TRANSLATION TRAVAILS

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I suppose 6 deg C isn't that cold - but it certainly feels it without heating! The days are starting cold and if there is a cloudless sky, it warms up to 22 or 23 deg, cooling again as soon as the sun goes down around 6 pm. Coming from England, these are temperatures I'm used to coping with, but for the translators who have traveled here to the plateau from the rain forest, it's a drastic change of climate. This island has such a variety of climate, flora and fauna, and also quite a variety of forms of Malagasy language. The last couple of days I've been teaching about key concepts in the Bible, such as priest, Temple, the Law, gospel, eternal life etc and it's been very interesting to compare what terms the various language groups have suggested to translate these terms. Tomorrow we'll move on to translating figures of speech, with the teaching being given in English by a Dutch consultant and translated into Malagasy which should prove interesting! Quite hard to talk about how we should translate figures of speech when we are already translating the lesson and the examples, but not enough French is understood by most of the participants for us to be able to teach in French.

On Sunday morning we went to a huge open air meeting a few miles out of town. It was the annual celebration held by the local Lutheran Church Synod and this year the church was celebrating its115 year in the Antsirabe area. On the Saturday there had been around 20,000 people, but I don't know how many there were on Sunday. We arrived early, and during the 3 hours or so we were there people continued to arrive. Shortly after we got back, we received the news that Marietta's (one of the participants) mother had died. So we went to present our condolences and to send her on her way with our prayers and gifts of money, accompanied by one of the pastors in the group. It took her at least 12 hours by bush taxi, but she is hoping she may be back for the 3rd week of the workshop.

We have been looking at the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, looking particularly at which biblical concepts might not be known in Malagasy culture. In the Official Malagasy translation, the expression for the oil used to treat the man's wounds is 'diloilo' (originally from the French 'de l'huile'). In the Jewish context this would have been olive oil, used also in lamps, but for the northern language groups here, the only meaning 'diloilo' had was the paraffin they use in lamps! The Samaritan pouring paraffin onto the man's wounds is certainly NOT

the meaning we want to convey! This is one of the many examples where words in the official Malagasy language can have a different meaning in other languages, which is why we are training people to translate into more Malagasy languages.

Well, it's late already so I must get to bed, especially since I'm getting up earlier than at home.