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Neological Aspirations in a Few Recent Finno-Ugric Bible Translations*

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1. Introduction. The majority of the Finno-Ugric (Uralic) languages don't have archaic linguistic records that could help the linguists to outline the distant past of these languages by internal reconstruction. The literacy of all our related languages, with the exceptions of Finnish, Komi and Hungarian, is only a few centuries old, and on the basis of it, we can get to know only their recent past.

In this respect, those word lists and short texts are precious, which, in the overwhelming majority from the second half of the 18th century, prove that in some Orthodox monastic centres (in the east from Moscow, in the Volga region: Nizhny Novgorod, then Kazan; in Siberia: Tyumen; in the west from Moscow: Tver, later in the north, in Karelia: Petrozavodsk) attempts at the translation of the New Testament into different minority languages of Russia were made in the form of a certain team-work. The youth of the Finno-Ugric peoples studying there at the time, the majority of whom were trained to do missionary work, must have taken an active part in this. The fact that the translations of the texts were done comparatively fast in the beginning of the 19th century supports the existence of this preparatory work. The translations were also published in print as early as the 1820s, mainly parts of, or the whole New Testament (the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistles written to various Christian communities). Catechisms were made to clarify the practical questions of religious life. We have only secondary evidences for the existence of parts of earlier translations.

The Cyrillic script is difficult to use for the transcription of smaller Finno-Ugric languages, but lettered monks could lean on it only, since there weren't any other means. (It was not different with respect to Latin in the cases of the

* This is the written version of the lecture held during the CIFU-X in Joshkar-Ola.

Hungarian, Finnish and Estonian literary languages written today in Roman letters.) Some monks travelled as far as the Western European universities (e.g. Damaskin, alias Semenov, spent six years in Göttingen, where he got in touch with Schlözer, as well). The work of translation was led by such erudite bishops. The source was the canonical Slavic translation, later a modernised version of it, of course, but a few accomplished clerics must have used the Greek original, and they must have acquired some Latin and German publications during their travels in the West. There were attempts to write also in Roman letters only in the cases of certain Karelian dialects.

With the inhabitants being illiterate, these publications could not reach the wider population, and the afterlife of the present translations is also questionable. The translations of the 19th century overtly served missionary purposes. The present publications also want to provide help for the resurgent religious life, but we cannot expect that, as an effect of theirs, the number of services (*sluzhba*) in the mother tongue would soar, or that the education of churchmen in the mother tongue would start to blossom. The question arises: what do we need these translations for? In my opinion it would be useful, if these publications were used as (obligatory) readings at school, at least.

2. The latest publications. In the spring of 2004 we thoroughly dealt with the Bible translations published in Finno-Ugric languages in the framework of the linguistic PhD training of the University of Debrecen. Most of the Bible translations in the 1990s were published by the Institute for Bible Translation (Helsinki and Stockholm). We owe our thanks to the Institute for Bible Translation [Suomen Piipäseura] of Helsinki, which gave us a free run of its latest sources (cf. Csepregi 2005: 23–27), and we acquired the earlier translations also, from the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland [Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskus]. The lecturers and students of the PhD programme each made a preliminary study about the questions related to the translations. Each of them studied the translations according to their own fields of interest from different points of view: an etymological study about word strata classified according to various categories, an analysis of a phraseological group, some contrastive studies on the basis of the different languages, and a historical linguistic overview on the basis of the comparison of the earlier and later translations were written. Translations of a broader biblical word set were studied in certain languages. Concerning the languages studied, the spectrum is broad: we examined the Northern and Eastern Saami, the Northern Karelian and the Southwestern Olonec among the Karelian dialects, the Erzya- and Moksha-Mordvin languages, the Northern Mansi and the North-

ern Khanty, but since the translations were made with the help of intermediary languages, we often mentioned the Russian and Finnish equivalents, and, of course, we included the Hungarian translation in each case. Unfortunately, the Mari and Permic corpuses are missing from the list. We are hoping for an external help in the cases of these languages. The preliminary results of the research were published in the eleventh volume of *Folia Uralica Debrece-niensi* in Hungarian accompanied by English or German summaries.

3. A short comparative analysis of 'sin'. Raija Bartens's excellent study sets an example, in which the author analyses the Finno-Ugric expressions of the word *sin* in detail. We can see, as a result of the examination, that when translating the Christian ethicoreligious concepts completely alien to the Finno-Ugric peoples originally, the translators often used those original words which were adaptable from the customs and beliefs of the people concerned. The ancient and the foreign terminologies co-exist (cf. Bartens 1999: 15–28). A remark here: the Mordvin corpus necessitates the word family MdE *čumo*, MdM *šumə* 'sin, vice' of unknown origin.

Bartens calls our attention to the fact that it would be worth to examine the terminology related to the word *pardon* apart from that of the word *sin*. "Anteeksiantamisen käsitteelle ei löytynyt omasta maailmankuvasta analogiaakaan, mutta anteeksiannon ilmaiseksen selvittely onkin jo toinen juttu." [We have no analogy for the concept of forgiveness from their ideology, but the examination of the expression of pardon is another matter.] (cf. Bartens 1999: 25). In my presentation I will give a few examples for the methods of solving the problems of the concepts mentioned in some Finno-Ugric languages. *Sin* occurs in the following relations in the Christian, or at least the Catholic, morality: *commit a sin – confess – repent – forgive*. I will give some examples from various Finno-Ugric languages in order to demonstrate the solutions to express the abstract notions of *repentance, pardon, conversion*. The cognitive points of view, which served to reproduce the Biblical ideas in the attempts of native translators, can be validated in the phraseological examinations. On the basis of the more detailed comparison it is easier to find the occurrent borrowings, calques, and ways of word formation (cf. Keresztes 2002, 2004).

[I give the data in the headword samples on the basis of the most up-to-date sources. The structure of the headwords is the following: 'meaning' – examples (Finno-Ugric: Northern Karelian, Olonec, Erzya-Mordvin, Moksha-Mordvin, Mansi), Russian, Finnish, Hungarian, English translation [actually: literal interpretation] (source).]

3.1. 'forgive'

- *Kar prosti meilä miän riähät* | Rus прости нам наши грехи | Fin *anna meille syntimme anteeksi* | Hun *bocsásd meg a bűneinket* | Eng forgive us our sins [actually: forgive us our sins] (Luke 11,4)
- *Kar puitto ken voit päästyä riähät* | Rus кто может прощать грехи | Fin *kuka muu kuin Jumala voi antaa syntejään anteeksi* | Hun *ki más bocsáthatja meg a bűnöket* | Eng who can forgive sins [actually: who can let sins off?] (Luke 5,21; 7,49)
- *Мап кант ат ёрувлянын-ке, тõнт Тõрум Асин нән кареканьн ос ат ёрувлянэ* | MdE *а нолдындерясынк, менельсэ Тетянкак а нолдасынзе тынсэнк чумонк* | MdM *кда аф нолдасасть пиятнень пежетьснон, эста Менелень Алянтевок аф нолдасыне тинь пежеттенень* | Rus если же не прощаете, то и Отец ваш Небесный не простит вам согрешений наших | Fin *jos te ette anna anteeksi, ei teidän taivaallinen Isännekään anna anteeksi teidän rikkomuksianne* | Hun *ha ti nem bocsáttok meg, mennyei atyátok sem bocsátja meg bűneiteket* | Eng if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in the heavens forgive your offenses [actually: forget/let off] (Mark 11,26)
- *Мап нау кареканын хот-ёрувлахтэгыт* | MdE *нолдавить тонь пежететь* | MdM *тонь пежеттне нолдавихть* | Rus прощаются тебе грехи твои | Fin *sinun syntisi annetaan anteeksi* | Hun *bocsánatot nyerneк bűneid* | Eng your sins are forgiven [actually: are forgotten/let off] (Mark 2,5)
- *Мап элумхõлас кареке хотютн хот-ёрувланкве вёрмаве* | MdE *киненьгак лиянень пежеть нолдавить* | MdM *кинди нолдавихть пежеттне* | Rus кто может прощать грехи | Fin *kuka muu voi antaa syntejä anteeksi* | Hun *ki bocsáthatja meg a bűnöket* | Eng who can forgive sins? [actually: forget/let off] (Mark 2,7)

3.2. 'repent' (= 'be sorry, regret')

- *Kar hyö jo ammuin ois jätetty riähät ta kiännytty Jumalan puoleh* | Rus то давно бы они покаялись | Fin *olisivat jo aikoja sitten ... katuneet* | Hun *tartottak volna bűnbánatot* | Eng they would have repented [actually: they would have abandoned sins and would have turned to God a long time ago] (Luke 10,13)
- *Kar hyö jätettäis riähät* | Rus покаются | Fin *he kääntyisivät* | Hun *bűnbánatot tartanak* | Eng they will repent [actually: they abandon sins] (Luke 16,30)

- Olo *muutakkua mielel* | Rus *покайтесь* | Fin *katukaa siis syntejänne* | Hun *tartsatok búnbánatot* | Eng *repent [actually: change your thoughts, change your mind]* (Acts 3,19)
- Man *карыканыл вуськасан ... м̄хум Иоан Иордан -т витыл п̄рнал пинсанэ* | MdE *сон пежеттест витькстицятнень нававтсь Иордан лейсэ* | MdM *азондозь эсь пежетьснон, и сон ксиндазень Иордан ляйса* | Rus *и крестились от него все в реке Иордане, исповедуя грехи свои* | Fin *he tunnustivat syntinsä, ja Johannes kastoi heidät Jordánissa* | Hun *és búneiket megvallva megkeresztelkedtek nála a Jordán folyóban* | Eng *and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins [actually: throwing away/telling about their sins]* (Mark 1,5).

3.3. 'repent' (= 'return')

- Kar *jos että kiäntyne riähistänä Jumalah päin* | Rus *если не покаетесь* | Fin *ellette käännny* | Hun *ha nem tartotok búnbánatot* | Eng *unless you repent [actually: if you do not turn away from your sins and turn to God instead]* (Luke 13,3)
- Olo *kiännükkiä (riähkispäi) Jumalan puoleh* | Rus *покайтесь* | Fin *kääntykää* | Hun *térjetek meg* | Eng *repent [actually: turn away from your sins, and turn to God]* (Acts 3,19)
- Man *н̄ан кареканын хультунтэн* | MdE *велявтодо пежетнеде* | MdM *шарфтода Шкайти* | Rus *покайтесь* | Fin *kääntykää* | Hun *térjetek meg* | Eng *repent! [actually: abandon your sins/turn away from the sins/turn to God]* (Mark 1,15).

3.4. Conclusions. In the Bible the sinner is such a debtor, whose debt is written off by God: God does not see the sin any more, as if having left it behind, taken it away, been conciliated, and destroyed it. Christ used the same set of words. However, different words appear in the Apostolic writings (the Acts of the Apostles, the epistles written to various Christian communities): clear up, wash, etc. We come across the same images in the latest translations. (Cf. *Biblikus teológiai szótár*. Budapest 1972: 894–895.)

Thus pardon can be expressed by let off the sin (Kar, MdE, MdM), dismissing (Hun), forgetting (Man), giving as a present, or writing off, annulling (Fin) the sin, or by using the passive-reflexive forms of the above mentioned verbs. Telling, confessing, regretting the sin: the repentance can be telling about the sin (confession) (MdM), abandoning it (Kar), casting it off (Man, MdE), the reassessment and change of the earlier opinion (Olo), or

etymologically considering it as *ills* (Hun). – Conversion can be expressed by turning away from the sin (Kar, Olo, MdE, MdM, Fin), by abandoning it (Man), or by returning to the right way, or to God (Hun). Interestingly, the expressions converging in the Russian (покаяться) and English translations (to repent) were perceived by the translators of various Finno-Ugric languages in different ways, so in these languages we can find different translations. Maybe, partly due to this, the borrowings of verbs of Russian origin are present in lower proportions than the paraphrases in their own words; this is also partly due to the fact that the translators consciously strived towards neologisms instead of servile borrowing. This tendency can be observed when comparing the modern translations with the earlier ones.

The solutions can be explained by the different cultural and linguistic influences these languages were and are exposed to. We can see, for example, that the Karelian is closer to the Finnish, and the Olonec reveals a more intensive Russian influence (cf. Peneva 2004: 109). We can discern this difference even among the Saami dialects: the eastern dialects (those of Russia) show similarities with the Russian, the other dialects with the Finnish (cf. Armutlieva 2004: 23–24). Many expressions got into the Mansi from or via the Komi, even when the Mansi language had its own word for the concept (vö. Keresztes 2004: 78). The same can be experienced in the case of the Khanty (cf. Widmer 2004: 130). The other smaller Finno-Ugric languages examined show a preference for neologisms. Apart from this, we can find specific expressions of the process in the phraseology: sin as a negative thing is left out, or as dirt, it is wiped or washed away, or cast off, that is, they get rid of it, return from the sin, that is, they return to the right way. The Finnish shows more western, while the Hungarian shows mixed influences.

4. A short comparative analysis of 'baptism'. I will give some examples from various Finno-Ugric languages in order to demonstrate the solutions to express the concrete notions of *baptism*. Usually only one of the two elements of the procedure of *baptism* is highlighted: on one hand, the immersion into water, or the sprinkling with water, on the other hand, the symbolic or real placement of the cross onto the person to be baptized.

4.1. 'baptize'

– Kar *mie kassan teitä vejellä ... hiän kastau teitä pühällä Henkellä ta tulella* | Rus я крещу вас водою ... он будет крестить вас Духом Святым и огнем | Fin *minä kastan teidät vedellä ... hän kastaa teidät Pyhällä Hengellä ja tulella* | Hun *én csak vízzel keresztelek benneteket...*

- [*õ*] *majd Szentlélekben és tűzben fog benneteket megkeresztelni* | Eng I baptize you in water ... he Himself will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire [actually: I immerse you ... he will immerse you] (Luke 3,16)
- Olo *anna ristie iččiedäs* | Rus крестись | Fin *anna kastaa itsesi* | Hun *vedd fel a keresztséget* | Eng be baptized [actually: let baptize yourself] (Acts 22,16)
- Olo *annakkua ristie iččie* | Rus крестится | Fin *ottakaa itse kaste* | Hun *keresztelkedjék meg* | Eng be baptized [actually: let baptize yourselves] (Acts 2,38)
- Olo *hyö ristittihes Ižändän Iisusan nimeh* | Rus они крестились во имя Господа Иисуса | Fin *he ottivat kasteen Herran Jeesusen nimeen* | Hun *megkeresztelkedtek Jézus nevére* | Eng they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus [actually: they were baptized] (Acts 19,5)
- Ман ам нāнан витыл п̄рнал пинасум, Тав нāнан Ялпын Лылым пинияны [-ны-] | MdE мон тынк нававтомынь ведьсэ, сон карми тынк нававтомо Иневанькс Оймьялтсо | MdM мон ксиндадязь ведьса, а сон кармай кстиндамонт Иняру Ваймопожфса (-кожфса?) | Rus я крестил вас водою, а Он будет крестить вас Духом Святым | Fin *minä olen kastanut teidät vedellä, mutta hän kastaa teidät Pyhällä Hengellä* | Hun *Én vízzel keresztellek titeket, ő azonban Szentlélekkel fog megkeresztelni* | Eng I have baptized you in water, but He Himself will baptize you in the Holy Spirit [actually: do with water, with a cross/immerse] (Mark 1,8).

4.2. 'baptism' (= 'immersion', a Christening ceremony)

- Kar *ta ottua kassanta* | or. проповедуя крещение покаяния | Fin *ja ottamaan kasteen* | Hun *hirdette a bűnbánat keresztségét* | Eng proclaiming a baptism of repentance [actually: take baptizme] (Luke 3,3)
- Olo *ristindä* | Rus крещение | Fin [*kastoi parannukseen*] | Hun *keresztség* | Eng baptism (Acts 19,4). This Olonets word is not recorded in the dictionary of the Karelian dialects [Karjalan kielen sanakirja], instead *ristieset [-st'-]* can be found which is perhaps a loanword from Fin *ristiäiset* 'christening'. In Finnish there is no such a word **ristintä* which could be a full counterpart of the Karelian derivation (cf. Peneva 2004: 109). In Finnish *kaste* 'baptism' is used instead.
- Ман ос ам п̄рна пиннэм сирыл п̄рна пинункве в̄рм̄гын | MdE ды нававтомомс се пиштемань нававтомасонть, конаньсэ мон нававтоман | MdM дяряй кстиндафтада ризфонь ся кстиндамаса, кодамса мон кстиндафтфт | Rus и креститься крещением, которым Я

крещусь | Fin *voitteko te ottaa sen kasteen, jolla minut kastetaan* | Hun *hogy megkeresztelkedjetek azzal a keresztséggel, amellyel én megkeresztelkedem* | Eng or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? [actually: doing with a cross/immersion] (Mark 10,38).

4.3. Conclusions. Usually only one of the two elements of the procedure of baptism is highlighted: on one hand, the immersion into water, or the sprinkling with water, on the other hand, the symbolic or real placement of the cross onto the person to be baptized. The first goes back to the Greek terminology, which refers to the procedure of immersion (Eng, Fin, Kar, MdE). In the Finnish, the verb 'dip, immerse' and their derivatives are used; there is a derivative from the word cross, which is of Russian origin eventually: but 'baptism' means a ceremony, a Christening ceremony (Peneva 2004: 107, 109). The North Karelian Gospel translation does not include any borrowings of Russian origin. The second is the Slavic terminology: baptism and baptize are the derivatives of the word cross, which fact refers to the symbolic or real placement of the cross (Rus, Hun, Olo, MdM, Man). 'Baptize' in the Moksha-Mordvin language must be an earlier Russian borrowing considering its phonetic form. The procedure had to be explained further in Mansi, because of this, the paraphrase includes both elements: the expression 'place, do with water, with a cross' refers to being immersed into water or being sprinkled with water, and to the cross being put onto the person to be baptized also/afterwards. There is a dichotomy in Saami, reflecting the two main cultural influences: baptism (ceremony) is a borrowing from Russian in the Eastern Saami dialects, and it comes from Finnish in the others (cf. Armutlieva 2004: 23).

5. The significance of the Bible translations. Each new version of the Bible translations reflects the tradition and the neological aspirations of the given language. The Bible translations had played a significant role in the birth of the Western European national languages, and they had made a certain neological activity necessary everywhere. The Bible translations have played an important role in the preservation of the national identity of the smaller peoples. It is especially true in the cases of the Finno-Ugric languages of Russia, which have been living in the grip of the dominance of the Russian language, and the speakers of these languages are in danger of being assimilated into the majority of the society. The newest Bible translations in smaller languages in the 1990s can be considered as landmarks in the preservation of the linguistic and national identities. The individual translators and

groups deserve the highest appraisal, since they had to cope with the specific and abstract concepts of a foreign culture complex.

[To make the enormous difficulties of this work comprehensible for everybody, I showed a part of the Gospel according to Mark (7, 21-22), which lists the sins according to the Judeo-Christian religious ethics (cf. Keresztes 2004: 81–83). It would be impossible to reconstruct the original Greek text on the basis of these translations!]

6. Things to do. It would be interesting to study the examined parts in the earlier translations too, and map the correspondences and innovations of the terminology. It is highly likely that the modern translators took into consideration the earlier translations at their disposal to a great extent, and they made few changes compared to these in the newer translations published by the Institut for Bible Translation.

We can draw important conclusions from a historical linguistic point of view with the comparative analysis of the parts of the Bible from the 19th century, and from the end of 20th century: to a lesser extent in the field of historical phonetics, but there is a possibility of argumentations in the field of morphological history, however, the development of the phraseology and the formation of neologisms can be followed up the most.

It would be worth to collect and organise the most important biblical words in a dictionary, as Anna Widmer did, for example (2004: 127–139). It would be sensible to create an international team of scientists. It would be important to carry out a thorough comparative examination, and lexiconize the neologisms, since the experience gained this way should serve the further refinement of the literary languages. It would be highly beneficial if the vocabulary of the newest translations became a common heritage of the younger generations of the speakers of smaller Finno-Ugric languages, because it would significantly foster the smaller children's linguistic development. Furthermore, the methods and the behaviour would contribute to the nationalization of the mother tongue (that is, to its differentiation from Russian) in the scientific and administrative fields, and later, in the legal field, too. Those young people, if still existing, who will start school, can get to know another culture complex apart from their own ancient culture. The linguistic mediation presents a great challenge for the translators. By all means, their efforts can mean significant steps in the creation and stabilization of a literary language, with which they will learn to appreciate the values of their own ancient culture more.

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