For	Primary Risk
Linguistic	Maintain historical	Proper names, units of	Low readability,

	accuracy.	measure.	foreignness.
Cultural	Ensure immediate local clarity.	Cultural idioms, local objects.	Accidental distortion of history.
Theological	Protect doctrinal accuracy.	Abstract religious attributes.	Overly long, clumsy phrasing.

Principles to be considered in choosing and translating Key Terms:

Consistency versus Context

Should one word have a meaning that is fixed right across Scripture? The Revised Version of the 19th Century moved in that direction. Alternatively, should each word be translated according to the immediate context? This view has been the prevailing one for many years. In fact, not even the KJV translators used the same translation in every case. This has been the rule for the Chumburung translation, especially where the one word in the source text has more than one meaning.

Literal versus Metaphorical

I refer here not to whether a whole passage is to be read as literal or metaphorical, but single expressions, e.g. Daughter of Zion, Ephraim, Israel, Rahab, which may be synecdoche for a whole group or nation of people.

Source Language Context or Receptor Language Context

Should things and concepts common to the source culture (SC) be transliterated into the Target Language (TL), or should the nearest equivalent in the TL and Target Culture (TC) be used? Many cases cited below show that the nearest local equivalent was the preferred option.

Calques versus Borrowed words

According to Bynon (1977:232), a calque is a loan translation. “The form and meaning of a foreign word, instead of being carried over into the recipient language as a unit, is merely employed as a model for a native creation. For this to be possible it must be both morphologically complex and semantically transparent, and the process consists in substituting for each of its morphs the semantically closest morph in the recipient language and combining these according to its own native rules of word-formation.”. Examples she gives include, “evangelium (Latin), godspell (Old English), gospel (Modern English).

Bynon (ibid:237) also speaks of ‘semantic calques,’ i.e. ‘modifying the semantic range of an item of similar meaning in the native vocabulary or by expanding it so as to accommodate the new meaning alongside the original one.’ Thus, the Old Norse goddess guarding the kingdom of the dead was **Hel**. This word in the Christian context came to mean ‘the place of punishment after death.’ The German **himmel** ‘sky,’ and French **les cieux** ‘the skies’ have now the dual meanings of **sky** and **heaven**. So in Chumburung **heaven** can be both **Wuribware se** ‘on God,’ or **soso** ‘up, sky.’ See Section 3.6 for more examples. Borrowed words include mostly loans from Asante. Several of these commonly used in interpretation of sermons were eliminated in the translation of the NT but **ba asuu** ‘to baptise’ (Asante) remained as it was well understood, and there was no traditional appropriate expression. See Section 3.6 for examples where Asante was dismissed, and Chumburung semantic calques were used.

Examples of Selected Key terms in Chumburung-Religious and sacred expressions

God

The Chumburung know of God as **Wuribware**. Folk etymology suggests this might derive from **owure** ‘chief’ **bware** ‘rain,’ But it is a Proper Noun, just as **Yahweh** is a Proper Noun, and so cannot be pluralised, or be used as a generic term for god/gods. The word for idol or fetish (Ghanaian English) is **kisi**.

Therefore, ‘Baal’ was usually translated as **Kisi Baal**. The trickier expressions were ‘detestable idols’ and ‘foreign gods,’ and ‘gods they never knew.’ It raises the question, were some idols not detestable? Was it all right to worship Hebrew but not other peoples’ idols? Circumlocutions were needed, e.g.

‘the detestable idols’ **bɔ lee feye ikisi-o pɛɛ gye abusɛntɔ** ‘because all those idols are disgusting/hateful things.’ 2Chronicles 15.8.

Foreign gods’ **tɔŋ kɔ awuye kisi kɔ** ‘the idol of the people of another place’ (Isaiah 43.12).

‘Gods they never knew’ **ikisi ne bɔ kyɔ bɔ mɔŋ suŋ-o** ‘idols that they had never worshipped’ (Jeremiah 19.4).

‘Worthless idols’ does not imply that some idols are worth something, but that all idols are useless. Therefore, we had **ɛ maa taare a ɛ waa sɛye** ‘they cannot do anything’ and **Ikisi mɔ mɔŋ gye sɛye** ‘but idols are nothing.’

A problem arises when God is contrasted with other gods.

‘God of gods’ **Wuribware de keyaaleŋ ikisi pɛɛ se, ne ɔ bee ɔ gye anyanpe pɛɛ-rɔ nyanpe** ‘God has power over all idols, and he is master of all masters’ (Deuteronomy 10.17).

‘God of gods’ **Nyɛŋkpeŋ-kyɔŋ-atɔ-pɛɛ-Bware** Know-thousands-exceeds-all-God’ (Daniel 11.36).

‘God of Israel’ **Isireelii awuye bamɔ nyanpe Wuribware** ‘Israel people’s Master God’ (Ezra 1.3).

‘The God of your father David’ **Wuribware, nyanpe ne fɔ nana Deefid a suŋ-o** ‘God, the master whom your grandfather David worshipped.’ Isaiah 38.4.

Multiple attributes of God

See Gillian Hansford’s paper on proverbial names. Since Chumburung has a productive Word Formation Rule by which names can be created out of short sentences, we used this to create natural sounding names for God, e.g.

‘The Holy One’ **Bɔye-kɔ-mɔŋ-te-mò-se-Bware** ‘No-sin-sits-on- him-God.’ Isaiah 10.17 etc.

‘God Almighty’ **Bɔ-eleŋ-ɔ-kyɔŋ-ɔkɛmaa-Bware** ‘Possesses-strength-he-exceeds-all-God.’ Genesis 17.1 etc.

‘I am who I am’ **Mɔ-gye-mɔ-ne-n-gye** ‘I-am-I-that-I-am’ (Exodus 6.2).

‘Holy Spirit.’ **Wuribware a kufwiŋe timaa-o** ‘God’s good breath’ rather than borrow **Honhom kronkron** ‘pure spirit’ from Asante, because the cognate Chumburung **kreŋkreŋ** ‘pure’ refers only to water.

‘Ancient of Days’ **ɔ-bɔ-rɔ-dɛdaa-ɔ-bɔ-fɔ-ndɔɔ-na-nsu-pɛɛ-Bware** ‘He-is-there-in.old.times-until-today-and-years-all-God.’

‘Sovereign Lord’ (NIV) ‘Lord God’ (KJV) **Nyanpe Wuribware** ‘Master God.’

Tabernacle and Temple

Chumburungs have a borrowed word **tanɛɛ** ‘tent,’ The basic meaning of Tabernacle is ‘a tent for living in,’ So in general

‘Tabernacle’ was translated as **tanɛɛ kekyaŋ** ‘tent room.’

‘Tent of meeting’ became **tanɛɛ-kekyaŋ-ne-mɔ-e-gyaŋŋaa-mɔ-asesɛ-kemo-rɔ-ɔ** ‘Tent-room-that-I-will-meet-my-people-in-it’ because it was God who took the initiative and called Moses and the priests to meet him

in a specific place. Contrariwise, before the instructions for making the Tent were given to Moses, he pitched a tent outside the camp and went to meet God there. In that case Moses had taken the initiative. So this became

‘tent of meeting’ Exodus 19 **tanṭee-kekyan-ne-mo-e-gyanṭaa-Wuribware-kemo-ro-o** ‘tent-room-that-I-will-meet-God-in-it.’

The ‘tabernacles’ that the Israelites lived in for one week in a year, when they got to the Promised Land, were not so much tents as temporary shelters made of sticks, etc. So the translation is **Abwii-ro kekyena a kigyibee-o** ‘Shelters-in living eating time.’

‘The Temple,’ which was meant to be a replica of the Tabernacle, is generally translated as **Wuribware sunḡkpa** ‘God’s worship place’ just as a pagan shrine is a **kisi sunḡkpa** ‘idol worship place.’

‘Sanctuary’ was also rendered **Wuribware sunḡkpa**.

Sacred clothing

The clothing for Aaron in Exodus was an ongoing problem for the translators. It was finally agreed as follows:

‘Turban’ **Kepa dabe** ‘big hat.’

‘Ephod’ **kaare katiṅ-o** ‘short shirt.’

‘Breastpiece’ **kekan se kaare** ‘shirt on chest.’

‘Robe’ **kaare soswee** ‘long shirt.’

‘Tunic’ **batakeri** ‘long shirt’ (borrowed from Asante **batakari**: Moslem man’s dress).

‘Linen’ **kyefuri kakpan** ‘piece of white cloth.’

Sacred things

‘Cherubim’ **abanḡban awuye** ‘winged people.’

‘Ark of the Covenant’ **Wuribware etaṅ a kedakaa-o** ‘God’s oath box.’

‘Ark of the Testimony’ **Wuribware kedakaa ne mbraa afoṛe-o i di-ro-o** ‘God’s box that the law stones lie in.’

‘Atonement cover’/ ‘Mercy seat’ **Buṅse mo gye Nyiṅkpeṅ-eweeṅupo ayaa yereseḡkpa nee** ‘This lid is Knows.thousands-merciful.person’s feet standing.on place.’

‘Incense’ **nyonḡku** ‘incense’ (a local sweet smelling liquid from the **kenyanḡ** tree used by RC churches).

‘Urim and Thummin’ **abu tweese ne ba tee amo e Nlon na Dyure-o** ‘the casting stones that they call Cursing and Blessing,’ This seemed the nearest equivalent of the original meaning, which still remains the subject of scholarly debate.

‘Manna’ **Nteto-nee** ‘what is it.’

‘Jewels’ Since there were no known local equivalents, these were transliterated, with the addition of the main colour (even though reference books cannot agree on what were the dominant colours, or even the proper name of the stones! e.g

Kpare gyenkpɛɛɛ-ɔ: rubi nɛ ku du kipipee-o, na topas nɛ ku du fɛɛ kakaduro-o, na beril nɛ ku du kɛbɔbwɛɛ-ɔ. ¹¹ **Kpare nyɔsepɔ-ɔ: gaanɛt nɛ ku du fɛɛ lɔŋkɔnkyuronkyu nɛ kipipee te-ro-o, na safiro nɛ ku du buruu-o, na amaredo nɛ ku du kɛbɔbwɛɛ-ɔ.** First row: Ruby which is red, and topaz which is yellow, and beryl which is blue. Second row: garnet which is like purple with red in it, sapphire which is blue, and emerald which is green.

¹²**Kpare sasepɔ-ɔ: gyakinɔt nɛ ku du buruu-o, na agɛt nɛ ki de ɛkpare ɛwɔrɛsɛ ɛwɔrɛsɛ-ɔ, na ametisto nɛ ku du fɛɛ lɔŋkɔnkyuronkyu-o.** ¹³ **Kpare nasepɔ-ɔ: krisoliito nɛ ku du fɛɛ kyaasɛ mfɔ-ɔ, na saadonis nɛ ku du kipipee kafwɛɛ na kifufuri-o, na gyaasipaa nɛ ku du kipipee-o.** Third row: jacinth which is blue, agate which has many colours, amethyst which is like purple. Fourth row chrysolite which is like chicken fat, sardonis which is a little red and white, and jasper which is red (Exodus 39.10-13).

Sacrifices

Sacrificing to idols/fetishes in Chumburung country is part of their traditional religion. How should ‘sacrifice’ be translated? Initially the translators doing the NT used the Asante word **afɔdɛɛ**, transliterated as **afɔrɛyɛ**, which was current in church services, and derives from the Asante Bible. However, it was learned that in churches the word **afɔrɛyɛ** had come to be limited to thanksgiving offerings at harvest festivals. Moreover, the traditional word for sacrifice to local gods/fetishes was **lɔŋŋɔ** ‘repair,’ i.e. one repaired the breach that had occurred between the people and the local god. This seemed exactly the right word, since the sacrificial system in the OT was repairing the breach between a Holy God and his sinful people. So this was used. both in the NT and OT.

Mbɔ kɔkywɛɛ kɔlɔŋŋɔ ‘animals burning repairing.’

Ɛbɔyɛ kɔlɔŋŋɔ ‘Sins’ repairing.’

Kɛpɔ kigyɪ kɔlɔŋŋɔ ‘Eating guilt repairing.’

Kayɛɛyuri kɔlɔŋŋɔ ‘Peace repairing.’

Ayu mpu kɔlɔŋŋɔ ‘Corn-flour repairing.’

Bɛrakpaawo nɛ baa yaa kimukee-ro-o ‘Male goat that they send into the desert,’ = ‘scapegoat.’

Nɛ baa kra asarɛɛ-rɔ yasɛ bɔ sa Wuribware bɔ kaapo fɛɛ baa baa mɔ aketɔ ‘They held in their hands lifted to give to God to show that they had brought him gifts,’ or **baa yasɛ bɔ sa Wuribware** ‘they lifted to give to God’ were used for ‘wave offering.

‘Mɔnɛ ya mɔɔ kabɔ na mɔn’ bɔ lɔŋŋɔ mɔ bɔ sa mɔ aɲsɛ na kusɯŋ ‘when you kill an animal to repair me to give me thanks.’ was used for ‘thank offering.’

Persons with roles and functions

Chumburung expressions were sometimes used, but with an extended semantic range, e.g.

‘Prophet’ **Wuribware kyaamɛɛ** ‘God’s linguist.’

‘Priest’ **Wuribware ɔlɔŋŋɔpɔ** ‘God’s repairer.’

‘Angel’ **Wuribware kabɔɔ** ‘God’s messenger.’

‘Apostles’ (NT) **Yeesuu ayaa-rɔ a ayɛrɛpɔ-ɔ** ‘Jesus’ those who stand in his legs.’

‘Seer’ **mɔ nɛ Wuribware i lee mɔ mfɛɛrɛ ɔ kaapo-ɔ** ‘he that God reveals his thoughts to.’

‘Medium’ **ɔko ne ɔ tee akyenango** ‘one who calls up the spirits of the dead.’

As for distinguishing pastor, priest, priest, deacon, elder etc in the beginning of the project the translators wanted to use the Asante word **ɔsofo** ‘priest, minister’ for all of these. Finally, the above mentioned were chosen, in addition we added in the NT

‘Deacon’ **asoree okyaropo** ‘church helper.’

‘Evangelist’ **asen timaa-o ɔtowepo** ‘good news speaker.’

‘Pastor’ **ɔsofoɔ** ‘priest’ (< Asante).

‘Priest’ **Wuribware ɔbɔngopo** ‘God’s repairer.’

‘Elder’ **ɔbreɛ** ‘elder.’

‘Preach good news’ **towe asen timaa** ‘say good matter’ Isaiah 61.1.

‘Ecclesiastes/the Preacher/the Teacher’ **kanyiasen akaapopo** ‘wisdom teacher.’

‘Messiah’ (NT) **Kristoo ne Wuribware ye o suɔ a ɔ bo kyɔnwe Yudaawuɔye-o** ‘Christ that God said he would send to the Jewish people.’

The following were natural Chumburung expressions

‘Tribe’ **kasuro** ‘Clan’ **kabuno** ‘Family’ **kokowɛɛ-ro** ‘Nation’ **kade**.

‘The nations/gentiles’ **nde se awuɔye** ‘towns on people’ (when speaking of them as a third party).

‘Gentiles’ **mone ne mone mon gye Yudaawuɔye-o** ‘you who are not Jews’ e.g. Paul writing to Gentile Christians.

Festivals

Annual festivals **Kasu-ro agyibee** ‘celebrating/eating times of the year’

‘Feast of unleavened bread’ **Bodobodoo-ne-yiisi-mon-te-ro-o kigyibee** ‘Bread-that-no-yeast-sits-in eating time.’

‘Feast of weeks/Harvest Festival’ **Adɔteese kekpa a kigyibee** ‘farm-food gathering eating time.’

‘Feast of ingathering’ **Ayii Agyi Kiteebɛ** ‘Fruit of trees plucking time.’

‘Feast of tabernacles’ **Abwii-ro kekyena a kigyibee** ‘Living in shelters eating time.’

‘Year of Jubilee’ **eyee kenya a kasu-o** ‘self-getting year’ i.e. freedom getting year.’

‘Passover’ **Wuribware-a-kyaa-ane-yɔwe a ateese-o**. ‘God-has-saved-us-left-us food.’ This expression means that God rescued us from potential disaster.

Concepts of right and wrong

Holiness and righteousness and goodness seem to overlap, but the commonest expressions in the translation were:

Kasɛnti ‘truth.’

Kitimaa ‘goodness,’ **timaa** ‘good.’

Kakponɔfwiri ‘white heart.’

Wuribware bware ‘God is good’ i.e. ‘good, kind, righteous.’

Kekpeyaa ‘goodness’ **kpeyaa** ‘good.’

The words **kpeyaa** ‘good, holy’ and **timaa** ‘good’ seem to be nearly interchangeable. However we tried to reserve **kpeyaa** ‘holy’ for holy as in Holy of Holies, though the expression for Holy Spirit still retains the word **timaa** ‘good,’ This may or may not change in any revision.

The idea of holiness for humans at least is

a. Separation from the world and dedication to God;

b. Consequential imitation of God’s inherent qualities of complete sinlessness. Because God is inherently sinless, his apartness has to be taken into consideration.

Here are some examples of what was done, according to context.

Persons

Okò mon bọ kaye mɔ-rɔ nɛ ɔ gye sɛsɛ timaa fɛyɛ m̀. **Okò maa taarɛ a ɔ porɔ m̀.** There is no-one in the world who is a good man like him. No-one can accuse him’ (Job 1.8).

Fò dɛɛ fò gye sɛsɛ nɛ fò a tɛɲ fò eyɛɛ lee iyisi si, nɛ fò a kii ɔkpeyaa bọ sa m̀, nɛ ebɔyɛ mon te fò-rɔ. ‘You are a person who has cut yourself from dirt, and you have become holy for me, and no sin sits on you’ (Jeremiah 2.3).

Asɛsɛ nɛ Wuribware a lee sa m̀ eyɛɛ-ɔ ‘people that God has chosen for himself.’

Tɛɲ bọ sa Wuribware ‘cut for God’ i.e. ‘set aside for God.’

Places and days

Mfɛɲ nɛ a mon de iyisi-o ‘where there is no dirt.’

Kake nɛ ka gye katimaa-o ‘A day that is good.’(Sabbath).

Sun̄kpa kan̄ sɛ kekyaɲ kpeyaa-ɔ na dɔdɔ-rɔ kekyaɲ kpeyaa kpeyaa-ɔ-rɔ. Worship-place entrance room holy and inner-room holy holy (Exodus 26.33).

God

Bɔyɛ-ko-mon-te-m̀-ɛ-Bware ‘Sin-any-not-sits-him-on-God.’

Actions related to worship and the divine

‘Consecrate’(to make holy) **waa m̀ ɔkpeyaa** ‘make him holy.’

‘Dedicate’ (to give to God) **tɛɲ bọ sa Wuribware** ‘cut to give to God.’

Taa bọ sa Wuribware ‘take to give to God.’

‘Consecrate’ (Appoint to an office) **lee m̀ kawu** ‘take him outside’ (Exodus 28.41).

‘Anoint’ ‘Ordain’ **Twiiri mfo bɔ wɛɛ mɔ̃ kuɲu-ro bɔ kaapo fɛ fɔ a yure mɔ̃ bɔ sa Wuribware** ‘Pour oil on his head to show that you have blessed him for God’ (Exodus 29.7).

‘Ordain’ lee bamo kawu ba alonṅṅopo kusun bo sa bamo ‘Take out give them priests’ work’ Numbers 3.3.

‘Blaspheme’ **kyii Wuribware kenarye gyegaa bo tɔwe abusɛnsɛɲ** ‘mention God’s name uselessly to say detestable.things.’

‘Cast lots’ **twēe abu** ‘throw stones’ (OT Hebrew).

‘Cast lots’ **waa mpini mpini** (Chumburung game) Joel 3.3, John 19.24.

‘Cast lots’ sowe kegyan (Chumburung divination) Jonah 1.7.

‘Cast lots’ **lee nyii** ‘take out sticks’ (Christian) Acts 1.26.

‘Swear’ (that something is true) **ka keyaa feyε** ‘pay leg that...’

‘Swear’ (to do something) = an oath **waa etan feye** ‘do an oath that...’

‘Vision’ **atɔ ne Wuribware a lee bɔ kaapo m̀ò-ɔ** ‘thing(s) which God has revealed to him.’ **kɔtɔkɔ ne ɔkɔ a nu dee-ro-o** ‘something that someone has seen in a dream.’

'Oracle' **Asen** **təwɛsɛ** 'spoken thing' **asenkpəɛgyi** 'words.'

‘Proverbs’ **kenase** ‘literal proverb’ **kekpare** ‘metaphorical proverb’

‘Parable’ **kitee** (story).

Examples of Selected Key Terms in Chumburung - Non-sacred

Money

In the printed NT printed money was translated into **ᵑᵑ** ‘pound’ and **ᵑᵑᵑᵑ** ‘sack, 200 cedis.’ But inflation overtook all that in 20 years. During the revision of the NT after the OT was finished, it was decided that in order to be both natural and clear, money terms should be translated by the Ghana cedi equivalent, based on an arbitrary decision that GHC10 was an average day’s wage for a worker. It was also understood that the inevitable effects of inflation would render this obsolete in some years to come, maybe by the time a revision and reprint was needed.

As for the OT, we chose to base the currency on silver coins and gold coins, whose values were not discussed. Large quantities were in multiples of **ebote** ‘sacks.’

‘Usury, Interest’ Mone de nkyu bweeto mone e waa atanne ne ba para mone ase-ɔ-rɔ ‘You are adding much water to the money that they borrow from you.’

Weights and measures

Since the Chumburung have yet to even see a weighing machine or use pounds or kilos,

Dry measures were translated in pans, bowls and sacks.

Liquid measures were translated as barrels, gallon cans, and bottles (coca cola).

Lengths and heights and distances were translated as feet (literally), sometimes as the distance between two outstretched arms, and miles for long distances.

Trees

Most of the trees in the Bible are not known to the Chumburungs. So the nearest equivalents were used, taking into account size, density and strength, and uses, e.g.

Kekpare ‘a big tall tree taller than **yiibrii** with hard wood, sacred to one of the clans in Ekumdi, African afzelia or counter wood tree. Has black seeds with a yellow cap. Good for boards.’ This was used for ‘cedar.’

Kekeŋlæ ‘a kind of tree whose wood is used for rafters’ was used for ‘oak.’

Animals, reptiles and birds

The Chumburung divide animals into 3 classes, **efa-ro mbo** ‘bush animals,’ **ɔpe mbo** ‘home animals,’ and **nkyu-ro mbo** ‘water animals.’ To this we had to add the description of reptiles as **bamɔ ne ba nyaa mme si-o** those that crawl on their bellies,’

Animals that are known in Chumburung land, i.e. most of those in the Bible, can be translated reasonably accurately. Some that are not known, e.g. ‘bear,’ were translated by whatever animal had the closest equivalent in size or fierceness, e.g. bear in Daniel 7. 5 became **kwaare** ‘hyena,’ This also stood in for ‘wolf.’ ‘Coney’ in Leviticus 11.5 became both **kyɔɔbo** ‘grass-cutter,’ and **kidenpo** ‘mongoose.’

As for birds, questions were asked of the translators as to whether certain birds were eaters of carrion. If so they were used as the equivalent of birds which are tabooed eating in the OT. Although this distinction has been the subject of scholarly dispute, it made sense in the translation.

‘Mule’ was too difficult to translate. **Kuruma** ‘donkey’ was used instead.

‘Wild animal’ was ‘bush animal’ or ‘bad animal’ according to context, *not* one that was mad in the head.

Mythical animals

‘Leviathan’ and ‘Behemoth’ were translated according to whether the context was a metaphor or real. So in Job 40.15 Behemoth is a ‘hippopotamus,’ and Leviathan in Job 41.1 is a ‘crocodile,’ but in Job 26.12 ‘Rahab’ is translated as, **kɔwɔ bɔye** ‘**Rahab**’ bad snake Rahab’ and in Isaiah 30.7 as **Amɔse-ɔ mɔ e tee Igyipiti sweere nee feye Kabɔ Rahab Seye-ke-maa-taare-waa wuye** ‘Therefore I will call Egypt land Animal Rahab person-who-cannot-do-anything.’

Plants and Crops

Barley and wheat are unknown to the Chumburung, though wheat flour is known, as it is the ingredient for making bread. What local equivalent should we choose for these crops? It was decided that since maize ripens first, it should stand for barley, and guineacorn would stand for wheat.

‘Barley’ abwaye.

‘Wheat’ yaabraa.

‘Grapes’ and ‘vines’ are unknown, so the word **bobe** ‘vine’ was borrowed from the Asante Bible.

Hyssop was translated as **kɔkyoyaa kapesii** ‘small broom made of a certain herb’ used for purificatory purposes.

‘Myrrh, cinnamon, cane and cassia’ were translated in Exodus 30.22-23 as

kakyanne ‘a sweet smelling herb used for purifying;’ **efonɔ** ‘pods like vanilla, small black seeds, ground as a spice for soups and stews. Can be burned to drive away the spirits if a child has convulsions.’ **Kafɔrɔɔ** ‘a kind of tree; leaves smell like liniment; used for headache medicine or guinea worm.’

papɛra ‘cloves, ground to put in soup or in a bath.’

Geography

The word for ‘sea’

Ɔpoo known as a word borrowed from Asante, but not actually experienced except those who have travelled to Accra. This was applied to the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea, but **kepare dabe-ɔ** ‘the big lake’ was used for Lake in Kinnereth **Kineret kepare dabe-ɔ** (OT) and Tiberias **Tibeeriyas kepare dabe-ɔ** (NT).

Directions were Chumburung expressions, e.g.

West **kyɔwɛ twɛɛkpa a kebegya-ɔ** ‘sun setting-place side.’

East **kyɔwɛ lɛɛkpa a kebegya-ɔ** ‘sun rising-place side.’

North **sosɔ-rɔ** ‘in up’:

South **kaase-rɔ** ‘in under.’

Desert

In Chumburung ‘desert’ is **kimukee**, though few claim to know a piece of ground that is a desert. ‘Stony ground’ is **kagyase**. ‘fields,’ i.e. uncultivated land, is **ɛfa-rɔ** ‘in grass, i.e. bush.’ ‘farms’ i.e. cultivated land is **ndɔɔ-rɔ** ‘in farms’ **kadɔɔ** ‘a farm plot.’

Plateau

Emɔn ne ɛ da kipeɲpireɲ si-o ‘towns which lie on a height as in Deuteronomy 3.10.

Land of milk and honey

sweere ne ɛfa timaa bweɛtɔ bo-rɔ sa bamɔ mbo-ɔ, na gyabweɛkyu

bweɛtɔ bo mɔ se sa bamɔ a bo gyi-o ‘a land where there is much good

grass for their animals, and honey is in it for them to eat.’

Fortifications

‘Stronghold’ (literal) **kweɛrɔkpa-ɔ abɛɛ-rɔ** ‘hiding-place in the mountains.’

‘Stronghold’ (metaphorical) **mɔ ɛlɛɲ** ‘my strength’; **mɔ ŋkpa kuɲpɔ** ‘protector of my life.’

Times and seasons

Wherever possible the Hebrews months were translated by the nearest equivalent in the Chumburung 12-month calendar, which roughly corresponds to ours, but the seasons were only approximations, because of the difference of climate between Israel and West Africa.

Abib (NIV, GNB) Exo 13.4. **Ɔgyoɲgywane** ‘March.’

‘Summer and winter’ **yuri na kipeŋpeŋ, na kekyaaɛ na kegyɛɛ** ‘cold and heat, rainy season and dry season.’

‘Winter house and summer house’ **mò kpaŋkpaŋ-na lɔŋ na mò kipuripuri-ro lɔŋ** ‘his harmattan house and humid season house’ Amos 3.15.

Architecture

This was challenging, since buildings such as a temple are unknown. A two-storey house is known in Ghanaian English as ‘storey building.’ The Chumburung equivalent is borrowed from Asante **abaŋsɔrɔɔ**.

A ‘tower’ could only be translated as a **kekyaaŋ sosweɛ leŋleŋsɛ** ‘tall strong room.’

A ‘pillar’ became a heap in Exo 31.51, ‘a tall cloud’ in Exo 31.21, and ‘a big upright log’ in 1 Ki 7.

Abrɔŋdayɛ ‘verandah’ (<Asante < Portugese) referred to a ‘porch’ in Judges 3.23, a ‘gallery’ in Ezekiel 41.15 and a ‘colonnade’ in John 5.2.

A word which was not in the Hebrew, nor in the NIV, but in the GNB ‘passageway’ in Ezekiel 40.21, was added as **kyoŋkpa** to make sense of the description of each gateway to the Temple as seen by the prophet in a vision.

‘Corner’ A distinction had to be made between an inside corner and an outside corner.

Diseases

It was sometimes difficult to match diseases, with those in the Bible. ‘Leprosy’ was translated literally as **kebwato**, and not as ‘dreaded skin disease’ (GNB).

Musical instruments

There is no separate word for music or for poetry in Chumburung. The word **kiliŋ** stands for ‘song, poetry, music.’ Even English translations differ on what translation to use for musical instruments.

Avoiding any mention of drums, which are unknown in the Bible, we decided on the following:

‘Harp’ **kwangyi** ‘a stringed instrument.’

‘Lyre’ **kodoŋlɛɛ** ‘a stringed instrument.’

‘Flute’ **mbɛɛ** ‘horn.’

‘Tambourine’ **kyaare** ‘gourd bottle with beads attached.’ ‘cymbals’ **idowuro na mboŋereŋ na mpurukyoo** ‘three kinds of bell types percussion instruments.’

Miscellaneous persons

‘Pharaoh’ **Igypiti owure** ‘King of Egypt.’

‘Soldier’ **ɔnaapo** (OT) ‘warrior’ **soogyaa** (NT).

‘Prince’ is not the son of a chief but a chief himself.

‘Kinsman-redeemer’ **kokoŋwɛɛ-ro ɔmoŋwɛpo** ‘family saviour’ (Ruth) (Hebrew: *goel*).

‘Avenger of blood’ **Mò nɛ oo wu-o kɔwɛbɛɛ** ‘the relative of the one who died.’ (Numbers 35) (*Hebrew: goel*).

Miscellaneous things and actions

‘Fiery furnace’: There was much discussion on this expression in Daniel 3.6. It was finally agreed that **fononoo** ‘furnace, stove’ < Asante <Portuguese could only mean something like an oven for baking bread, something which only a small animal could crawl inside! The general word for a big bonfire was used with an ideophone to intensify it, as **kɛdɛɛkpɛɛtekii nɛ kɛ ɛ kywɛɛ wuruŋ wuruŋ wuruŋ-o** ‘the big fire which burns strongly-IDEOPHONE.’ The same noun was used for a furnace which melted iron.

‘Veil’ = **kyim** headtie **mayafi** = full veil (Song of Songs 4.3 as worn by Moslem women).

‘Grave’ ‘pit’ (according to context) **kegyeraŋta** ‘grave’ (literal) **lowi** ‘death’ **akyeŋaŋpo aye** ‘the place of dead people.’

‘Sackcloth’ is what the Israelites put on to express mourning. We decided that this should not be translated as ‘funeral clothes,’ because the typical Ghanaian red or black dress for funerals was too fine. We used **mon' mare aprakɛɛ bɔ tɛŋ mone ɛlaare-ro** ‘tie rags around your waists.’

‘Plough’ This is unknown to the Chumburung, who use hoes of different kinds. **Bo de ɛnaate ɛnyɔ ɛnyɔ nɛ baa ba iyii serise bɔ da bamɔ abɔ-ro, nɛ ba gyiiri atɔ dabe feye ntee nɛ bɔ de ba dɔɔ-ɔ** ‘they use pairs of cattle and they use carved sticks to lay on their necks and they drag big things like hoes which they use to farm ‘dig’ (1 Kings 19.19).

Na bɔ taa bamɔ akpa mɔ da bɔ waa nkyɔɔ ‘They will take their spears and beat them make into hoes’ Isaiah 2.4 ‘Besiege’ **Ba di a bɔ muruwaa maŋ-ɔ, ba swii ɛsɛ apireŋ apireŋ a bɔ bɔ suŋ maŋ a adenbee-o na bɔ deɛ yere sɛ lwee maŋ-ɔ-ro** ‘They will lie around the town, they will gather up heaps of earth against the town walls to climb stand on enter the town.’ ‘Ship’ **kɔrɛɛ dabe** ‘big canoe.’ ‘Yoke’ **Ba kiyii bɔ waa ɛkpee, na fo taa bɔ da fo kebɔ-ro** (literal) ‘Use wood to make stocks and lay it on your neck’ (Jeremiah 27.2). ‘Yoke’ (metaphorical) **Baa baa bamɔ eyee Babilɔŋ owure-o kaase** ‘They put themselves under the King of Babylon.’

Metaphorical concepts

‘Cup of God’s wrath’ **kɔtowaa na nta preepreesɛ** ‘gourd drinking bowl with bitter alcoholic drink.’

‘Daughter of Zion’ (according to context) > Jerusalem town, Jerusalem town’s people, Zion town, Young woman (Isaiah 52.1), Woman of. Zion (Lamentations 4.2).

‘Jacob,’ ‘Ephraim’ and ‘Israel’ which may be synecdoche for a whole group or nation of people, depending on whether they are addressed as a daughter, wife, or son. ‘Day of the Lord’ **kake nɛ Wuribware i gyi mɔ kuwure-o** ‘the day when God will reign.’ **kake nɛ Ebware ɛ ba-ɔ** ‘the day that God will come.’ **kake a tɔ-ro feye mo, Ebware i bu asɛsɛ pɛɛɛ kepɔ** ‘the day has come near that I God will judge all peoples guilty.’

‘White as snow’ **fwiiri feye kyefuri-o** (OT) ‘whiten like white cloth’; **fwiiri pare pare** ‘whiten very white.’ (NT). ‘Name’ (literal) **kenyare**. ‘My name shall be there’ **Mfee nɛ mɔ kenyare ɛ dɔŋŋɔ sɛ-ɔ** ‘Here my name will lie on.’ 1 Kings 8.29. ‘Reputation’ **kenyare dabe** ‘great name.’ ‘Naked’ **ketɛbɔŋburoŋ** (literal) Genesis 3.7 **Kɛkpɔŋkpaŋ** (metaphorical) Job 1.1.

Ideophones and word plays

Much use was made of ideophones, even though one early reviewer thought they were not suitable for a translation of the Bible! e.g. **Nɛ ɛlɛlɛɛ a gyi mɛlɛɛ mɛlɛɛ mɛlɛɛ** ‘And lightning flashed IDEO.’ **nɛ soso a lanŋɛ-ro wɔyɛ wɔyɛ wɔyɛ** ‘and the sky brightened IDEO.’ **Bware a su-ro gburi gburi gburi** ‘and rain

rumbled IDEO' Psalm 18.12. Word plays are difficult or even impossible to translate. However, we had one instance where it worked, in Daniel 5.25:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PĒRĒS, kaase e_gye

KARE, KARE, KARI, KE-RO 'Count, Count, Weigh, Divide.'

Use of Footnotes and the Glossary

We wrote a Glossary to explain persons, places and things. We added Footnotes in the NT for quotations from the OT. We added the notation LXX to show that the NT version of the quotation came from the Septuagint.

Footnotes in the OT were written to explain something difficult to understand from the text.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

This is not a full account of all the Key Terms that were used in the Chumburung OT, but only a taste of what was done. Wherever possible the nearest equivalent was used, unless it would cause great misunderstanding. Calques and Semantic Calques were created in some cases, in the hope that local terms would gain an extended meaning in the context of the Bible and church. Distinctions had to be made, according to the context, as to whether an expression was literal or metaphorical. Much attention was paid as whether an expression was both natural and clear. Use was made of 'body metaphors' to express actions, characteristics and emotions. See G. Hansford (2005) for a full description of Chumburung Body Metaphors. Much use was made of ideophones to express noise, visual effects, intensification, and emotions.

I would advise any team engaged in the translation of the Bible, whether the NT or OT, to keep track of how Key Terms are used, so as to be consistent where consistency is needed, and to be different where difference is needed. This can be by a card file system, but the better way is to make full use of the Paratext program, which in a few seconds is capable of listing words or expressions and their references.

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