



The Storyboard

Summer
2003

published by the
Papua New Guinea branch
of Pioneer Bible Translators

Hey, Not so Fast

by William Butler

It had been a long week of village checking and I was tired. As we approached the final section of Colossians, 4:10-18, I was ready to burn right through these verses just as fast as possible and be finished with our work. I had already looked at the verses carefully. I had a few questions to ask, but there were no doctrinal issues at stake, and the verses repeated the same greetings several times; so it should have been an easy job to finish quickly.

Oh, Brother

I held on to this silly notion until we got to the middle of verse 10: "Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, also sends greeting"(NIV). For "cousin" Samuel (one of our co-translators) had used the word *donghang*, the singular form of the word we had used for "brothers" in other places in the book. However, the checking committee rejected the

singular form being used in that way. They insisted that a proper kinship term be used. That is where our problem began. There is no Banaro term that means the same as "cousin." In the Banaro system, all your uncles and aunts are called by the kinship term for "father" and "mother." Therefore, it is only logical that their children, your first cousins, are referred to by the same term as "brother" and "sister." And guess what you call their children? "Son" and "daughter!" So you see there isn't any room in the system for cousins, as the English word is used.

Somewhere in the discussion I remembered that we weren't translating from English but Greek, so I looked up the Greek word that is translated cousin in English, hoping to find some help. The Greek word is more specific than the English word, specifying a first cousin. Therefore, we needed to use the correct Banaro term for a first cousin: "brother." Not so hard, eh?

But in Banaro there is no general kinship term for brother. Age rank is important in the culture so one must specify older brother or younger brother. Considering that Barnabas seemed to take Mark under his wing and Mark's action in turning back on the journey he started out on with Paul and Barnabas, we decided that Mark was likely younger. He is, therefore, "Barnabas's younger brother." You have to realize that when a Banaro person reads this he will not automatically assume that Barnabas and Mark are siblings of the same parents but will consider the wide range of relationships covered by this term in their culture. We will also have a footnote trying to further define the kinship relationship that likely existed between the two men.

Coming or Going?

Having resolved that matter I was ready to roll now. And we did—all the way to the very next sentence! The translation stated: "You have already heard the talk that he (Mark) is coming to you." This followed both the English and Pidgin translations, but the checkers did not like it. From the perspective of Paul, as he was writing the letter, Mark would be moving away from him and toward the Colossians so he would be "going" to the Colossians. So to produce an accurate meaning in Banaro, we had to change the "coming" to "going."

I have often said that in Banaro it is hard to know whether you are coming or going. Now you know why!

Also in this issue:

New Kids in Town . . . 3

Coping Devices 4

Notes

Editor's

Well, here I sit all by myself in the computer room. It's been a long time since I was editor of The Storyboard. Ellen Rohrer, our REAL editor is on home leave. Sadly, so is Lori Witham, who would be handling this if she also were not on home leave. Ah well, their time away has been well earned.

*The lead article Hey, Not So Fast by William Butler is a little longer and more technical than our usual offerings, but **stick with it** - it's worth it. It's one of the best illustrations of the premise that no detail is too nitpickingly small to escape the attention of a linguist. Einstein is commonly said to have pronounced, "God is in the details." I have yet to understand exactly what that means, but it seems to apply to Bible translation.*

Next up is New Kids in Town by Kelly Robinson. Our traditional way of torturing newbies who have completed "Jungle Camp" is to make them write about their experiences for The Storyboard.

For dessert, we have another of Mike Sweeney's Coping Devices. What can we say about a guy with such a serious job who is always cracking jokes? Thank God for him immediately comes to my mind. And humor is only one of his many talents. He often walks around the office dispensing the most lovely and convincing trumpet music - using only his mouth!

Jan Messersmith ♦ Temporary (please!) editor

continued on page 2

Jesus, Paul's colleague

We finished that verse without any more problems, but verse 11 presented a problem for me. The translation introduced the next person as “a ground (earthly) man whose name is Jesus, whose other name is Justus.” “Ground man” is a term that we have used previously to refer to people of the earth, usually with the connotation of “sinful people.” I could not figure out why Samuel had characterized a companion of Paul in this way so I asked the checkers, “Why is the word ‘ground’ in there?” I got a look that said, “Are you really that stupid?” then the explanation, “The man’s name is Jesus. If we don’t tell people that he is a ‘ground man,’ people will be confused and think that Paul is talking about Jesus, God’s son.” Okay, I never thought about it that way, but it does make sense.

Forwards or backwards

Having introduced all of his Jewish co-workers, Paul closes the list with a summary statement in the middle of verse 11: “These are the only Jews among my fellow workers” (NIV). Samuel had translated that, “Among the Jewish people, these alone help me in the work. . . .” It seemed to be an equivalent expression until I asked the checkers, “Who is Paul talking about?” They said, “We don’t know.” Thinking they had forgotten the foreign sounding names, I asked Samuel to re-read verses 10-11. Still they couldn’t answer the question. When I asked why, I was told, “You haven’t read that part yet!” Looking more carefully at the text, I saw the problem. Samuel had followed the English a little too closely and created a problem in Banaro. In English, we can use “these” to point us to things we have already talked about or to point us to things we have not yet talked about. Here “these” is used to point back to Aristarkus, Mark, and Jesus (Justus), Paul’s Jewish colleagues. However, the Banaro equivalent to “these” can only point forward. Unless we made a change in the translation, readers would understand that Epaphras and Luke, who are the next people mentioned in the text, were the Jewish colleagues Paul was talking about. Since we didn’t want that to happen, we changed Banaro “these” to “those,” the proper way of referring to people who have already appeared in the story.

Yours or ours? In verse 12 we ran into another problem created by the nature of the Banaro language. The text says, “Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ, sends greetings” (NIV). It was the “who is one of you” phrase that gave us trouble. Samuel had translated it, “Another man is

Epaphras. He also is your man.” The “also” refers back to a similar note about Onesimus in verse 9; “your man” was meant to indicate that he was from Colossi.

For the possessive pronoun “your (plural)” Samuel had used the correct form *nuna*. However, when I asked the checkers to translate the sentence into the Pidgin language, they consistently used the Pidgin pronoun that means “our (inclusive),” that is, both the speaker (Paul) and the hearers (the Colossians). How did “your man” become “our man?” In Banaro *nuna* can mean either “your (plural)” or “our (inclusive).” Only the context determines to whom the pronoun refers. In this case, in the context of Paul listing his colleagues, the checkers assumed that he was introducing Epaphras as another of “his men.” The context was insufficient to point them to the correct meaning for the word. To clarify that *nuna* should be understood as “your” here, we added two words that mean “a Colossi native.” So now the translation is understood as “he is one of your men, a Colossi native.”

Just what did Paul write?

At that point we did really begin to move along, not discovering any other problems until we got to verse 18, where Paul takes the pen from his scribe to write greetings in his own handwriting. The first part of that verse says, “I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand” (NIV). The translation said, “I am Paul. I myself by my hand am writing this paper to you.” It was fine except that everyone understood that “this paper” referred to the letter in its entirety, not what the original meant to say. To clarify the meaning, we stated that part of the verse this way, “I myself by my hand am writing to you the last talk that is on this paper here.” Then everyone understood that Paul was only writing the last little bit with his own hand.

Whew! Finally we reached the end. I was glad. But I was also glad that we had carefully checked those closing verses. The changes we had made did not affect any doctrine or any weightier matters of the Scriptures, but they brought the message of the Banaro translation into line with the meaning of the original text while following the rules of the Banaro language.

The next time I think some Scripture will be easy to check, I’ll remember this experience. I really doubt that checking any Scripture is easy, whether it is at the beginning, the end, or somewhere in the middle. There is a potential for miscommunication and inaccuracy in even the most straightforward verses. It takes time to bring those problems to light.

William and Robin Butler first arrived in PNG in 1979 and have served for 24 years among the Banaro people.



New Kids in Town

by Kelly Robinson

“Our support has come in, our visas are in our hands, and we’re headed to Papua New Guinea!” was our big news in January. We left the US on February 4, after many years of preparation and seeking God’s call on our lives. We were finally going to PNG as real missionaries, with no return ticket in hand. So many emotions were in our hearts, anxiousness about the new place, excitement to do what we had dreamed about doing for so long, difficulty of leaving family and friends, the joy of feeling welcomed by fellow missionaries, and anticipation of the unknown.

A requirement for all new teams is to attend the Pacific Orientation Course (POC). POC is designed to orient you to a broad range of things necessary for living in the tropics. When we came to PNG, we had no idea all the things that we didn’t know (or knew very little about). Here are some of the things we did at POC...

- Started learning *Tok Pisin* (Melanesian Pidgin)
- Fire Lighting (with and without kerosene)
- Swam a mile in the ocean
- Hiked on rugged trails (one time being gone for 3 days in a row)
- Learned short wave radio procedures
- Multi-Cultural Teamwork (our co-workers are not all Americans!)
- Dehydrated food
- Medical training (Malaria, dehydration, suturing, injections, burns, fevers, medications)
- 4 wheel driving
- Built a shelter and table out of bush materials and then cooked over a fire with no fridge!
- Made a drum oven for baking bread (see the picture)
- Stayed overnight in a house with a national family
- Packed and organized enough food and supplies for 5 weeks in a village
- Learned how to bathe in a river (possibly with people watching you)
- Learned about Papua New Guinea customs and religions



- Learned about boiling and purifying water (do you know how much water you drink in a day?)

As a former boy scout and just an all around smart guy, my husband, Scott, knew how to do more of this list than I did. I found out very quickly all the things I had taken for granted! If you know how to do more than two of these things, you are about where I was when I came and should think about being a missionary too!

After the time at POC, we got a chance to practice our skills firsthand, in a village called Ogg, where we lived without electricity in a bush house, cooking over a fire, carrying our water and washing clothes in the river for five weeks. We lived with the people, and had to get used to not having the privacy we are accustomed to at home. We had assignments to help us learn the

language and the culture. Though it was a long five weeks, we now have the skills to live on our own in a village!

Above all, I think, we learned about ourselves. When living is a 24-hour a day job, I have to make time for rest. I knew it before but found out again that God is my strength, and when I

don’t feel like I can do anymore, He gives me just what I need. I can communicate about deep things with people when we have a language in common. I can talk to the kids in the trade language (I think talking to kids is hard, they don’t talk like adults!). I need “sick food” with me, because when my tummy is turning but the menu says “chili” I won’t eat anything. I can make friends with people whose life is so different from mine.

Now for the first time in our lives, we have “real jobs,” we’re finally doing what we’ve wanted to do since High School, we’re not kids anymore! But sometimes we still feel like kids, and we catch ourselves not trusting God to lead us in the direction He wants us to go. But our desire is to see the people of the world, the people of Papua New Guinea, know God through His Son, Jesus, and to be able to read His Word in their language, all so they can worship Him as he deserves to be worshipped! Though we’re the new kids in town, we know that our God is faithful to help us with all the new emotions, the new work, the new people we meet, and the new things He teaches us every day!

Scott and Kelly Robinson are the latest addition to our literacy teams. Scott is a second generation PBT worker. Scott’s father and mother, David and Chris are support workers in Madang.



PIONEER BIBLE TRANSLATORS

P.O. Box 178
Madang 511
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Phone: +675 852-2440
FAX: +675 852-2506

E-Mail:
erohrer@pioneerbible.org.pg
Website: www.pioneerbible.org.pg

Editor: Ellen Rohrer
Artwork: Cindy Davis
Typesetting: Jan Messersmith



Bringing the Word to Life

Coping Devices

by Michael Sweeney



What can dampen the creative spirit? Some theologians claim that “being made in the likeness of God” means that people have a fervent need to be creative. Some people have it more fervently than others.

My wife, Linda, is an example of that. She loves making things. Over the years I’ve watched as she has sewn, tried her hand at macramé, gotten into a little woodworking, put together video and PowerPoint presentations, awed hundreds with her cake decorating, and now, her latest craze, quilting.

Quilting. This is an example where the will to create overwhelms the will to be sensible.

Ah, I can hear the voices now. Quilting is a wonderful art form. It’s a part of Americana. It harkens back to those years when women, though short on

material, overcame their circumstances to create beautiful, warm, blankets from bits of scraps that were otherwise unusable. Quilting is a noble, creative enterprise.

Yes, I agree, all of that is true. And I am forever impressed by what Linda can make out of hundreds of little squares of fabric. The whole is always greater than the sum of the parts.

But wait, think for a moment about the difference between your circumstances, dear reader, and our own. Most readers of this publication live in North America, with its frigid winters and air-conditioned summers. Quilts give your house and your bed a feeling of warmth and comfort. They’re cozy.

But here, 5 degrees south of the equator, where the average daily temperature is 95 and the humidity is 82%, cozy is the last thing we need. And even though Linda and I live in the middle of a tropical jungle, there she sits in the window seat, compelled by creativity to draw her needle through layers of fabric and batting heaped over her lap, living in a sauna of her own making.

The creative spirit is indeed a marvelous thing. So much so that watching my wife has caused my muse to turn to verse:

Mike is Bible translator for the Mum language group. He is also currently PBT’s Assistant Director of Language Affairs. He and his wife Linda live in the village of Katiati. Their two boys, Christopher and Ryan are at Ukarumpa attending the Ukarumpa International High School.

**It is not sweat that damps her brow
And moistens all her clothes
That trickles twixt her shoulder blades
And dribbles down her nose,
It is not perspiration
You see where’ere her skin might show,
Tis but a spilling o’er the banks
Where her creative juices flow.**

