

C2.16  
Fort Hare,  
12.6.50

Dr R.H.W. Shepherd,  
P.O. LOVEDALE.

Dear Dr Shepherd,

I have examined carefully Chief Bathoen's translation of NKOSI SIKELEL'I-AFRIKA into Tswana and am now prepared to submit my comments on it. I might mention that I have also consulted Mr G.L. Letele, our Lecturer in Bantu Languages, about the matter. My comments are as follows:-

1. I am assuming that Chief Bathoen was translating from Xhosa and that he was using the version of the National Anthem obtainable from the Lovedale. If this assumption is correct, then Chief Bathoen's translation is in several places wide off the mark. This will be illustrated below.

2. It seems to me that in translating an anthem which is regarded as a Bantu national anthem and which the Bantu drawn from different tribes often sing together, it would be advisable as far as possible to use corresponding words and corresponding constructions. This Chief Bathoen has not adhered to as faithfully as he might have done. To give a simple illustration, there seems no reason why he does not use the Tswana word "Kgesi", where the Xhosa version uses "Nkosi".

3. Taking his stanzas one by one we find the following variations from the Xhosa version:-

1. line 1, "Molimo" is used where "Kgesi" might have been used
- line 2, "Le merame eotlike e mentsho" means "And all the black people" which is different from the second line in the Xhosa which is translated "May her horn rise high up";
- line 3, the Tswana given means "Hear the prayers, O Lord" whereas the Xhosa is "Hear Thou our prayers"
- Line 4, the Tswana given means "Help Thy children", the Xhosa "And bless us".

Chorus. Here's the Tswana is wide off the mark.

Instead of "Descend, O Spirit, Descend O Holy Spirit" it has "Thy Children pray with all their hearts"

2. Chief Bathoen's second stanza, translated, reads:

"May Peace and Mutual understanding come,  
Grant them to all Chiefs  
In the rule of them all,  
Teach our leaders."  
which is quite different from the second stanza, Xhosa version

3. Chief Bathoen's third stanza, translated reads:

"Our tasks are many  
In churches and schools,  
In courts and in homes  
Pour out the Spirit, Gentle-Hearted.  
which does not bear much resemblance to Stanza 5, Xhosa version, upon which it is presumably based.

4. The Chief's stanza 4, translated, reads:

"God b~~less~~ Africa,  
May we acknowledge Thee the Creator,  
All Powere comes from Thee,  
May Thy Spirit Come,  
Father May we honour Thee.

which differs widely from stanza 4, Xhosa version, or from Stanza 2, Xhosa version upon which it is presumably based.

In short, while Chief Banthoen's translation is good Tswana and can quite well be wedded to the usual tune, it is not a faithful rendering of the Xhosa version of Nkosi Sikele'i-Afrika. It is of course possible that the Chief may have had a different version at his disposal.

Yours sincerely,