AN INTERCULTURAL CRITICISM OF NEW TESTAMENT TRANSLATIONS

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to show similarities and differences between Greek and Swahili texts of the New Testament, especially at the lexical, morphological, syntactic, and semantic levels. It uses an intercultural approach that compares Greek, Latin, and Swahili texts, and argues that there is a great deal of similarity between the Greek and the Swahili languages at the grammatical level, except for the Greek deponent form, which has no formal equivalent in Swahili. One of the most striking lexical findings concerns the mismatch between the Greek form of Jesus's name and its Latin or Swahili translations. Both Latin and Swahili do not have formal articles, while the Greek language uses them even before proper names. The original, authentic, and meaningful form of Jesus's name is the Hebrew or Aramaic עוֹשׁוֹהִי , or עוֹשִׁי ("he saves"). The Latin *Iesus* and the Swahili *Yesu/Yezu* stand as correspondent transliterations of the meaningless Greek ὁ Ἰησοῦς. In a Latin Church culture, the meaning of a proper name in itself may not be that important, but in the Swahili target culture a proper name is bound to be meaningful and informative through its own wording. Consequently, the Swahili *Yehoshua* or *Yeshua* would be a more considerate rendering of Jesus's name in view of the target culture frame and that of the most original biblical culture.

I. Introduction

The New Testament was written in "common" Greek, and "from the very first days of Christianity the NT has been translated into other languages, for the benefit of people not acquainted with the Hellenic language. This work of translation continues till today" (Caragounis 2011). A translation inevitably involves a lower or higher degree of equivalence and transgression between the target text and its source (Engler 2007, 308). In other words, there is nothing that can be translated perfectly (i.e. a certain degree of mismatch is unavoidable), and there is nothing that cannot be translated (i.e. a certain degree of "equivalence," "representation," or "adequacy" is possible).

This study uses an intercultural approach that will be defined later on. The aim is to show similarities and differences between the Greek, Latin, and Swahili texts of the New Testament for the sake of a better understanding of some specific Swahili renderings. Due to space restrictions, only few examples have been taken at random to highlight similarities or differences at lexical, morphological, syntactic, and semantic levels. These examples involve some basic issues and therefore are important for a fair comparison between the languages and cultures concerned. Without claiming to be exhaustive, this paper illustrates certain linguistic patterns that substantiate how the Greek, Swahili, and Latin languages might operate differently, though they are ultimately able to communicate the same message through similar but not necessarily corresponding categories. The awareness of such lexical, grammatical, and semantic similarities and dissimilarities can help a translator avoid imposing some particular features of a given language upon another one.

For this study, the Greek texts are taken from the Greek New Testament edited by the United Bible Societies (2008), while the Swahili gloss texts come from a Greek–Swahili NT Interlinear (2009). This Interlinear also includes the literal *Swahili Union Version Revised* (SUVR) and the common language *Biblia Habari Njema* (BHN 2006). These two Swahili Bible versions appear to be the most widely read in Tanzania and Kenya, where the use of the standard Swahili is largely promoted. They also have the same publisher as the *Greek–Swahili NT Interlinear* (GSNTI), namely the Bible Societies of Tanzania and Kenya. Some cases of dissimilarity between the three Swahili renderings will be pointed out as part of an internal dialogue within a same contemporary culture. This shows that an intercultural mediation does not take place only between external cultures. Furthermore, internal dialogues befit both a horizontal and a vertical interculturality since the same culture can produce many contemporary versions (horizontality) as well as several versions from different generations (verticality). A study of vertical interculturality will also be interact with Latin texts of the Vulgate (VUL). Mediations between external cultures and internal sub-cultures may certainly "reveal things that we did not know or which we had chosen to forget" (Bringhurst 2007, 302).

This study consists of two major parts, namely, the presentation of the underlying methodological framework and a consideration of some translation issues. The overall findings are expected to contribute towards consolidating a more constructive dialogue not only among the distinct Greek, Latin and Swahili texts of the New Testament, but also among some different Swahili NT texts.

II. Contextual and Methodological Frameworks

1. *Eugene Nida's Legacy in Bible Translation*

What is translation? There have been many theories and applications of translation with an emphasis either on literal renditions or meaning-based renderings. In the history of Bible translation, Eugene Nida (assisted by Charles Taber) seems to have been the first to elaborate a functional equivalence where ideally both original form and meaning have to be communicated so that the target audience can experience the same impact as if it were for the original audience. In this perspective, translation consists of "reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the SL message, in terms of meaning and style" (Nida and Taber 1969, 12). This functional approach remains the first milestone in the conceptualization of Bible translation work since translators of the Septuagint, Coptic New Testament or Vulgate did not produce such theory, even if they share a preference for common language translation. In other words, common language translation did not start with Nida, nor will it end with him, yet his peculiar contribution resides in the theorization of this approach under the name functional approach. Besides, Nida's translation method has been institutionalized by the United Bible Societies and widely adopted by other Bible translation agencies. Continually nurtured and supported by Nida and translation teams, this approach has been spreading all over the world since the 1960s. For example, Nida led the first translation seminar in Kinshasa in 1965 and, along with the Bible Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, launched projects for availing common language Bible translations in the Lingala, Kongo, Tshiluba, Swahili, Luba, Uruund, and Songye languages. In spite of their worldwide success, some common language translations did not rigorously convey Nida's view of keeping the balance

between the content and form, as they pushed more for meaning-based translations at the expense of the form.

A second important contribution from Nida was that of maintaining the translation focus on specific target audiences. His target audiences included both ordinary and scholarly communities, but each had to be provided with an appropriate product. With Nida, Bible translation becomes itself a missionary, ecumenical, and scholarly endeavor. With Nida, a specific focus is placed on the language accessible to the youth, women, and non-Christians, as they constitute the majority of ordinary people in many countries. As for academic audience, Nida initiated or promoted projects that produced scholarly works such as the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, the *Greek New Testament*, the journal *The Bible Translator*, and numerous translator's guides. Unlike some of the great Bible translators such as the Septuagint translators (third century B.C.E.), Ulfila (311–383), Jerome (340–420), Martin Luther (1483–1546), King James Bible translators (sixteenth–seventeenth century), Louis Second (1810–1885), Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1809–1891), and others who translated the Bible themselves but without a very elaborate theory of translation, Nida's significant contribution to Bible translation does not relate to the translation of a particular Bible. He excelled, rather, in translation consultancy and theorization, which led to many Bible products. Nida became a well known name in the fields of both translation studies and Bible translation, with positive, constructive, and even controversial influence (Gentzler 1993, 4; Mojola and Wendland 2003, 1; Porter 2009, 117–118; Stine 2005, 7; Stine 2012, 38). Nonetheless, Nida remains in a binary model involving the source text ("Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartentia" or the Greek New Testament) and the target text (the translated text in making), with less emphasis on any church canonized translation. According to the intercultural approach, the latter is an integral part of triple frame of reference. This view on the Church culture is lacking not only in Nida's functional equivalence, but also in other competitive models such as Ernst Gutt's "Relevance Theory," Katarina Reiss, Hans J. Vermeer, Justa Holz-Mantarri, Christiane Nord's "Functionalist Theory," and Ernst Wendland's "Literary–Functional Equivalence" (See Mojola and Wendland 2003, 1–25; Loba-Mkole 2008, 253–266). A concrete application of a functionalist translation is provided by Berger and Nord (1999).

2. *Intercultural Approach to Bible Translations*

An intercultural approach to biblical exegesis or to Bible translation studies can fill in the gap that has been widening between these two disciplines. As Porter and Hess (1999, 13) put it:

> The translation and understanding of the Bible, whether by rendering it in the vernacular or through careful study of the original languages in which it was written, is an essential step in study and interpretation of the text. For this reason, it is surprising that more studies are not devoted to the question involved in the process and the final product.

Intercultural mediation is a dialogical process that involves not only literary works but also artistic symbols and human beings who ensure the transmission of the biblical text from an original culture to a contemporary one, including the critically assessed heritage of a church culture (See Loba-Mkole 2004a, 37–58; 2004b, 79–115; 2005a, 58–80; 2005b, 291–326; 2007, 39–68; 2008, 253–266; 2012). Here, culture is to be understood not only as an artistic component of a society but mainly as a totality of a human experience in a given time and space. It is never holistically apprehended at once and for all, but it allows itself to be progressively accessed through languages and texts. The concept of cultural or cross-cultural mediation in not new in translation studies, however intercultural mediation as developed in this study needs some clarification.

"Intercultural" involves a relation between two or more cultures while "mediation" evokes the idea of a representation. In that sense, a translated Bible is a representation of two or more cultures: a source-text culture, a target-text culture, and a church culture (the latter is expected to be sensitive to both Christian and non-Christian audiences). Even if intercultural mediation is less known in biblical exegesis, it can be argued that an exegetical study is a representation of the source-text culture, a church culture, and a target audience culture. The peculiarities of intercultural mediations are stated below for the sake of a general overview; further details can emerge when this method is being applied in other works of Scripture translation or exegesis. It is worthwhile noting that intercultural mediation could also refer to a process, a product or a criticism (analysis, study) based on that approach. Research on this method — like the current paper — can fall under the category

of an intercultural criticism, analysis, or study, while a work that applies this method to interpret and/or translate the Scripture can be called an intercultural exegesis or intercultural translation (Loba-Mkole 2004a; 2004b; 2005a). Intercultural process involves the use of peculiar features of this method in order to deliver a relevant product or criticism. For example, an intercultural process was used in producing the New Testament in Lari and Beembe languages of Congo-Brazzaville, respectively in 2005 and 2013. In both projects, the final product is a translated text negotiated between the Greek New Testament (representing an original biblical culture), the Vulgate (representing a church culture), and the Lari or Beembe language (representing a contemporary culture). At the level of contemporary culture, horizontal interculturality was applied in the sense that some of the present-day translations in French and Lingala were consulted. Models of intercultural exegesis have been offered by Ukpong (1996), Matand (1998), Cilumba (2001), Manus (2003) and Loba-Mkole (2010, 2013) among others. Intercultural method is applicable to both exegesis and translation; hence its contribution to reducing the gap that some approaches have created between exegesis and translation.

Intercultural mediation takes into account a *triple frame of reference*: the original biblical culture, church culture, and a contemporary target culture. Languages play an important role in the expression and understanding of those cultures. The original biblical culture is accessible through the languages in which the biblical texts were originally written (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek). Similarly, a church culture or a contemporary culture avails itself through its particular languages, such as Latin for the Roman Catholic Church culture or Swahili for an African contemporary target culture. In view of *Ethnologue* data, Swahili is spoken by approximately 100 million people living in Tanzania, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa, Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Canada, the United States of America, and possibly other parts of the world (Mulokozi 2008; Lewis, Simons and Fennig 2013).

Intercultural mediation operates with a *triple epistemological privilege*; that is, the epistemological privilege is granted not only to the contemporary audience (contra Ukpong 2002, 62; Tamez

2002a, 10; 2002b, 58), but also to all three sets of cultures involved. The unique epistemological privilege of canonicity is given to the original biblical cultures because they contain authoritative books for ruling in matters of faith and conduct. The unique privilege of elderliness is conferred to the church cultures because on the one hand they shape the original biblical cultures through the fixation of the biblical canons, and on the other they spiritually engender their target contemporary cultures through the evangelization ministry. The unique epistemological privilege of liveliness is bestowed upon the target contemporary cultures because they revitalize both the original biblical cultures and the church cultures. In other words, the target contemporary cultures are the only ones presently active and who are responsible for improving their own lives while connecting the past, the present, and the future. By definition, an epistemological task refers to intellectual and practical efforts which have to be deployed for the attainment of knowledge (See van Aarde 1994, 584; Loba-Mkole 2005b, 298; Pym 2007, 195). According to Arduini, translation epistemology is a rhizome where "knowledge is the point where the rhizome's roots cross and overlap and make paths" (Arduini 2004, 9). For intercultural mediation, the rhizome of knowledge is located at the junction of paths from the original biblical cultures, church cultures critically assessed, and the target contemporary cultures. After that junction, the journey has to continue on the road of the target contemporary cultures, leading to the future.

Intercultural mediation embraces three *epistemological values*: a target culture worldview (what is valuable is that which promotes life), a message from the historical Jesus (what is valuable is that which concurs with a message of the historical Jesus), and a Christian culture value (what is valuable is that which is in consonance with the Church's critically assessed culture). In terms of ethical values, intercultural mediation includes accuracy to the original culture (ethics of accurate representation), loyalty to the current target culture (ethics of service), and honesty toward a critically assessed church culture (ethics of transparency).

Intercultural mediation integrates a *triple cultural scope*: current cultural locations of the mediator, horizontal cultures, and vertical cultures. Current cultural locations of the mediator consist of diverse situations in which the mediator lives. The horizontal

intercultural scope deals with the experiences between neighboring cultures and the target culture, while the vertical intercultural scope applies to the interplay between the present target culture and its past, as well as its future. As a matter of fact, each of the triple cultural scope shapes the mind of the mediator, and their viewpoints need to be clearly spelled out to avoid confusions on the one hand and pave the way for genuine harmony on the other (See Akper 2006, 1–11; August 2006, 12–18; Jonker 2006, 19-28).

The originality of the intercultural biblical mediations resides in its triple frame of reference, triple epistemological privilege, triple epistemological value, and triple cultural scope. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that an intercultural mediation requires the practitioner to be creative in order to invent points of agreement between the cultures concerned. For van Binsbergen

Intercultural communication is always transgressive, innovative, subject to bricolage. Genuine differences […] can only be reconciled in dialogue, love, seduction, trade, diplomacy, therapy, ritual, ethnography and intercultural philosophy in an innovative way […] that is not compellingly imposed. (van Binsbergen 2003, 516)

Even without being exhaustive regarding each aspect of an intercultural mediation, the present paper envisions to promote intercultural approach to both exegesis and translation, viewed as two distinct yet integral parts of the same interpretive endeavor.

III. Translation issues in Swahili Renderings of the Greek New Testament

The Greek New Testament is a set of theological books. One may raise the question whether the Swahili language is able to express this set of theological ideas. Such a question assumes that the Greek language has more epistemological privilege than the Swahili language, which from intercultural perspective is not the case. The epistemological privilege of the Greek language of the New Testament is limited to the original biblical culture, which it shares with Hebrew and Aramaic, while the epistemological privilege of the Swahili language is limited to its contemporary target audience, which it shares with various local and international languages. The Swahili language cannot take the place of the Greek

language in the original biblical culture, nor can the Greek replace Swahili in the target culture. Each language is unique and irreplaceable in its own symbolic world. Each expresses the theological ideas of the New Testament books in a unique way, yet with a great deal of similarity. None of the two languages is theological in itself, except when argued from an incarnation perspective whereby Jesus Christ is confessed as the Son of God who became human. But in this case every human language (including Greek and Swahili) is theological because Jesus shared his divine nature with all human conditions, except sin. Succinctly, the content or ideas of the New Testament books remain theological, but not the languages through which those ideas are expressed (Greek or Swahili). These languages are human though they have acquired theological status through the incarnation of the Son of God and by the virtue of communicating theological ideas. Nevertheless, this paper focuses on the similarity and dissimilarity of the Greek and Swahili languages with regard to the New Testament texts since the linguistic patterns of each of them constitute a significant vehicle for theological ideas. Language patterns seem to confirm that there is no language that has inbuilt theological words. Theological ideas are, rather, expressed through human languages like any type of human knowledge even if each science can develop a specific terminology.

1. *Contrastive features with regard to idiomatic expressions*

Contrastive features will be examined based on the UBS *Greek New Testament* (GNT), the Vulgate (VUL) and the three Swahili versions: *Swahili Union Version Revised* (SUVR), Biblia Habari Njema (BHN) *and Greek-Swahili NT Interlinear* (GSNTI). SUVR represents a formal sub-culture, while BHN and GSNTI stand for a common language sub-culture and a scholarly sub-culture, respectively.

It is obvious that Greek idioms cannot be rendered literally into Swahili. For example GSNTI and SUVR render ποιήσατε οὖν καρπὸν in Matthew 3:8 with "*zaeni basi matunda*" (produce then fruits) instead of "*fanyeni basi tunda*" (make then fruit). In addition to the idiomatic rendering of ποιήσατε by "*zaeni*," the Greek accusative singular καρπὸν is rendered in Swahili by the plural "*matunda*" (fruits), since naturalness in Swahili cannot tolerate the literal "*fanyeni tunda*" (make fruit). BHN reads "*Onesheni*

kwa vitendo" (show by actions). Interestingly, the literal "*fanyeni tunda*", avoided by the three Swahili versions, corresponds to the VUL rendering "*facite ergo fructum*" (make therefore fruit). In addition, ποιῇς ἐλεημοσύνην in Matthew 6:2 is translated in SUVR with "*utoapo sadaka*" (as you give alms), while BHN translates it with "*unaposaidia maskini*" (as you help the poor), and GSNTI has "*ukitoa sadaka*" (when you give alms). All three Swahili versions agree not to literally render the idiom ποιέω ἐλεημοσύνη with "*fanya sadaka*" (do or make alms): SUVR and GSNT replace the verb "*fanya*" with "*toa*," since the latter fits better with the word "*sadaka*" in this context. BHN chooses a Swahili idiomatic equivalent ("*unaposaidia maskini*"). VUL has "*cum ergo facies elemosynam*" (as you then make an alm). These examples show that the same Greek verb (ποιέω + noun) can be rendered by different Swahili equivalents: "*zaa*" (produce), "*toa*" (give), and even "*saidia*" (help) when it is accompanied by ἐλεημοσύνην. VUL constantly uses the equivalent "*facere*" even where the context supports an idiomatic meaning.

2. *Contrastive features with regards to lexical items*

There is no perfect equivalence between certain Greek terms and Swahili because of the differences at the syntactical level or word order in a sentence. For example, the Greek lexicon includes a gender system (M/F/N), where nouns are also categorized as being definite, indefinite, or neutral. The gender is often enhanced by the presence of an article, though an anarthrous use of a noun does not affect its gender. In contrast, the Swahili lexicography is characterized by noun class system which determines whether a noun belongs to the category of human beings, animals, nature, inanimate things, abstract things, etc. While the gender of a Greek noun defines the gender of the qualifying article and adjective, the class of a Swahili noun determines the form of the affix of the adjective and verb. Furthermore, it has to be noted that even if Swahili does not have articles, it can express the definiteness by means of an elaborate demonstrative system.

The Greek Ἐν ἀρχή (in + anarthrous "beginning"), ὁ λόγος (definite article "the" + the noun "word") as well as the anarthrous θεὸς (god) in John 1:1 have all been rendered respectively as "*katika mwanzo*" (in beginning) or "*hapo mwanzo*" (there in be-

ginning), "*neno*" (word) and "*mungu*" (god). As is to be expected for a language that has no explicit articles, all the three Swahili versions render a Greek noun with or without the article in a same way ("*mwanzo*" for ἀρχή, "*neno*" for ὁ λόγος, and "*mungu*" or "*Mungu*" for θεὸς). Nevertheless, GSNTI gives "mungu" in lower case as does GNT, while SUVR and BHN both give "Mungu" with upper case. However, they use a lower case where GNT has an upper case in John 10:34: Θεοί ἐστε ("*nyinyi ni miungu*", you are gods). VUL capitalizes the equivalent of ὁ λόγος ("*Verbum*," Word) and θεὸς ("*Deus*"), but it uses a lower case for the capital letter of Θεοί ἐστε ("*dii estis*," you are gods). The word θεὸς is not a proper name, but a common noun which has both singular and plural forms. It should not be capitalized everywhere as if it were a proper name, as SUVR, BHN and VUL have done. Similarly, it should not be written with a lower case where GNT has an upper case (John 10:34, contra SUVR, BHN, and VUL).

The exegetical and translation debate around the absence of the article before ἀρχή ("beginning") and θεὸς ("God") in John 1:1 is almost irrelevant from the perspective of Swahili language syntax. Nonetheless, the absolute or relative meaning of ἀρχή and θεὸς can be determined from the context (Wallace, 1996). But, the vocative case of the Greek article in Colossians 3:18–4:1, also known as "vocative span" (Young 1994, 253), is conveyed in Swahili by a personal pronoun as shown in the following (Colossians 3:18; 4:1):

Αἱ	γυναῖκες,		ὑποτάσσεσθε	τοῖς	ἀνδράσιν		
Enyi	wake,		Tiini		waume		
You	wives,		obey	to the	husbands		

Οἱ	κύριοι,	τὸ	δίκαιον	καὶ	τὴν	ἰσότητα	τοῖς δούλοις	παρέχεσθε
Enyi	mabwana,		haki	na		adili	watumishi	watendeeni
You	masters,	the	just	and	the	fair	to the slaves	do

GSNTI uses "*enyi*" where SUVR has "*nyinyi*." BHN alternates "*nyinyi*" and "*nanyi*," which is a shorter form of "*na nyinyi*" (and you), but the addition of "*na*" (and) seems to be superfluous. "*Nyinyi*" can be used for personal pronoun, second person plural, nominative and vocative cases, but "*enyi*" is strictly used for the

vocative, second person plural. It is worth noting that "*enyi*" or "*nyinyi*" covers both Greek feminine and masculine forms because Swahili does not have a gender system. Since Latin has no articles, VUL does not represent them, but the meaning of the Greek vocative is conveyed by the correspondent Latin vocative ("*mulieres subditae estote*," wives, be submissive; "*domini quod iustum est et aequum servis praestate*," masters exhibit to your servants what is just and equal).

A Swahili reader who is accustomed to interact with the New Testament through European languages such as English, French, and others may be surprised to see that the Greek uses articles even before proper names (e.g. "*ὁ Ἰησοῦς*," the Jesus) while these languages use them only before common names. The Greek form "*ὁ Ἰησοῦς*" has no meaning, while the Hebrew or Aramaic "עוֹשִׂיה"or "עַוֹשִׂיַ" means "he saves." In Bantu culture a personal name is meaningful; can a Bantu language like Swahili continue translating a meaningless Greek form of the meaningful Hebrew name of Jesus and others? From the perspectives of Semitic languages, the Swahili rendering of Jesus's name would not be "*Yesu*" (a mere Swahili transliteration of the Greek form), but rather "*Yehoshua*" or "*Yeshua*." Unfortunately, the GSNTI, SUVR and BHN have all used "*Yesu*," which is similar to the Latin transliteration "*Iesu*" (VUL).

Another lexical issue concerns the phrase "*ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*" (the son of the man). SUVR translates it as "*Mwana wa Adamu*" (son/daughter of Adam), whereas BHN renders it "*Mwana wa Mtu*" (a Son/daughter of Human Person), GSNTI "*mwana wa mtu*" (son/daughter of human person), and VUL "*Filius hominis*" (Son of man). In many occurrences, this phrase records Jesus's self-designation. On those grounds, VUL might be right in using the upper case only for "*Filius*" which begins the whole phrase but not for "*hominis*." In the Swahili language, the expressions "*mwana wa mtu*," "*mwana wa adamu*," whether in upper or lower case, refer unmistakably to any indefinite female or male human being. First, the word "*mtu*" (a human being) belongs to the noun class of human beings; secondly, the genitive marker "*wa*" (of) associates "*mwana*" (daughter or son) with "*mtu*" to indicate where she or he belongs. However, the NT phrase "*mwana wa mtu*" refers to a male because it translates the GNT phrase of mas-

culine gender ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. On that basis, the Swahili "*mwana wa mtu*" can be understood not as daughter of a human being, but more precisely as a son of a man. The phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, like the case of ὁ θεὸς or θεὸς, is not a proper name but a common name which has its plural form in υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων (see Mark 3:28) as well as an anarthrous form υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου (John 5:27; Revelation 1:13; 14:14). Furthermore, the Swahili phrase "*mwana wa mtu*," whether it applies to a female, male, or both has an idiomatic meaning of "a human being."

The strange double determinative (definite article + genitive) in the word ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (the son of the man) has led the majority of New Testament scholars to insist on the titular use of this expression, which is reflected in SUVR and BHN through capitalization. An argument based on articles will not work in Swahili, though the latter can still indicate definiteness with regard to a word which is qualified by an article in the source language (Loba-Mkole 2000, 563; 2003, 853; 2010, 125–127; Casey 2007, 319).

In the Masoretic text, "ben adam" בֶּן אָדָם in Ezekiel occurs ninety-three times, whereas the Aramaic בַּר אֱנָשׁ only appears in Dan 7:13. The Septuagint has rendered both expressions with ἀνθρώπος, which means a man, a human being. Nevertheless, a great number of biblical scholars consider the son of man in Daniel as the most sublime messianic conception that the Bible offers since he seems to be not a collective character, but a transcendent Messiah with heavenly and divine features (Feuillet 1975, 478; Kuzenzama1990, 19 and 76; Mulholland 1999, 187). Some extra-biblical writings (1 Enoch 46–71; 4 Ezra 13:3) have been brought forward to support the expectation of the Messianic "Son of man" in Judaism. However, this interpretation goes far beyond literary evidence. The most persuasive view is that the Danielic son of man is a symbolic expression which refers not to an individual messianic figure, but to the people of Israel. They are represented by a human figure that anticipates the kingdom of God while other kingdoms have been compared to beasts (Hampel 1990, 32, 42, and 63). This view is shared by some exegetes, such as Leivestad (1972, 244; 1982, 234), Bietenhard (1982, 337), Coppens (1983, 111), Haag (1993, 167) and Koch (1993, 84), among others.

Philological research attributes three understandings to בַּר אֱנָשׁ, namely the generic sense (every human being), the indefinite

sense (someone), and the circumlocutional sense of the first person personal pronoun (I). At all levels, it refers to a human being in the third or the first person (auto-reference). There are three types of auto-designation conveyed by the phrase "son of man": exclusive auto-designation (when the speaker refers to himself alone); the inclusive auto-designation (when the speaker refers to himself and to all other human beings); and the idiomatic auto-designation (when the speaker refers to himself and to a class of persons he associates with) (Lindars 1983, 23–24). On linguistic grounds, the phrase ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου refers to a human being without implying any divine or messianic connotation.

In the history of religions, there is no convincing evidence indicating that this expression bore a divine or messianic meaning that could account for its titular use. Nonetheless, Jesus of Nazareth is the only religious and historical leader who is recorded as someone who used this phrase to refer to himself, not for revealing his divine nature but to confirm his human nature. Moreover, no church confesses Jesus's divinity through this expression.

The Swahili phrase "*mwana wa mtu*" (GSNTI) is not a literal equivalent but an accurate rendering of the Greek ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in the sense of a human being. The difference between the source and the target terms pertains to the fact the Greek phrase is a masculine gender referring to a male human being while the Swahili rendering is gender-inclusive. The Latin *filius hominis* also has its own peculiarity. While "*filius*" is a masculine gender, "*hominis*" (*homo*) can be gender-inclusive like the Swahili "*mtu*," but generally it cannot refer to a female human being alone (as per the Greek ἀνθρώπος), whereas the Swahili "*mtu*" can do so.

3. Swahili Equivalents of Greek Moods, Tenses, Voices, and Aspects

The Swahili particle "*na*" is used to represent the Greek indicative mood, present tense, active voice, as in the following example (Matthew 3:11):

ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω	ἐν	ὕδατι
ni<u>na</u>wabatiza	kwa	maji
I you baptize	in	water

GSNT and SUVR have both the form "*ninawabatiza*" (I baptize you), while BHN records "*ninawabatizeni*", where the ending "*ni*" emphasizes the plural form of the verb complement. This emphasis can be left out without affecting the plural form of the verb complement "*wa*," which is a personal pronoun in second person plural. "*Ninawabatiza*" and "*ninawatizeni*" are both accurate renderings of the same "*ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω*." However, this example displays the remarkable agglutinative character of the Swahili language, where the personal pronoun subject "*ni*," the tense marker "*na*," the personal pronoun object "*wa*," and the verb stem "*batiza*" are expressed with a single word ("*ni-na-wa-batiza*"). VUL has "*ego quidem vos baptizo*" (I indeed baptize you), adding an extra personal pronoun "*ego*" (I) to the one included in the verb "*baptizo*" (I baptize).

Another particular feature of the Swahili verb pertains to the use of the particle "*hu*" (not translatable in English) at the beginning of a verb in the present active indicative to show a habitual action (Matthew 8:9):

λέγω	τούτῳ,	Πορεύθητι,	καὶ	πορεύεται
ninasema	kwa huyo,	Nenda,	na	<u>hu</u>enda
I say	to this one,	"Go,"	and	he goes

The GNTI, SUVR, and BHN use the particle "*hu*" as a marker of a habitual verb action, but a mere present form such as "*anaenda*" (s/he goes) can also convey the sense of a habit similar to VUL's "*dico huic vade et vadit et alio veni et venit*" (I say to this one go and he goes and to another come and he comes).

The particle "*ta*" is used to represent a Greek future tense (e.g. Matthew 3:11):

ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει	ἐν	πνεύματι	ἁγίῳ	καὶ	πυρί
<u>ata</u>wabatiza	kwa	mtakatifu	roho	na	moto
he will you baptize	in	holy	spirit	and	fire

GSNTI, SUVR and BHN all have the same future tense marker "*ta*", which corresponds to the Latin "*b*" ("*baptiza<u>b</u>it*," he will baptize).

The aspect of aorist indicative active in Greek can be rendered by the Swahili particles "*li*" or "*ka*," which are markers of the past tense (e.g. Matthew 1:2):

Ἀβραὰμ	ἐγέννησεν	τὸν	Ἰσαάκ
Abrahamu	ali(m)zaa		Isaka
Abraham	begat		Isaac

GSNTI, SUVR, and BHN all have the same "*li*" for the Greek indicative aorist while VUL has the perfect "*genuit*" (begat).

However, in some cases the Greek aorist is rendered by the Swahili perfect tense like in Matthew 14:15:

ἡ	ὥρα	ἤδη	παρῆλθεν
	saa	tayari	imepita
the	hour	already	has passed

BHN differs from GNTI and SUVR by using a plural form "*saa zimepita*" (hours have passed), which is not in the Greek source text. But the Swahili singular form "*saa imepita*" and the plural form "*saa zimepita*" can be used interchangeably.

The Swahili perfect "*imepita*" or "*zimepita*" conveys the sense of a recent past, whereas the past tense "*ilipita*" (used as an equivalent of Greek indicative aorist) evokes a distant past. VUL has a pluperfect "*hora praeteriit*" (hour had passed).

The use of the aorist in Greek is wide ranging and complex. In Swahili, the particle "*li*" is used to represent the indicative aorist active (e.g. Mark 14:22).

ἐσθιόντων		αὐτῶν	λαβὼν		ἄρτον	εὐλογήσας	ἔκλασεν
wakiwa wanakula			alipochukua		mkate	alipobariki	ali(u)mega
eating		they	he took		bread	he blessed	he broke

καὶ	ἔδωκεν		αὐτοῖς	καὶ	εἶπεν
na	ali(wa)pa			na	alisema
and	he gave		them	and	said

Unlike GSNTI, SUVR and BHN use "*ka*" in some places to represent both the indicative aorist active and participle aorist active (e.g. Mark 14: 22): "*walipokuwa wakila* (SUVR) / *walipokuwa wanakula* (BHN), "*alitwaa mkate, akabariki, akaumega, akawapa, akasema*" (as they were eating, he took bread, he blessed, he broke, he gave them, he said). The succession of verbs in this verse could eventually explain the choice made by both SUVR and BHN for

the use of "*ka*" instead of "*li*." It is known that "the aorist participle usually denotes antecedent time to that of the controlling verb. But if the main verb is also aorist, this participle may indicate contemporaneous time" (Robertson 1934, 1112–1113; Wallace 1996, 614). The main verbs are in the aorist indicative (ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν |…| καὶ εἶπεν). Moreover, λαβὼν and εὐλογήσας are aorist participles, suggesting that actions expressed by these participles took place before those of the main verbs (Porter, Reed, and O'Donnell 2010, 110). In addition, ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν is a genitive absolute that provides background information. VUL renders this genitive absolute with an ablative absolute "*manducantibus illis*" (as they/ these ones were eating), and it uses an indicative perfect ("*accepit*," "*fregit*") or a present participle ("*bendicens*") in the place of Greek aorist participle "*accepit Iesus panem et benedicens fregit et dedit eis et ait*" (Jesus took bread and blessing he broke and gave to them and said).

The Greek present indicative participle is represented by the particle "*ki*" (e.g. λέγων, "*ak̲isema*," "saying" by SUVR and GSNTI, or VUL with "*dicens*" in Matthew 5:2). BHN drops this present participle. In addition, when a participle is used as a noun, the particle "*ye*" serves to represent this noun participle (e.g. Luke 14:11):

ὁ	ὑψῶν	ἑαυτὸν	καὶ	ὁ	ταπεινῶν	ἑαυτὸν
yule	ana**ye**jikweza	mwenyewe	na	yule	ana**ye**jishusha	mwenyewe
he	who exalts	himself	and	he	who humbles	himself

SUVR differs from GSNTI and BHN in another form of nominal participle, namely "*ajikwezaye*." In any case, "*anayejik- weza*" in GSNTI and BHN—or "*ajikwezaye*" in SUVR—also functions as a relative clause (he who exalts), thus corresponding to the rendering "*qui exaltat*" by VUL. When the participle or relative pronoun marker "*ye*" is used in Swahili, it comes at the end of the verb, and the present tense marker "*na*" disappears. It must be noted that when the Greek article is used before an adjectival participle, it can be conveyed in Swahili by a demonstrative pronoun adjective (cf. "*yule*"). Likewise, the Greek article in vocative case can be represented by the Swahili personal pronoun referring to the addressee (compare the vocative span of Colossians 3:18–4:1). Moreover, SUVR, GSNTI, and BHN have introduced the reflexive particle

"*ji*," which is absent in GNT as well as in VUL. Unlike the Greek and Latin languages, in Swahili the reflexive particle "*ji*" is combined with "*mwenyewe*" (him/herself) to indicate that the action of the verb emphatically refers back to the subject involved. This particle is not used when the action of the verb refers to a complement of object (e.g: "*yule anayekweza uzuri wake mwenyewe*," the one who exalts his/her beauty him/herself). The reflexive particle "*ji*" can also be used without "*mwenyewe*" in a context where the subject is a beneficiary or victim of his/her own action. This case corresponds to the Greek middle voice—for example "*λυσαμενος*," "*aliyeji-fungua*" (person who loosened him/herself) (see Olson 1991, 109).

In Greek, a noun participle is usually accompanied by an article (*ὁ, ἡ,* or *τό,* which are respectively masculine, feminine, and neuter), but in Swahili only the particle "*ye*" signals the presence of a nominal participle, since Swahili has neither article nor gender.

As was suggested above, the particle "*me*" is used in Swahili to represent a Greek perfect active indicative tense (e.g. Matthew 3:2):

ἤγγικεν	γὰρ	ἡ	βασιλεία	τῶν	οὐρανῶν
ume̲karibia	maana		ufalme	wa	mbinguni
it has approached	for	the	reign	of	the heavens

The indicative perfect active in Mathew 3:2 is rendered by the same "*umekaribia*" in GSNTI, SUVR, and BHN, or its equivalent "*adpropinquavit*" (has approached) in VUL.

The Greek indicative pluperfect active in Swahili is represented by the particles "*... li-kuwa ... me-kwisha ....*" (e.g. Mark 15:7):

ἐν	τῇ	στάσει	φόνον	πεποιήκεισαν
katika		uasi	maua ji	<u>walikuwa wamekwisha</u> fanya
in	the	insurrection	murder	they had committed

GSNTI uses the pluperfect "*walikuwa wamekwisha fanya*," as does VUL with "*fecerant homicidium*" (who had done homicide). SUVR has "*waliosababisha*" (who caused), which is a past participle or a relative clause, while BHN has "*kwa kusababisha*" (for causing), an infinitive form.

The Greek indicative imperfect active is rendered in Swahili by the particles "*... li-kuwa ... na*" (e.g. Matthew 8:15):

διηκόνει	αὐτῷ
a<u>li</u>kuwa a<u>na</u>(m)tumikia	yeye
she was serving	him

GSNTI uses the indicative imperfect active "*alikuwa ana(m)tu-mikia*," while VUL likewise uses "*ministrabat eis*" (she/he was serving them), though the two differ regarding the number of the object complement (him or them). SUVR prefers "*akawatumikia*" (she/he served them) and BHN "*akamtumika*" (she served him). Both prefer to use the particle "*ka*," which marks a succession of actions but has the disadvantage of not accounting for different aspects or tenses of the verbs involved among which some might be in the indicative aorist, others in the imperfect, and so on.

The Greek present subjunctive is rendered by the Swahili particle "*e*" at the end of the verb. The subjunctive mood is commonly used to convey a wish or an order (e.g. Matthew 5:45):

ὅπως	γένησθε	υἱοὶ	τοῦ	πατρὸς	ὑμῶν
ili	muw<u>e</u>	watoto	wa	baba	yenu
so that	you may become	children	of	father	your

GSNTI has a straightforward subjunctive form "*muwe*," as does VUL with "*sitis*" (you may be), while SUVR and BHN use an auxiliary form of the verb "*mpate*" before the verb "*kuwa*" ("mpate kuwa," you may become).

In the protasis of a conditional sentence, Swahili uses the particle "*kama*" (if) followed by a verb in the indicative mood where the stem is preceded by the particle "*nge*" (GSNTI) or its variant "*ngali*" (SUVR and BHN). In the apodosis, Swahili also uses a verb in indicative with "*nge*" or "*ngali*" particle (e.g. John 11.21). This particle indicates that an undesirable action has taken place in the past.

εἰ	ἦς	ὧδε	οὐκ ἂν ἀπέθανεν	ὁ	ἀδελφός	μου
kama	u<u>nge</u>kuwa	hapa	ha<u>nge</u>kufa		kaka	yangu
if	you had been	here	he not had died	the	brother	of mine

While GSNTI, SUVR, and BHN stick to the indicative mood where the past aspect is suggested by the particle "*nge*," VUL uses the conditional pluperfect "*si fuisses hic frater meus non fuisset mor-*

tuus" (if you could have been here, my brother would not have died).

The Greek passive voice is represented by the Swahili suffix "*wa*" (added at the end of the verb stem; e.g. Matthew 15:12):

οἱ	Φαρισαῖοι	ἐσκανδαλίσθησαν
	Mafarisayo	walikwaz<u>wa</u>
The	Pharisees	were scandalized

Both SUVR and BHN have "*walichukizwa*" (they were annoyed) with the same ending suffix "*wa*," like GSNTI, to express the passive voice. VUL has a gerundive with the verb "*esse*" (to be) in the indicative present: "*Pharisaei scandalizati sunt*" (Pharisees are scandalized).

The Greek also uses the middle voice, which is formed in the same way as the passive voice although it has the sense of the active voice. However, it often underlines an action intended for the benefit (or detriment) of the subject of the verb (e.g. Matthew 11:7):

πορευομένων
wakiwa wanakwenda zao
they departing for themselves

SUVR uses the participle aorist "*walipokwenda*" (they having departed) while BHN has the participle imperfect "*walipokuwa wanakwenda*" (as they were departing). GSNTI sticks to the Greek participle present "*wakiwa wanakwenda*," and it adds the emphatic "*zao*" (for themselves) to indicate the sense conveyed by the middle voice. VUL has an ablative absolute "*illis beuntibus*" (as they/these ones were departing), where the emphasis is expressed by the demonstrative pronoun "*illis*."

The Greek uses deponent verbal forms, which are represented in the passive voice but have the meaning of an active voice. GSNTI uses a straightforward rendering in the active voice. For example, the passive deponent ἀπεκρίθη in John 1:21 has been rendered by the active "*alijibu*" (he/she answered) instead of the passive "*alijibiwa*" (he/she was answered). SUVR and BHN do the same, even though they prefer the particle "*ka*" to "*li*" to render

an indicative aorist. VUL also has an indicative active, albeit in the present tense, "*respondit*" (he answers). The Greek deponent verbs do not necessarily correspond to Latin deponent, semideponent, or gerundive verbs. For example, GNT has a present participle ὁ παρακαλῶν (he who exhorts) in Rom 8:12, but VUL uses a deponent or gerundive "*qui exhortatur*" (he who exhorts). In ancient Greek, some verbs were defective rather than deponent as far as voice is concerned (some did not have all tenses in both active and middle voices) (Robertson 1934, 332); this is also the case with Latin.

Summary of Basic Equivalence between NT Greek, Latin, and Swahili

	Greek/Latin	Swahili	Swahili Renderings
Noun	+/+	+	Translatable
Nominative, accusative, dative	+/+	+	Translatable (Bound or Unbound)
Vocative	+/+	+	Personal pronoun or "*ee*" before nouns
Genitive	+/+	+	Possessive particle (e.g. "*wa*," "*ya*")
Pronoun	+/+	+	Translatable
Adjective	+/+	+	Translatable
Article	+/-	-	Not translatable as definite or indefinite article
Conjunction	+/+	+	Translatable
Adverb	+/+	+	Translatable
Preposition	+/+	+	Translatable
Interjection	+/+	+	Translatable
Verb	+/+	+	Translatable
Active Voice	+/+	+	Translatable
Middle Voice	+/+	+	Addition of a pers.pron. or "*ji*" particle
Passive voice	+/+	+	"*wa*" at the end of the verb
Indicative present active	+/+	+	"*na*"

	Greek/Latin	Swahili	Swahili Renderings
Indicative future active	+/+	+	*"ta"*
Indicative aorist active	+/-	+	*"li"*
Indicative present participle	+/+	+	*"ki"*
Indicative aorist participle	+/-	+	*"po"*
Participle noun	+/+	+	*"ye"*
Indicative Imperfect	+//+	+	*"alikuwa… ana…"*
Indicative perfect active	+/+	+	*"me"*
Indicative Pluperfect	+/+	+	*"alikuwa … amekwisha…"*
Subjunctive (exhortation)	+/+	+	*"e"*
Subjunctive (or condition)	+/+	+	*"kama"…."nge"*
Imperative	+/+	+	*"a"*
Infinitive	+/+	+	*"ku"* at the beginning of the verb
Deponent	+/+	-	Active voice
Verbal endings (person + number + tense markers are generally at the end, except for Greek aor, imp, perf, and pluper)	+/+	-	Person + Number + tense are expressed at the beginning of the verb (*"ni"*-*"u"*-*"a"*-*"tu"*-*"mu"*-*"wa"*+ *"na,"* *"ta,"* *"li,"* etc)
Gender (masc, fem. neut)	+/+	-	Persons and things
Bound morphemes (Verb + Personal Pronoun Endings)	+/+	+	Subject Personal Pronaouns+Verb+Objects

+: literal presence of linguistic item; - literal absence of a linguistic item

Conclusion

The study of the New Testament both in its original language and translation can prove to be enriching, as similarities and differences between the two or more types of texts are being highlighted for the sake of a constructive dialogue. This dialogue is challenging but possible when the epistemological privileges are equally yet distinctively granted to original biblical cultures, church cultures, and contemporary target cultures. An overview of the Greek and Swahili New Testament texts with regard to their lexical, morphological, syntactic, and semantic similarities and differences has shown how both languages strive to communicate the same message with accuracy and naturalness, even if some mismatch is inevitable.

The first striking difference is related to idioms: the Greek and Swahili languages have different idioms, which do not match in meaning when translated literally. A second important difference between the Greek and the Swahili languages concerns the presence of articles in Greek and their absence in Swahili, though in some cases Swahili is able to convey definiteness by the means of an elaborate demonstrative system or even by personal pronouns in vocative case (cf. Colossians 3:18–4:1). Thus, in Greek the presence of the definite article before nouns θεὸς, υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, λόγος, and others is not explicitly marked in Swahili, yet their original meanings are well conveyed, taking into account the Semitic background of some of these familiar terms, especially in the case of υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. A third substantial difference between the Greek and Swahili words of the New Testament pertains to proper names such as Jesus and others. The Swahili "*Yesu*" is a meaningless transliteration of the Greek meaningless ὁ Ἰησοῦς. But the meaningful Hebrew or Aramaic עֹשׂוֹהִי or "עֹשִׂי" could be rendered in Swahili as "*Yehoshua*" or the shorter form "*Yeshua*" (both meaningful transliterations) and be given the same original meaning. As for certain grammatical elements such as moods, tenses, voices, or aspects, the Swahili language has all the equivalents of the Greek of the New Testament moods, except for deponent verbs, though they may be conveyed in Swahili through active forms. In brief, a comparison between Greek, Latin, and Swahili linguistic patterns indicates that both Latin and Swahili do not have formal equivalence of all Greek words, but they still find ways of conveying at least some aspect of these lexical and grammatical features (see the case

of articles, aorist aspect, deponent verbs, gender, verbal affixes and suffixes, agglutinative or nonagglutinative features).

One of the most striking lexical findings concerns the mismatch between the Greek form of Jesus's name and its Latin or Swahili translations. Neither Latin nor Swahili have formal articles, while Greek even uses them before proper names. The original, authentic, and meaningful form of Jesus's name is the Hebrew or Aramaic עוֹשׁוֹהִי or עוֹשֵׁי (he saves). The Latin "*Iesus*" and the Swahili "*Yesu*"/"*Yezu*" stand as correspondent transliterations of the meaningless Greek ὁ Ἰησοῦς. In Latin church culture, the meaning of a proper name in and of itself may not be that important, but in the Swahili target culture a proper name is bound to be meaningful and informative through its own wording. Consequently, the Swahili "*Yehoshua*" or "*Yeshua*" would be a more considerate rendering of Jesus's name in view of the target culture frame and that of the most original biblical culture.

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