TRANSLATING AND PERFORMING (IN ISIZULU) THE POETRY OF PSALM 134, USING THE LITERARY-RHETORICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The translation of poetry requires attention to the literary and rhetorical features of the source text. Moreover, all the functions achieved by the poetic devices in the source text must be fulfilled by similar or other poetic devices in the receptor language. In this empirical study, Psalm 134 is analysed for its literary and rhetorical features, following the steps delineated by Wendland (2004). Various experimental translations, composed by isiZulu mother-tongue speakers are then discussed, as well as the performances of these poems (as songs, rap, or spoken poetry). The translations are evaluated on the basis of functional translation, using the traditional criteria of accuracy, naturalness, and clarity, as well as the additional criteria of artistry, aurality, and acceptability.

INTRODUCTION[1]

The translation of poetry requires poetic translators, but not all (Bible) translators have a poetic sensitivity. Indeed, a Zulu poet complained to Eugene Nida about the poor poetry in the isiZulu translation of the book of Psalms (Nida 2003:82). He requested permission to revise it, making the psalms more acceptable poetically, and, according to Nida, did so with great success.[2] Thus in this experimental study, isiZulu-speakers interested in poetry[3] were invited to participate in workshops at which they learned the basics of translation principles and poetic/oral devices (as used in Hebrew and Zulu

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[1] This paper is based on my PhD research at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal in 2017. See http://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/14223.

[2] The importance of using the poetic genre when translating sacred text was a key factor facilitating its acceptance by the Tamil community of India (Israel 2011:169, 178).

[3] Another example of community members being included in the drafting of Scripture is attested by Gilles Gravelle (2013).

poetry). They then made their own translations of the psalm under study, and thereafter performed their items before an audience, using song, rap, or spoken-poetry.

Prior to the participants attending the workshops, the researcher had analysed the Hebrew text using the twelve steps delineated by Ernst Wendland. This analysis highlighted the important issues to be discussed in the workshops. It is presented below, after which some of the isiZulu translations are discussed, as well as observations from their performances, both of which made use of this literary-rhetorical analysis. Thereafter various workshop translations are evaluated, to see if the application of the literary-rhetorical approach has been successful or not.

Poetry is language used in a particular way to arouse the emotions of the hearer, either through its rhetorical power or its aesthetic beauty. The translator of poetry needs to try to include the movement apparent in the original,[4] thereby creating a new poem. This requires that the translator be a "verbal artist", utilising appropriate poetic features in the receptor language. To achieve this goal, a systematic methodology is needed. The literary-rhetorical approach to functional translation, as outlined by Wendland (2004), provides a useful guide which can serve as the basis for innovative (and faithful) translation into a receptor language. In this study, the methodology is applied to Psalm 134, and thereafter the literary and rhetorical features of the Hebrew poetry are transformed by mother-tongue speakers into beautiful and powerful isiZulu text, which is performed orally.

LITERARY-RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE HEBREW OF PSALM 134

Psalm 134 was selected as the first psalm to be translated in the workshops as it is a simple praise-psalm with only three verses,[5] and lends itself to singing,[6] being easily

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4   "A poem is a movement …" (Nasi 2016).
5   Psalm 117, the shortest psalm, has 17 words in the Hebrew. Psalm 134 has 23 words.
6   If one searches on the Internet, it is apparent that there are numerous sung performances of Ps 134.

remembered. The steps outlined by Wendland (2004:230–245) for the Hebrew analysis are as follows.

Context of the text

Psalm 134 is the last of the fifteen Psalms of Ascent, and is considered by many scholars to have served a purpose within the cult (Mowinckel 1962/1982). As it is part of a larger unit of discourse, it needs to be analysed within the whole (Grossberg 1989). Indeed, the two motifs of the psalm, viz. to praise Yahweh and receive His blessing, summarise the goals of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and the psalm thus serves as an appropriate finale to the collection (Brueggemann and Bellinger 2014:561). Other scholars of the Psalms note that key-terms group psalms into units, often with alternating psalms being used for morning/evening worship.[7] According to this pattern, Goulder (1998:302–303) believes that Psalm 134 was an evening psalm.

As mentioned, the key idea in Psalm 134 is that of "blessing", both "bringing blessing to the Lord" and "being blessed by the Lord". These two themes support the most likely use of the psalm,[8] namely that the Psalms of Ascent were sung by pilgrims on their annual visit to Jerusalem for the agricultural festivals.[9] The Mishnah suggests that later the Levites sang these fifteen psalms at the Feast of Tabernacles, as they stood on the fifteen steps of the temple. Another ancient Jewish document, the Tosefta,[10] describes Temple liturgy during the Feast of Tabernacles, and includes verses 1 and 3 of Psalm 134. Whether the psalm itself was performed in the liturgy of the Temple is questionable,[11] but it does seem to be "an impressive closing liturgy"

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[7] Goulder (1998) has divided the Psalter into a number of major collections, such as the Korah psalms (42–49, 84–85, 87–88), the "prayers of David" (Psalms 51–72), and the Asaph psalms (50, 73–83).

[8] "A psalm can be understood only in the light of the circumstances for which it was composed" (Goulder 1990:25).

[9] Harvest imagery features in many of the Psalms of Ascent, suggesting this notion. Also see Bullock (2001:79).

[10] The Tosefta is a compilation of Jewish oral law from the same period as the Mishnah (late second century). See Sukkah 4.7–9 (trans. Jacob Neusner; New York: KTAV, 1977).

[11] Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:487) suggest that redactors probably composed and added Ps 134 to the collection of Psalms of Ascent, to give a fitting closure in the form of a doxology.

(Hossfeld and Zenger 2011:487), a doxology of praise at the end of the pilgrimage. The serving priests are reminded to continue to praise Yahweh, and the pilgrims return to their homes with a blessing.

Boundaries of the text

The psalm has only three verses, and thus the boundaries of the composition are clearly defined. The initial verses are addressed to "the servants of the Lord", who are called upon to praise Him. The third (and final) verse is a prayer for God to bless these servants. There are thus two voices apparent in the psalm: that of the psalmist or worship-leader (in verses 1 and 2), and that of the "servants of the Lord" or worshippers (in verse 3).

As the closing psalm in the collection known as the Psalms of Ascent, Ps 134 summarises theological motifs and key ideas presented in the collection of fifteen psalms (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011:489). For example, Ps 134 includes the merismus עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ ((the Lord) who made heaven and earth) which was also used in Pss 121:2 and 124:8 (Brueggemann and Bellinger 2014:561).12 Similarly, the formula יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן (may the Lord bless you from Zion) as used in Ps 134:3, echoes its use earlier in the collection, in Ps 128:5. There is also a significant overlap in terminology between Psalms 133 and 134, suggesting that the latter is a continuation of the former.13

Outside of the Psalms of Ascent, the LXX translators also linked Psalm 134 with Psalms 135–136.14 Consequently they changed the MT version of Ps 134:1 to reflect that seen in Ps 135:2 (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011:489–490). Also, the use of the phrase "servants of the Lord who stand in the house of the Lord" in both 134:1 and 135:1–2

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12   The same formula appears in Psalms 115:15 and 146:6. See Bullock (2001:129).

13   For example, both psalms begin with הִנֵּה, which LXX translates as "but see" in both cases, thus linking these two psalms. Also, both 133:3c–d and 134:1 have an atypical use of the root בָּרַךְ (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011: 486–487). Both psalms also make reference to "Zion" as the place of blessing.

14   Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:489) note that Psalms 135 and 136 are often grouped together as they cover similar content (the history of Israel's origins).

serves as another link between these two psalms, and strengthens the union between the last two books of the Psalter.

Text-critical analysis[15]

It is generally accepted that in the ancient world there were variant copies of biblical texts in circulation. For example, "(ostensibly) there were three editions of the psalms … in circulation in the late Second Temple period" (Flint, cited in Wendland, 2015). However, as Ps 134 is so brief, there are only two contested textual issues. First, the LXX adds an extra description at the end of v.1: "in the courts of the house of our God" appears after "who stand in the house of the Lord". The addition results in 11 syllables, which contribute one accent per colon, thereby supporting a better rhythm structure. The addition, in parallel with the previous clause, also mirrors the parallelism evident in Ps 135:2. However, this addition to the MT is not supported by the Qumran text 11QPs(a) and many translations.[16]

The other textual issue is found in verse 3: the Qumran text 11QPs(a) has "the name of Yahweh" rather than simply "Yahweh" as in the MT. This addition results in a 7:8 syllable line, but the rhythm pattern suggests it should not be included (Dahood 1970).

Genre and sub-genre

Brueggemann and Bellinger (2014) classify Ps 134 as a psalm of simple praise or mutual blessing, with the sub-genre being that of a "psalm of orientation". Westermann (1984:124) refers to such psalms as "declarative praise", and more recently deClaisse-Walford et al. (2014:940) classify Ps 134 as a community hymn.

The psalm is borne out of a stable situation, with no tension to be resolved. Rather, as Gunkel (1967:29–30) notes, the focus of such hymns is always Yahweh's majesty. Bullock (2001:126) agrees that such psalms point to the perfection of God's character,

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[15] MT = Masoretic Text; LXX = Septuagint; 11QPs (a) = Qumran text of the Psalms.
[16] NJB follows the LXX.

rather than giving reasons for the praise in terms of blessings received. As a result, the language is often generic, using formulas such as "Hallelujah" and "Praise the Lord".

An important element of such praise psalms was the understanding that the people were in the very presence of the Lord himself (Mowinckel 1982:81). Although Ps 134 includes this notion, with the first two verses calling for worship to the Lord, the psalm is distinctive in also including a blessing from God to the people.

Bellinger (1990:81) suggests the following typical structure for a hymn of praise:

Introduction: a call to praise (v.1)

Body; a reason for praising God. The relative clause in v.3b gives a reason for praise.

Conclusion: a renewed call to praise (v.2)

Repetition,[17] key concepts

An annotated diagram of the structure of Ps 134 follows.

V.co	post-Vb 3	post-Vb 2	post-Vb 1	Verb	pre-Vb 1
1a	יְהוָה	כָּל-עַבְדֵי	אֶת-יְהוָה	בָּרְכוּ	הִנֵּה
	the Lord	all-servants-of	DO-the Lord	bless(2PP)	Behold
1b	בַּלֵּילוֹת	בְּבֵית-יְהוָה	הָעֹמְדִים		
	at-night	in-house-of -the Lord	the ones standing		
2a		קֹדֶשׁ	יְדֵכֶם	שְׂאוּ-י	
		(to) holy	your-hands	Lift up (2p pl)	
2b			אֶת-יְהוָה	וּבָרְכוּ	
			DO-the Lord	and-bless (2p pl)	
3a		מִצִּיּוֹן	יְהוָה	יְבָרֶכְךָ	
		from-Zion	the Lord	May-he-bless-you (sg)	
3b	וָאָרֶץ	שָׁמַיִם	עֹשֵׂה		
	and-earth	heavens	the one-making		

The key terms בָּרְכוּ (bless) and יְהוָה (Lord) are repeated, both being used in all of the verses. In v. 1, יְהוָה (Lord) is used 3 times, indicating the central role of Yahweh in

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[17]   Use of the same shading indicates repeated words. V = verse; co = colon; Vb = verb.

worship. Although the word בָּרְכוּ (bless) is repeated, the meaning is different in verses 1–2 and v. 3. In the former, the sense is that of praising the Lord whereas in v. 3 it is a prayer asking the Lord to bless his servant(s).[18]

Another set of related ideas is בֵית־יְהוָה (house of the Lord) in v. 1, קֹדֶשׁ (holy (place)) in v. 2, and the two locatives מִצִּיּוֹן (from Zion) (the holy mountain) and שָׁמַיִם (heaven) in v. 3. All these terms indicate the dwelling-place of Yahweh.[19] As אֶרֶץ (earth) is part of the formula in v. 3, it also can be included in this notion of a place of his dwelling.

Other "semantic pairs" are עַבְדֵי (servants (of)) in 1a and הָעֹמְדִים ((the ones) standing (to serve) in 1b, as well as שְׂאוּ־יְדֵכֶם (lift hands, in prayer) in v. 2 and the prayer for blessing יְבָרֶכְךָ in v. 3.

Disjunction[20]

Verse 1 has several disjunctive features. First there is the attention-getter, הִנֵּה.[21] This is followed by an imperative בָּרְכוּ (bless) and a vocative כָּל־עַבְדֵי יְהוָה (all you servants of the Lord).

Verse 2 has two imperatives, שְׂאוּ (lift up) and וּבָרְכוּ (bless), resulting in three consecutive imperatives before a change in verse 3 to the *piel* imperfect (jussive) form of יְבָרֶכְךָ. The change in the established pattern (a disjunctive feature) draws attention to this final verse, the high-point of the psalm.

Verse 3 has the formula שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ (heaven and earth) as well as the key term מִצִּיּוֹן ((from) Zion), both of which add emphasis and emotional weight to the psalm. Although the psalm is very short, it has been carefully constructed so that the form contributes to the meaning and indicates the highpoint (Nasselqvist 2012).

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[18] The Hebrew has a singular pronoun, suggesting reference to the worship leader/psalmist. However, it is generally interpreted as a collective reference.

[19] Each of the verses in this psalm includes reference to a place of worship (Brueggemann and Bellinger 2014:560).

[20] Disjunction is indicated by formulae, vocatives, and imperatives (Wendland 2004).

[21] Gerstenberger (2001:375) suggests that הִנֵּה (behold!) is possibly a scribal addition (following Ps 133). It could also be interpreted as a means of intensifying the imperative וּבָרְכ (bless).

Areas of stylistic concentration

Verses 1 and 2 have similar content, but the second verse adds detail on "how" the servants should praise the Lord, viz. with lifted hands. This is a symbolic way of extending praise to the Lord: acknowledging his greatness and one's dependence on him. Verse 2 also adds an emphasis on the holiness of the place where they are serving.

In verses 1 and 2, the key-term Yahweh is repeated three times, drawing attention to the centrality of the Lord, the one who is to be exhorted. In verse 3 the use of Yahweh is highlighted even further with Yahweh now becoming the subject of the verb,[22] and with the addition of an attributive phrase in apposition to Yahweh.

Verse 3 is the highpoint of the psalm, and several features contribute to its prominence. Apart from the heightened use of Yahweh, there is also the inclusion of the key term "Zion", a formula ("heaven and earth")[23] and the switch to a jussive after a string of four imperative verbs. These features highlight verse 3 as climactic within the psalm, and thereby give prominence to its content: the receiving of blessing from the Lord. Because of his blessing, he should be praised (as in verses 1 and 2).

The psalm also includes the poetic features of alliteration, assonance, and repetition, liberally used in all three verses. These features add to the aesthetic beauty of the poem, and contribute to its rhetorical power as well as facilitating memorability.

Structure of the text

The first two verses show two chiastic patterns, which contribute to the psalm's rhythm and memorability (Brueggemann and Bellinger 2014:560.):

    i) "bless" / "you servants" / "you who serve" / "bless".

    ii) "bless the Lord" / "house of the Lord" / "holy (place)" / "Bless the Lord".

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[22] The blessing of the pilgrims by Yahweh reflects the Aaronic blessing in Num 6:22. In the same way as the people of Israel were blessed as they entered Canaan, so the pilgrims were blessed as they returned home (deClaisse-Walford et al. 2014:941).

[23] עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ (the one making heaven and earth) is a cultic formula, according to Gerstenberger (2001:376).

The third verse utilises various devices to give it prominence as the key verse in the psalm. First, the use of parallelism in 3a and 3b gives focus to Yahweh, as does the addition of the phrase "maker of heaven and earth", further defining the one who is the source of blessing. Ellipsis (with the omission of the verb in 3b) also serves to highlight Yahweh in 3a.[24]

The three verses all use the verb בָּרַךְ (bless), which serves to unite the psalm as a cohesive composition.

Semantic study

Some scholars[25] assert that כָּל-עַבְדֵי יְהוָה (all (you) servants of the Lord) refers to the priests performing their service in the Temple. Support for this notion comes from the use here of particular terms for "the place of the activity", and "the activity itself". First, various terms are used in the psalms for different parts of the Temple: "house of Yahweh" is generally believed to refer to the area where the *priests* served, whereas "courts of the house of our God" (as in Pss 135:2b and 100:4) is understood to refer to "the place of the laity, even of the Gentiles" (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011:486). Second, the verb בָּרַךְ (as used here in Ps 134:1, 2) is attested to be the verb used when the blessing activity is that of *priests*.[26] Third, the verb contained in הָעֹמְדִים (the ones standing) does at times (e.g., Deut 10:8) refer to priestly service in the Temple, such as offering sacrifices or praying.[27] However, this is not always the case.

Other scholars[28] believe that כָּל-עַבְדֵי יְהוָה (all (you) servants of the Lord) includes all members of the community of faith. Gerstenberger maintains that this is the correct interpretation in the late psalms (as in Pss 113:1 and 135:1). According to him, עַבְדֵי

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[24] Ellipsis often serves as a "literary marker", emphasising the attributes of Yahweh (Lama 2013:112).

[25] See Gunkel (1967), Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:485–488), and Krauss (1989:892–93).

[26] בָּרַךְ (bless) is also used in Num 6:24–26, when the (Aaronic) priests had the privilege to bless the people.

[27] However, "standing" (v. 1) could be an emendation arising from the influence of Ps 135:2 (Gerstenberger 2001:2, 375).

[28] E.g., Gerstenberger (2001:375); DeClaisse-Walford et al. (2014:940).

(servants) in these psalms refers metonymically to all believers, who are encouraged to worship Yahweh.

הָעֹמְדִים (the ones standing) has the general meaning of "being in the service of" (e.g., 1 Kgs 1:2) and the special sense of priestly service in the Temple (see Deut 10:8).[29] However, in Ps 134, the definite article appears before "standing" which Hossfeld and Zenger believe suggests the former, i.e., the service of general believers.[30] However, עָמַד can also have an idiomatic interpretation, meaning "(those) enduring".

בַּלֵּילוֹת (at night) suggests that either the priests were guarding the Temple at night (Kittel 1929),[31] or were performing an evening ritual.[32] Night rituals were not unusual in the ancient Near East (e.g., see Isa 30:29 and Ps 3:5), and were often a means to seek God's deliverance (deClaisse-Walford et al. 2014:940). The LXX translation of Ps 134 suggests a night liturgy as it moves "in the nights" to v. 2, within the context of the action of the people. However, Hossfeld and Zenger (2001:486, 488) consider it unlikely that night liturgies were performed in the Temple, for there is no record of such events in the Old Testament. Rather they understand "night" as an extension of priestly service which continued into the night.[33] There are examples in the psalms of services of evening worship (e.g., Ps 141:2) but in such cases the Hebrew term for "evening" (not "night") is used. Some suggest that "night" could be metonymic of "day and night" (meaning "continually"), as in 1 Chron 9:33. Lexicons[34] define לֵילוֹת as "night, in opposition to day" or "of gloom, protective shadow (fig.), a time of trial, weeping, suffering, and communion with God". Although this latter interpretation is

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29   See Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:488).
30   This is in contrast to the use of "standing" in Ps 135:2a where the relative particle is used, suggesting "presence", i.e., being in the Temple (Hossfeld and Zenger 2011:486).
31   The Temple was guarded all the time to prevent theft of valuables or contamination (Kittel 1929:281–282).
32   "Nocturnal services were held before all the important festivals (Gunkel, Psalms, 572–3). References to night meals during Tabernacles are evident in the Mishnah (Sukkah 2:6), and night liturgies are mentioned by Josephus (Ap.1.22, 199-200).
33   See 1 Chron 9:27, 33.
34   E.g., BDB (1999) and TWOT (1999).

valid in Ps 6:6, the one generally preferred in the biblical context is that of "night, in opposition to day".

שְׂאוּ-יְדֵכֶם (lift hands) is a formula which occurs frequently in the psalms (e.g., Ps 28 and Ps 63) and is symbolic of prayer.

קֹדֶשׁ (holy (place)) is thought to be a reference to the Holy of Holies, symbolising the presence of God (through the representation of Shekinah glory in the Ark of the Covenant). The word can be parsed in two ways, either as an accusative of place (implying the priests should be *in* the Holy of Holies when they lift their hands) or an accusative of direction (suggesting the priests should lift their hands *towards* the Holy of Holies). The Ugaritic text has a parallel passage (Krt: 75–76), which suggests that direction is implied (Dahood 1970).

The Hebrew word וּבָרְכוּ (bless) is used frequently in the Hebrew Bible (more than 400 times) and 4 times in this psalm of 3 verses! It generally has the idea of "kneeling down", thereby showing submission or worship to another (DeClaisse-Walford et al. 2014:940). Brueggemann and Bellinger (2014:561) maintain that blessing is the capacity to "live fully in the world" and this capacity comes from the divine presence. This psalm has three different locatives referring to God's presence, thus supporting this notion.

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה (May Yahweh bless you) occurs only in v. 3a and in Ps 128:5. Gerstenberger (2001:376) asserts that in this context it is a highly cultic greeting. In some contexts, as in the book of Ruth, it is a simple greeting. Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:486) view Ps 134:3 as the passing on of the blessing to the people of that which Yahweh gave to the priests in the previous psalm (Ps 133:3d).

Phonic system and other poetic features

Repetition is an important poetic device for oral communication, as in the psalms. Not only does it assist with remembering the text, but it also provides a strong rhythm which enhances the psalm's aesthetic beauty. In this psalm, extensive use is made of repetition. For example, בָּרְכוּ אֶת-יְהוָה (bless the Lord) occurs twice, בָּרְכוּ (bless) is

repeated in v. 3, and יְהוָה occurs 5 times. Another form of repetition is alliteration, and this is apparent in the repetition of שׁ in 3b and בְּ in v. 1 (four of the eight words).

Verse 2 is also carefully constructed with שׁ at the beginning and end of שְׂאוּ־יְדֵכֶם קֹדֶשׁ (v.2a). In that colon, the terminal vowels in קֹדֶשׁ and יְדֵכֶם are also the same.

Verse 3 shows a heightened use of poetic features, thereby drawing attention to this verse as the most important in the psalm. Each of the two cola has three words, thereby providing rhythmic parallelism. They also incorporate semantic parallelism with עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ (the one making heaven and earth) in parallel with יְהוָה (Yahweh).

Speech functions

Speech functions contribute to the rhetorical appeal of a text. In Ps 134, the principal speech function is "bless", used as an imperative (in vv. 1–2) and a jussive (v. 3). The direction of blessing is from the worshippers to Yahweh (vv. 1–2) and then is reversed, passing from Yahweh to the worshippers (v. 3). Thus Gerstenberger (2001:376) calls it "a blessing exchange" although the sense of "bless" is not the same in the two directions.

Rhetorical devices are used to support various functions in poetry. The following devices, and the functions they support, are apparent in Ps 134:

- The repetition of בָּרְכוּ אֶת־יְהוָה (bless the Lord) in verses 1 and 2 highlights the principal purpose of the psalm, viz. to exalt the Lord. He is exalted as the one deserving praise and the one who distributes blessing. The repetition of this clause (identical verb and direct object) also serves to unite these two verses into one section dealing with the first theme, viz. the people "blessing" the Lord.
- The repetition of the same verb בָּרְכוּ (bless) in the first section (vv. 1–2) and the second section (v. 3) holds the whole psalm in unity.
- The use of an exclamation הִנֵּה (behold) at the very beginning of the psalm highlights the importance of the psalm's message.

- The use of an extended vocative with two expressions in parallel (1a–1b) emphasises the importance of the message. Vocatives are a feature of oral communication, and demand the attention of the addressees.

- Imperative verbs indicate that an active participation is demanded, or expected, of the hearers. Such verbs have strong rhetorical force, seeking to influence behaviour. This psalm has four imperatives in two verses ("bless" in v. 1a and v. 2b, and "lift up" in v. 2a), resulting in a poem with significant rhetorical power.

- Imperative verbs also move the text forward, towards a peak. In this psalm, the four imperatives (vv. 1–2) project the text towards its climax in v. 3. Verse 3 is climactic in that "blessing *from* the Lord" follows (perhaps unexpectedly) "blessing *to* the Lord".

- The use of three locatives all linked to a place where God dwells emphasises the important connection between praise, God's presence, and his blessing. The locatives used are בְּבֵית-יְהוָה (house of the Lord), קֹדֶשׁ (the holy (place)), and צִיּוֹן (Zion, the holy mountain).

- Repetition of expressions (e.g., "bless the Lord"), words (e.g., "the Lord"), and sounds (as seen in alliteration and assonance) are all frequent in this psalm. They facilitate memorisation of the text and contribute to the psalm's aesthetic appeal.

- Parallelism, both rhythmic and semantic, emphasises the message of v. 3, the theme of the psalm (the Lord blessing His people).

- The use of a jussive verb (in v. 3) after a string of imperative verbs breaks the pattern, thereby highlighting v. 3 as the psalm's climax.

Form-functional matches in the receptor language

Zulu songs tend to use multi-voice parts (antiphonal singing) (Rycroft 1967), thus can easily accommodate the two voices of Ps 134.[35] Also, Zulu praise poetry (*izibongo*) makes frequent use of repetition thus suggesting that the repetition apparent in the Hebrew text can be effective in Zulu too. Zulu poetry also at times utilises chiastic

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[35] Antiphonal singing was used in some of the empirical performance-translations, usually with a chorus and one or more solo voices. See Dickie (2017:277).

structures, and thus the chiasm apparent in the Hebrew text of Ps 134 can probably be mirrored in the Zulu translation. However, some features of the Hebrew text will not carry over to the Zulu form. For example, the rhythm of Hebrew and that of Zulu will be different. In the Hebrew of Ps 134, the rhythm from verse 1 to verse 2 changes (with v. 1 having two longer lines). It is probable that the Hebrew psalm was chanted or sung within a service of worship, thereby serving a liturgical function. In the case of the Zulu songs, their use will be more informal, and one can expect various approaches to the aspect of rhythm, depending on whether the performance is spoken-poetry, rap, or song.

Provisional translation

Participants composed their own translations of Ps 134, after studying the Hebrew-English interlinear text and several translations (in both isiZulu and English). Key terms were discussed and attention was given to the use of poetic features of the Hebrew text and their suitability within Zulu poetry. The compositions were composed with the purpose of performing them before a live audience, and thus the poets focussed on relevant and engaging communication.[36] Consequently they had the flavour of Zulu oral art, and, in particular, a strong rhythm.[37]

Assessment of success of the work

The main criteria used for evaluating the workshop translations were those relevant to literary-rhetorical translation, viz. artistry, aurality, and audience acceptability.[38] The traditional criteria (accuracy, naturalness, and clarity) were also part of the evaluation; naturalness and clarity are integral elements within "acceptability". The criterion of

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[36] In line with Maxey (2016), the primary goal of the translation was not seen to be "recuperating the written text" but rather to present the message of the psalm in a way that young people would find appealing and meaningful.

[37] Traditional forms of poetry have often been used effectively to translate a biblical message. One example is the Kristapuruna, an oral poem of 10 962 verses written using traditional Indian meter (George 2016).

[38] See Wendland (2004, Chapter 10).

accuracy, or faithfulness to the original text, is traditionally given the most weight, but for the purposes of this study, it was considered less important.

In line with Reception Theory, assessments of clarity, naturalness, and acceptability were seen to be the prerogative of the audience and thus were evaluated by audience members in interviews with a sample. The remaining three criteria (exegetical accuracy, literary and rhetorical artistry, and aurality) were assessed by the researcher. The findings for these six criteria are summarised in the next section.

EMPIRICAL COMPOSITIONS AND EVALUATION

In the empirical study, 17 compositions of Ps 134 were prepared and performed by Zulu poets. Of these, three examples have been selected as representing interesting features. In each case, the poem is first presented, and then analysed according to the criteria of exegetical accuracy, literary and rhetorical artistry, and aurality.

Example 1[39]

    1a. *Uk'thula*[40] *ebandleni.*
       Peace   in the church.
    1b. **Thakazelan'**   **uSomandla**,
      Sing praise to the Almighty,
    1c. *nin' eza* **Somandla** *iz'nceku*,
       you the Almighty's servants

1e. *Melishona zona-zi -dlinz'*,	alliteration (z-), assonance (-ona)

      who when it sets, the ones meditating

1f. *ekusebenzeni kwesa* **Somandl'** *isiqu.*	<u>assonance</u> (-e)
who serve to the Almighty Himself.	
2a. *Tusan' ngezandla zenu*,	alliteration (z-), assonance (-a)
Wave (be joyful) with hands your,	
2b. ***thakazelan'*** ***uSomandla*** *ethempelini*	alliteration (th-)

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[39] Dickie 2017:266.
[40] *Thula* is an ideophone indicating "be absolutely quiet" (Nyembezi 1990:46).

        sing praise to the Almighty in the temple,

   3a. *Ngom'dali   wezinsuku,*

       By the creator of days (everything),

   3b. **uSomandl'**   *eSiyoni, manibusiseke*.

       the Almighty in Zion, may you be bless-able.

Exegetical accuracy

The poem above shows a few small variations with the Hebrew text. These are:

- In v. 1, בְּבֵית- יְהוָה (house of the Lord) is not translated.

- In colon 1b, the Hebrew verb is בָּרְכוּ (bless). This was translated by *thakazelan'* (sing praises) which is more specific than the Hebrew.

- In colon 1e, the Hebrew word הָעֹמְדִים ((the ones) standing) is generally translated in the sense of "serving". This poet had the concept of "serving" in 1f, but added the notion of "meditating" in 1e. Meditating in prayer could be part of the priests' service, thus it is not necessarily wrong, but it does make explicit something not apparent in the Hebrew.

- In colon 2b, קֹדֶשׁ ((to) the holy (place)) is replaced by "in the temple" which is not geographically accurate. The persons in v.2 were probably standing in the courtyard of the Temple, and are being called upon to lift their hands *towards* the Temple.

- The final colon uses the extension *-eke-* which implies capability. The Hebrew indicates that the Lord is the agent, and thus the isiZulu should either follow the Hebrew form or use a passive verb "be blessed". Thus, the sense has been altered. This verse raises the question: where are the boundaries of acceptable exegesis, and who sets them?[41] Reception Theory maintains that the responsibility is essentially that of the community, but it does require an educated audience.[42]

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[41] Of course, the *skopos* (purpose) of the text must be clear, whether the translation is to be accepted as "biblical text" or "an adaptation of biblical text".

[42] This matter continues to be controversial. "The Hebrew text often allows more flexibility in terms of understanding and 'meaning potential' than form-focused exegetes are willing to grant" (Wendland, personal correspondence, 2017), but clearly an informed audience is required for a competent evaluation.

Literary and rhetorical artistry

Despite the exegetical weaknesses described above, this poem has great strength in its use of oral artistry. The following poetic and oral devices are noted:

- Parallel uses of divine name:

  There is an interesting movement in the uses of the divine name: "Almighty" (1b), "Almighty himself" (1f), "Almighty in the temple" (2b) and "Almighty in Zion" (3b). The repetition of "Almighty" assists with memorability (as per oral criticism) but the variation provides interest and aesthetic pleasure.

- Metonymy:

  In colon 3a, "creator of days" is metonymic of "creator of all".

- Interesting, creative vocabulary:

  The poet uses several unusual expressions: e.g.:

  - *thusan'* in 2a to indicate a joyful raising of hands
  - "when the sun sets" to indicate "night"
  - *uk'thula* (an ideophone, in 1a) as an attention-getter
  - use of a different "formula" in 3a. This is stimulating to the hearer in that the metonymy triggers some thinking in the listener.

- Omission of final vowels (ellipsis):

  When preceding a vowel-initial word, the final vowel is dropped. This is aurally correct and more poetic and easy on the ear. It probably also serves the rhythm pattern.

- Intentional assonance and alliteration:

  Verses 1–2 show intentional assonance and alliteration which add to the aesthetic enjoyment of the poem.

- Repetitions:

  - Repetition of the divine name across all the verses holds the psalm together.
  - 1b cf. 2b. The first colon (1a) is an introductory attention-getter, thus the inclusio of 1b and 2b frames the words of the "pilgrims" (before there is a change of voice in v.3 to the "priests").

- Marked word order:

The verb in final position in 3b highlights the action, the highpoint in the psalm.

- Strong rhythm:

    Poetic lines of equal length (composed through the use of ellipsis) produce a strong rhythm.

Aurality

In addition to the aural features implicit in the poetic devices in (1b), the poet performed this item with a strong, clear reading, and with a good pronounced rhythm. Unfortunately, he had not had sufficient time to memorise the poem and so read it from a paper. This detracted from his ability to connect with the audience more directly, and to use his body. However, his tone of voice and the speed of delivery showed pleasing variability, and the click sound at the end of colon 1f was very pronounced, giving emphasis to "the Almighty Himself".

EXAMPLE 2[43]

1a. *Nakani* **nidumise**   *uSimakade,*   asso. (-a) on stressed
    Focus (let you) praise   the Lord,   syllables

1b. *nin**a** nonke zinceku zikaSimakade*,   alliteration (**z-**, n-)
       you   all   servants   of the Lord

1c. *nin**a** eni**b**ambelele   **ku**Sima**k**ade **k**unzima.*   asso.(**-a**, -e), allit.(**k-**)
       you   you who hold on to the Lord in difficulties

2a. *Phakamiselani   izandla*   assonance (-a)
        Lift up   hands

2b. **nidumise**   *uSimakade*   assonance (-ise) cf. 3a
        (Let you) praise   the Lord

3a. *Makanibusise   uSimakade*
       May he yet bless you   the Lord,

3b. *uSimakade owenze   umhlaba   nezulu.*
       the Lord   who made   earth   and heaven.

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43   Dickie (2017:258).

Exegetical accuracy

The poet of Item 17 chose alternative interpretations for "standing" and "night" in colon 1c. His translation *nibambelele*[44] *kuSimakade kunzima* (you who hold on intensely to the Lord in difficulties) is exegetically possible although none of the published translations or commentaries referenced take this interpretation, and it is not the probable interpretation in the cultic context. Nevertheless, it is of interest as it reflects an observation from Reception Theory that "gaps" (in meaning in the source text) provide hermeneutic opportunities for the hearers to apply the text in a meaningful way to their personal situations. This poet was experiencing a lot of difficulty in his life, thus possibly the more symbolical interpretation was particularly meaningful to him.[45]

Other exegetical observations are the following:

- Colon 2a lacks the direction to which the hands should be lifted (towards the holy place).

- Colon 3a lacks "Zion", the third mention in this psalm of the place where God is (and thus thematic).

- עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ is defined as "maker of heaven and earth". This poet reversed the order (*owenze umhlaba nezulu* (who made earth and heaven)), but other poets did as in the Hebrew, thus the order of the two constituents does not seem to matter in isiZulu.

Literary and rhetorical artistry

• Direct speech:

The exclamation, *Nakani*, and the assonance on the stressed syllables in 1a draws attention to the message that follows.

• Repetitions:

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44 The extension *-elel-* usually implies "a repeated action, an intense action, or the perfect execution of an action" (Taljaard and Bosch 1988:73).

45 Another poet (also going through personal difficulty) independently took the same interpretation.

- *Simakade* (6x) and ***nidumise*** (2x) in these 3 verses assists with memorisation, and unites the verses of the psalm. The frequent repetition of the divine name (once more than in the Hebrew text) as well as the deliberate assonance of the –*a* sound in the first colon (the stressed syllables of *nakani* and *uSimakade*) points to the message of the psalm (i.e., those who are suffering, as per 1c, must "focus" on "the Lord").

- Assonance (especially on stressed syllables, as in 1a) and the alliteration patterns also serve as mnemonic aids.

- Inclusio (in 1a and 2b) unites the contents of verses 1 and 2.

- Tail-head linkage (3a, 3b) provides aesthetic pleasure and serves as a mnemonic device.

- Rhythm:
  - Ellipsis in 3b maintains the rhythm over 3a–3b.
  - The poetic line in 2a and 2b is very short, but regular over the two cola.
  - The final word in 1c breaks the narrative rhythm established by the former lines, thereby giving focus to this notion. (It is also the middle of the inclusio formed by 1a and 2b.)
  - Almost all lines terminate with *uSimakade* (establishing a poetic rhythm), thus drawing attention to the last word in 1c when the rhythm is broken.

Aurality

Features of the performance also served to highlight verse 3 as in focus, with the singer significantly increasing the beat of the music before colon 3a. He also slowed down the pace as he sang the final words in colon 3b. These two devices gave prominence to this verse in the psalm.[46] Another point of interest is that the performer used a known tune, but with new words; this appeared to be successful. Although he had not been able to memorise the poem and needed to refer to his written copy, he smiled through much of the song and made eye contact at certain points, particularly at

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[46] As Susan Bassnett (2014:153–157) notes: "Embodied performances can be helpful in stretching our ideas about what translation is and how to evaluate it." Performed translations go beyond the words in what they express.

the end. This included the audience in the performance and greatly added to the communicative effectiveness of the poem.

EXAMPLE 3[47]

1a. _Manini   kanjalo_
     (May you) stop right there
1b. **_nibusise_**   _Inkosi yamakhosi_
     (let you) bless   the Lord of lords
1c. _ngokuyisebenzela_[48]   _imini nobusuku._
      by serving him   day   and night
2a. Phakamisani _izandla   zenu_
       Lift up   hands   your
2b. _ninike_   _Inkosi   yamakhosi   udumo,_
      (let you) give the Lord of lords   praise/fame,
2c. **_nimubusise_**   lo   _ophakeme._
      (let you) bless   this the highest one.
3a. **_Enga_**_thi Inkosi yamakhosi_ **_ingani_****_busisa_**   _eyaseSiyoni_   alliteration
(nga-)

        May   the Lord of lords   may he bless you   from   Zion
3b. **_enga_**_thi_ _angani_**_busisa_**   alliteration
(nga-)

         May   may he bless you
3c. lo   _owahlukanisa ubumnyama nokukhanya_   assonance (-
o)

      this one who separated   darkness   and light
3d. _owahlukanisa amanzi   nolwandle._   assonance (-
o, -a)

       who separated   water and sea.

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47 Dickie (2017:262).
48 _nga-_ indicates "with / by (means of)", i.e., instrumental (Taljaard and Bosch 1988:48).

Exegetical accuracy

- In colon 1c, the translation indicates a "means" (by …) whereas it should be (as in the Hebrew) a "state" הָעֹמְדִים (the ones serving).
- Colon 2a omits "to the holy place".
- Cola 3c–d replace the traditional formula עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ (maker of heaven and earth) with two expressions reflecting the same truth.

Literary and rhetorical artistry

- Creation of a new formula:

  עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ is defined as "maker of heaven and earth"; this seemed to be a well-known "formula" and was translated by a new formula, created by the poet, which carries the same broad reference metonymically to the Creator of all: *lo owahlukanisa ubumnyama nokukhanya, owahlukanisa amanzi nolwandle* (This one who separated darkness and light, who separated water and sea). Moreover, in his new formula, the poet introduced parallelism, thereby adding to the rhythm and beauty of the poem.

- Step-down parallelism:

  The parallel lines show a "step down": for example, 2b cf. 2c, 3a cf. 3b, 3c cf. 3d.[49] This is in contrast to the "build up" apparent in Hebrew poetry. This tendency needs to be further explored in Zulu poetry.

- Devices to highlight v. 3 as in focus:
  - The use of 5 verbs with imperative force (1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 2c) is followed by a change to the use of verbs with subjunctive mood and including the auxiliary verb *engathi* (3a and 3b).
  - V. 3 has 4 cola (compared to 3 cola in the other verses), with 3b repeating the main content of 3a, and 3c and 3d in parallel.
  - 3c and 3d are an extended interpretation of "creator of heaven and earth". By giving these extended clauses in apposition to "the Lord of lords", weight and focus is applied to this verse.

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[49]   Dickie (2017:158 Item 19) also shows an "easing off" from 1e to 1f.

- The use of the demonstrative *lo* just before v. 3 (in 2c) and again within v. 3 (3c) gives prominence to the topic, the Lord of lords (the agent in v.3).
- The use of the same root verb in v.3 (*-busisa*) as in v.1 highlights that "blessing" is still the focus, but the direction has been reversed.
- The verb *engathi -nganibusisa* is repeated (3a, 3b) highlighting the theme of the psalm.

- Repetitions:
  - Same verb used in 1b and 2c, forming an inclusio around the words of the "pilgrims".
  - Divine name used once in each verse, thereby uniting psalm.
  - 3b repeats the main content of 3a but in a step-down way (using the same auxiliary verb and main verb). This highlights the blessing given in 3a. The parallelism in 3c and 3d emphasises the source of the blessing given in 3a–b.
  - The same verb root is used in v.3 as in v.1–2 for "bless", linking together the 3 verses and highlighting the theme of "blessing".

- Redundancy:
  - The demonstrative *lo* is used in 3c to highlight "the Lord" (from 3a) and to introduce 3c and 3d. It also serves to unite the sections, viz. vv. 1–2 and v. 3.
  - Colon 2b is extraneous in terms of content (parallel to 2c) but introduces variety and thus added richness to the meaning of "bless".

Aurality

Assonance of *-nga* in 3a and 3b, *-o* in 3c and 3d, and the longer poetic line in 3a (following shorter lines in v. 2) draws attention to v. 3. The poem was presented as "spoken poetry", which has the poetic features of *izibongo* and a strong rhythm, but is spoken rather than sung. This is a very popular form of performance genre among young Zulu people today, and imitates in some ways (e.g., fast pace and strong emotion) the style of the *imbongi* (Zulu praise singer), and thus also seems appropriate. The voice quality was clear and strong, and the rhythm evident, making for a pleasing performance.

It is clear that the Zulu poets have successfully used a plethora of literary and rhetorical features in their compositions, particularly repetition of words and repetition of sounds (alliteration and assonance). Parallelism, inclusio, and chiasm are also apparent.

The three examples considered have been evaluated for exegetical accuracy, literary artistry, and aurality. The other three criteria used in assessing literary-rhetorical translations are the responsibility of the audience, and are discussed next.

EVALUATION OF TRANSLATIONS BY THE AUDIENCE

There are three dimensions of the text which the community must evaluate, all under the criterion of "acceptability". These are naturalness, clarity, and "biblical authenticity". Interviews with both the poets and audience members sought to assess how well the empirical performances rated on these criteria. In terms of naturalness and clarity, respondents indicated an appreciation for the message being clear and contextualised. Some comments were:

- "(The people) were able to understand in different ways God's word, using the singing and using drums."
- "(The Nguni people will enjoy having/creating more songs like these) because it is done in a way that people can relate to and understand better."
- "(Most people will enjoy singing the songs) because the translation used is much easier to understand than the original translation we have."
- "(What I liked best about the songs was) being able to translate the scripture into a song that I can relate to and understand, and be able to engage others as well."

Regarding "biblical authenticity", Reception Theory maintains that it is the audience who must draw the boundaries of acceptability. Some responses in the interviews indicated that the audience did consider what they were hearing to be "Scripture" and not just a Gospel song. One noted: "(People will enjoy singing the songs) because of the message and it still is part of the Scripture, not something we came up with." However, there is a need for further research to investigate this criterion more

thoroughly. Clearly, the audience needs to be informed in order to be able to make a valid judgment. One way of doing this is to have translator-performers evaluate one another's work, possibly through an online platform where compositions and performances can be posted, and feedback welcomed.

CONCLUSION

The empirical translations and performances, when evaluated using the criteria relevant for literary-rhetorical texts, seem to have fared well. On "accuracy", most of the poems captured the essential message (as assessed by the researcher and as indicated by audience interviews). Regarding "artistry", most of the translations used various poetic (literary) features to achieve the emotive, rhetorical, aesthetic, and performative functions of the original text. "Aurality" was inherent in all the translations, and "audience acceptability" was high. Thus, it can be concluded that by following the steps for a literary-rhetorical analysis of the Hebrew, and by giving basic training to interested speakers of isiZulu, translations can be achieved that satisfy functional equivalence, and that are rewarding to the participants and their audience.

It is frequently noted that the translation of poetry demands skill beyond that of the average translation team, but this study shows that interested, gifted volunteers can be trained relatively easily (by means of a systematic methodology) to enable them to produce creative translations which are aesthetically beautiful and rhetorically forceful. Although such translations may not serve as definitive translations for the whole community,[50] the sense of ownership and enthusiastic engagement resulting from participation in the translation is a very significant benefit, as is the greater understanding of the text.[51] Thus application of this literary-rhetorical process can

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[50] Shirky (2010:153–4) does acknowledge that the skill level achieved by amateurs may not equal that achieved by professionals, but he notes that there are times when the gains obtained by the process exceed those of having a perfect product.

[51] West (2016) asks: "Do we need a better translation, or a better life?" It seems that young people are more interested in having a meaningful, owned translation than a "perfect" one.

yield valuable results to those following the discipline. This suggests a more systematic way of translating poetry and utilising the gifts of the community.

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