


The colonisation of Setswana: A decolonial rereading of the 1840 Gospel of Luke

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In his 1840 translation of the Gospel of Luke from English into Setswana, Robert Moffat transfers Western numerals, geographic words and biblical names to Setswana. In this article, it is argued that in this translation, we see the beginning of the colonisation of Setswana. Furthermore, it is argued that in this translation, Moffat used epistemic privilege and the performance of power to facilitate the process of epistemicide on the linguistic heritage of Batswana and its indigenous knowledge system through an act of colonisation.

Contribution: The article applies an intersection of theoretical lenses, namely decoloniality and the Foucauldian notion of power, as its frames of reference in analysing the 1840 English–Setswana Gospel of Luke.

Keywords: colonisation; conversion; epistemicide; epistemic privilege; translation; number words; decolonial; Foucauldian notion of power; colonial matrix of power; coloniality.

Locating the 1840 translation of the Gospel of Luke

The 1830 Gospel of Luke was the first translated from the 1611 King James Bible as the source text into Setswana. The second version was translated in 1840, as part of the entire Christian Scripture. The translator of these texts was a member of the London Missionary Society missionary named Robert Moffat. This article argues that in his attempt to translate the text into Setswana, Moffat disregarded the religio-cultural and linguistic heritage of the receptor culture. As Schapera (1951) eloquently argues, Moffat conveyed his perception of the culture and tradition of the Batlhaping:

He was apparently interested in the BaTlhaping, not as people with lives of their own, but merely as souls to be saved. Throughout he insists upon their degenerate character; over and over again he refers to them bitterly as liars, beggars, and thieves. (p. xxvi)

It is in this context that the translation of the Setswana Bible needs to be contextualised. This is because translation does not happen in a vacuum, but rather it is influenced by the epistemic location and social location of the translator. Above all, it is influenced by the politics of translation and the technology of translation. Key to an analysis is why the translator translates the text in such a manner. Furthermore, this article analyses the Gospel of Luke as the beginning of a broader project of identifying other linguistic violations that the translator may have performed. The aim is not to analyse the equivalence of the concepts used in the translation, but rather to analyse the politics of translation, the translator and the various technologies he applied in his exercise of translation.

Contextualising epistemic privilege in the 1840 Gospel of Luke as a performance of power

The 1840 translation of the Gospel of Luke provides us with the framework and technologies Robert Moffat applied in his translation. The New Testament and the Psalms were printed in London by the Foreign Bible Society in 1840. To mark the accomplishment of this project, Moffat travelled to London to preach in front of the directors and benefactors to mark the completion of the translation of the New Testament from English into Setswana. Moffat (1840) states:

Their language has been *acquired* and *reduced to system*, and to *writing*, and brought under the operation of the press. Many elementary works, tracts, and considerable portions of the sacred volume, have been translated and printed in the language. A printing press on the station supplies the increasing wants of readers; and at the present moment the New Testament and the Book of Psalms are, through the munificence of the British and Foreign Bible Society, being conducted through the press in London. (p. 36 [*author's own emphasis*])

Note: Special Collection: Reception of Biblical Discourse in Africa.

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From the citation above, the following keywords are important in analysing the performance of power and epistemic privilege that Moffat applied, namely: (1) 'acquired', (2) 'reduced to system' and (3) 'writing'. These keywords highlight how power and/or knowledge in relation to the Batswana and their language masqueraded as universal.

The first aspect, the notion of acquired, links with Moffat's assertion that he self-taught the language. It also points to the epistemological location of the translator in that he perceived himself as the master of the language. Moffat (1844) states:

A missionary who commences giving direct *instruction to the natives*, though far from being competent in the language, is proceeding on safer ground than if he were employing an *interpreter, who is not proficient in both languages, and who has not a tolerable understanding of the doctrines of the Gospel. Trusting to an ignorant and unqualified interpreter*, is attended with consequences not only ludicrous, but dangerous to the very objects which lie nearest the missionary's heart ... They are not so charitable towards his interpreter, whose interest it is to make them believe that he is master of a language of which they know nothing, and consequently they take for granted, that all is correct which comes through his lips. I have been very much troubled in my mind on hearing that the most erroneous renderings have been given to what I had said. *Since acquiring the language*, I have had opportunities of discovering this with my own ears, by hearing sentences translated ... (pp. 200–201 [*authors own emphasis*])

The notion of acquiring appears on the basis that even though he did not know the language, he at the same time did not have confidence in the very people who spoke the language. It is for that reason that he took it upon himself to 'self-teach'. At the same time, he did not refer to the strategies he had used to acquire the language. Yancy (2004) reminds us to:

[C]ome to terms with how whiteness, as a power/knowledge nexus can produce new forms of knowledge (in this case 'knowledge' about black people) that are productive of new forms of 'subjects'. (pp. 107–108)

Furthermore, he states that the ideal interpreter, according to him, must have proficiency in both languages and an understanding of the doctrines of the Gospel. The submission by Moffat illustrates how through his Western epistemic and social location, he performed what Yancy referred to as a power and/or knowledge nexus in producing the characteristics of what an interpreter should possess. Furthermore, it is in his very statement that we are confronted with the masquerading of the 'doctrine of the Gospel' as universal.

An understanding of the doctrine of the Gospel is premised on the idea of a monopolisation informed by the regimes of truth that universalises Western colonial Christian theology as the superior knowledge of the divine. Thus, the rubric is the Gospel, the norm becomes the doctrine, the criterion is the notion of understanding and the evaluator is the preacher or the missionary. It is submitted that it is in this statement that we can observe the performance of power within the colonial matrix of power. This includes how, through such a rubric, he performed surveillance of the interpreter and that

of the audience. Furthermore, it is the very rubric he applied to justify the idea of self-taught and the acquisition of the language outside the custodians of the indigenous knowledge system expressed in the language.

The second aspect is the notion of *reduced to system*. Moffat here seems to suggest that there is one system to which a language could be confined. He failed to recognise that every language is constructed and mediated through some form of a system. Such a system may be through orality and symbolism or through the various letters used across western Europe and Asia. The recognition of these forms of systems challenges the notion of universalism. Yet it is evident that Moffat applied a universal approach in his assessment of Setswana. Mignolo (2002) argues:

The enduring enchantment of binary oppositions seems to be related to the enduring image of a European civilization and of European history told from the perspective of Europe itself. Europe is not only the center (that is, the center of space and the point of arrival in time) but also has the epistemic privilege of being the center of enunciation. And in order to maintain the epistemic privilege it is necessary, today, to assimilate to the epistemic perspective of modernity and accuse emerging epistemology of claiming epistemic privileges! (p. 938)

Moffat was informed by his social location and the epistemic location that located his epistemological paradigm as a superior form of knowledge. This can be observed in his 1826 *Bechuana Spelling Book*, in which we observe how Western sounds were used to explain the Setswana pronunciations and Setswana was written using the Western alphabet and symbolism. Moffat (1844) remarks:

[T]he reducing of an oral language to writing being so important to the missionary, he ought to have every encouragement afforded him, and be supplied with the means necessary for the attainment of such an object. (p. 200)

Furthermore, he ascribed an unwarranted attribute to Dr Burchell in his acquisition of Setswana. According to him, Burchell was an important protagonist in learning Setswana. Here again, Moffat applied a Western rubric to measure the depth of his knowledge of Setswana. He stated that had he had an opportunity to peruse his works, he would have learnt a great deal because, in his view, he possessed patience, abilities and judgement in his structuring of Setswana. Moffat (1844) states:

Had I possessed the work when engaged in forming a system of orthography, by reducing the language to writing, I should have derived great assistance from it; but having met with it only since my return to this country, I have been much struck with the remarkable coincidence of our ideas, while reducing the Sechuana to a written language. (p. 156)

It is clear from the citation above that the only real system of orthography was Western orthography and the real wisdom was a white male's wisdom. The indigenous system possessed nothing of its own – Why? I would argue that this was because anything that did not conform to the Western epistemological lens did not possess within it any form of

knowledge. Furthermore, we can observe Setswana, or rather the indigenous knowledge system, being rendered invisible. The idea of reduction highlights the institutionalisation of epistemic racism and privilege based on a racialised social order, which categorises that which is not Western as unintelligent. Thus, the application of Western linguistic identifications becomes a lens that can be applied in explaining the 'Setswana linguistic system'. In chapter XIV, Moffat dedicated pages 157 to 162 to demonstrating how to pronounce Setswana vowels and consonants. To achieve this, he compared them to Welsh, Dutch, Italian, Spanish and English words. Moffat (1844) states:

As many words in the Sechuana language will necessarily occur in this and the following chapters, a few remarks on the orthography may be found useful to those who would wish to pronounce them correctly. The *a* is sounded like *a* in father; *e* like *e* in clemency; *é* with an accent, like *ai* in hail; *i* like *ee* in leek, *th* or *ee* in see; *o* like *o* in hole; *u* like *u* in rule; the *y* is always used as a consonant. These vowels are long or short according to their position in the word. *Ch* represented in Bechuana books by the Italian *c*, is sounded like *ch* in chance; *g* is a soft guttural; *ph*, *th*, *kh*, are strong aspirates; *tl*, like the Welsh *U*, preceded by a *t*; *ng*, which is represented in the written language by the Spanish *ñ*: has the ringing sound of *ng* in sing. (p. 157)

The above citation further indicates how Moffat performed epistemic privilege in that he acted as an expert in a language that was not his mother tongue. Mignolo (2002:935) reminds us that Western epistemology has had the freedom of simultaneously being a fragment of the totality enunciated and the universal place of pronouncing itself as the natural order of the world, thus organising the epistemological space in dichotomous hierarchies. It is in the hegemonisation of the epistemological privilege that the 'Other' in space, time, belief and pigmentation was of a certain kind, a segment of humanity in the world that was unknown until Western colonial Christianity brought it into existence. Similarly, the indigenous languages came into existence because they were codified and conceptualised through the Western epistemological paradigm.

In this article, identified sections of the Gospel of Luke are analysed, that detail the names of people and botanical names, numerals and geographical locations. These names and numerals are found across the Gospel of Luke. An intersection of theoretical lenses is applied, namely decoloniality and the Foucauldian notion of power, as frames of reference in analysing the 1840 English–Setswana Gospel of Luke. I argue that while there might not be translation equivalences for the names of people, botanical names and geographical locations, through domestication, naturalisation, transliteration and *Tswanafication*, these symbols and concepts led to the infiltration of the Setswana linguistic heritage. Such infiltration led to the colonisation of the language. It is argued that the introduction of Western number words, rather than using Setswana numerals, exposes the inequality between the source text and the receptor culture. Above all, it shows the performance of epistemic privilege and epistemicide of Setswana.

Furthermore, it is argued that the domestication/naturalisation/transliteration/*Tswanafication* of these symbols and concepts, together with their meanings, into Setswana illustrate the dynamics of power and knowledge within the colonial matrix embedded in the act of translation. The domestication of foreign concepts in the 1840 Gospel of Luke was used as a tool for cultural change and imperialism. The infusion of these symbols and concepts also functioned as a transfer of the imperialist culture, knowledge system and traditions, at the same time altering the indigenous knowledge system. This process was aimed at elevating the Western epistemological paradigm and Western norms and cultures. It was aimed at the suppression and marginalisation of the body politic of the knowledge of the Batswana.

A decolonial analysis: Domestication, naturalisation or transliteration and *Tswanafication* as a performance of language colonialisation

The application of the intersection of the theoretical lenses of decoloniality and the Foucauldian notion of power in analysing the concept of domestication/naturalisation/transliteration/*Tswanafication* is considered within the study of decolonial biblical discourse. It is in rereading the text that epistemic privilege can be observed. The translator operating within the such a paradigm employs foreign concepts. It is in these concepts that we can observe the performance of domestication. This form of domestication through the technology of standardisation naturalises and *Tswanafies* these concepts making them part of the indigenous language system. The act of domestication is in itself a transliteration of these foreign concepts. In the section the technology of domestication as performance of power and epistemic privilege is discussed. Such analysis, for example, locates itself within the social and epistemic location of the Batswana. This includes the theopolitics of knowledge and the geopolitics of knowledge of the translator and of the Batswana. This is because there is, firstly, a consensus within decolonial, postcolonial and cultural translation studies that translations are to a large extent colonial products. Therefore, it propels scholars within biblical sciences to analyse and decolonise such texts, taking into cognisance the theopolitics and geopolitics of knowledge.

In other words, the transmission and reception of Christianity and its canonical texts must be understood and analysed as colonial texts aimed at achieving a particular outcome. Dingwaney and Maier (eds. 1995) remind us that the act of translation is often a form of violence and the performance of colonial power. The various Christian literature texts translated by missionaries illustrate that the act of translation facilitated colonisation. Thus, it is through analysing these texts that the politics of translation can be identified. Put differently, the power of the pen is informed by the epistemic and ideological location of the translator.

Translations are not innocent. These literature genres point to a metaphor of the colony as a translation. A copy of an original empire located elsewhere has been recognised because of the sophistication and problematisation of these texts by scholars working on postcolonial translation studies and decolonial thought. Such sensitivity has developed within translation theory for the interaction between source and receptor culture. Bassnett and Lefevere (1998) reflect on the required sensitivity:

We need to know more about the history of translation, and not just in the West, but also in other cultures. A great deal has been done, but the more we know, the more we shall be able to relativize the practices of the present, the more we shall be able to see them as constructed and contingent, not as given, eternal, and transparent. It is no accident that so much exciting work in translation studies is coming from those cultures who are presently in a phase of postcolonial development. As the world reassesses its relationship to the European 'original', so concepts of translation are inevitably re-evaluated, and canons of excellence based on Eurocentric models are revised. We need to learn more about the acculturation process between cultures, or rather, about the symbiotic working together of different kinds of rewritings within that process, about the ways in which translation, together with criticism, anthologisation, historiography, and the production of reference works, constructs the image of writers and/or their works, and then watches those images become reality. (p. 10)

Domestication as an act of normalisation, standardisation and colonisation

The translator of the 1840 Gospel of Luke did not only employ the indigenous concepts for the purpose of translation but he also employed concepts that were foreign in his translation. These concepts were foreign in the sense that they were not known or familiar to the receptor culture. Furthermore, the translation of the New Testament did not only introduce new symbols and concepts but it also introduced Roman-Anglo numerals into the Setswana, thus privileging the source text over the receptor language. Perhaps this is why the translator perceived the translation as not only making available the Christian literature but also that the Batswana should be grateful and thankful that their language was reduced to written form by claiming that Africa was indebted to the British heart. Moffat (1840) states:

Their language has been acquired and reduced to system, and to writing, and brought under the operation of the press. Many elementary works, tracts, and considerable portions of the sacred volume have been translated and printed in the language. (p. 36)

The above citation expresses the discursive practice in the translation agenda as an act of reordering and rewriting for the purpose of colonising and subjugating in order to construct a new identity. Venuti (1995:17) views domestication as a reduction of the foreign text (source language) to the cultural values of the target language. Domestication then highlights the power dynamics at the epistemic and cultural levels. Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) argue:

Translations are always embedded in cultural and political systems, and in history ... Yet the strategies employed by translators reflect the context in which texts are produced. (p. 6)

Domestication as a technology of power performed by the translator functions as an invisible form of subvention. Put differently, the domestication of foreign concepts in the text became a technology to civilise, evangelise and universalise knowledge aimed at subjectification. The translation of the Gospel of Luke was not only an act of foreignising and re-domesticating the key pillars of the belief system of Batswana but it was also about normalising and standardising Setswana for the purpose of the broader colonisation enterprise. Thus, the introduction of such texts not only privileged the source text they also colonised the language of the receptor culture. In the 1840 Setswana translation, there are traces of the use of the English language in the translation. Perhaps this points to the elementary features of the beginning of standardising and formalising written Setswana. Already in the late 19th century the Batswana readers had started labelling the Bible as an English–Setswana. For example, in the letters to Mahoko a Becwana in December 1889, *Sekaelo Piti* says:

I say, we have complained much about our language in the books, because they have not been representing true Setswana but rather Setswana and English - an English Setswana that is read as only a reminder of the real thing. (Mgadla & Volz 2006:29).

Such a labelling indicates the ethnocentric violence that the translation was performing on the religio-cultural practices and the linguistic heritage of the receptor culture. The prevalence of the English language qualifies labelling it as English–Setswana, as I will later demonstrate.

Although Moffat extensively relied on the English Bible (namely the 1611 King James Bible), the report of the British and Foreign Bible Society gives us a glimpse of another layer that could have necessitated the reliance on the 1611 King James Bible as a source text. The Thirty-fifth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society (1896) states the following:

In the preparation of this work, he had the English version ever before him: he also consulted the Dutch and some other versions, and occasionally referred to the German. This translation in general faithfully follows the English text; but some little deviations from that text occur in a few instances, occasioned by a preference entertained by Mr. Moffat for the corresponding Dutch rendering. (p. 64)

He was domesticating two languages, thus morphing the concepts found in these two languages to construct a new meaning. It can be argued that John Moffat's observation regarding the practices his father used in the translation process should compel further research on the way in which the Dutch language could have deformed and permeated the Setswana language.

Therefore, to label the New Testament as English–Setswana indicates the extent to which English concepts and meaning were interpolated into Setswana and perhaps to a large

extent Dutch also, thus producing some form of a 'new language' or introduction of new concepts, symbols and meaning. The interpolation of the English and the Dutch concepts and meanings was an exercise of power by the translator, thus normalising familiar and unfamiliar into Setswana.

Biblical names and anglicisation of numerals in the 1840 Gospel of Luke

The domestication of names such as *diabolo* in Luke 4:2, 3, 5, 6, 13 and Satan in Luke 2:8 and 11:18 re-enforces the dualistic characteristics of good or evil and consecrated or desecrated, thus introducing them into the spirituality of the Batswana and constructing beings that are the opposite of the divine. In other words, good is represented by the biblical God and evil is represented by the image of Satan. Both these symbolise the dualism within the religion. The domestication of the above signs in the receptor language can also be seen in the use of the word *demoni* [demon] in Luke 4:33, 35 and 11:14. Another element of domestication is the use of the word *moment*. Moffat domesticates the word as *momenta* (Lk 4:5), instead of using the Setswana word *motsotswana* [moment].

He also domesticated a new name for the divine, *Yehova*. He not only re-domesticated *Modimo* as male but used another foreign name to translate the word *Lord*. The domestication of the name *Yehova* to designate the term *Kgosi/Morena* [Lord] in Luke 4:8, 12 and 20:37 was an act of domesticating and normalising the foreign into the receptor language, forming part of the many examples throughout the Gospel of Luke. These examples show that the translator was normalising the foreign and altering the language.

The second level epitomises the act of domestication as a discursive practice to achieve colonialism. At this level, the translator introduces the Western numeric system. The domestication of this system occurred at the bedrock of the translator having claimed to have self-taught himself Setswana and having lived among Batswana for over 10 years. The question is: Why did he 'choose' to use the Western system rather than the Setswana numeric system? It can be argued that the domestication of the Western numeric system formed part of the colonial agenda and was a means to normalise and standardise Setswana, as this numeric system would eventually form part of the broader Setswana. According to Canton, the use of English numerals in the translation was a justifiable act, as the Setswana numerals are not easily expressible. Canton (1904) states:

Peculiar difficulties presented themselves for solution. English numerals, for example, seemed to be essential in a language in which the number eight was expressed by *Goshume go choa go heru menuana me beri*, i.e. 'Ten except the hindering (withholding, or holding down) two ringers'. Special attention to spelling was essential, 'for the omission of an aspirate in some words would change the sense of the whole sentence', and 'perhaps

make virtue vice'. One needed, too, a distinct understanding of the precise meaning of the text, as in the case of pronouns the word *o, lo, li, e, se*, etc.) varied according to the class of the noun to which it referred. Then there was the alliterative concord, characteristic of the whole Kaffir group of languages, in obedience to which the initial letters or syllables of words liable to inflection changed according to the grammatical construction. (p. 37)

Numerals such as *tu* [two] (in Lk 1:6); *faev* [five] (Lk 1:24); *sekes* six (Lk 1:36), *thri* [three] (Lk 1:56), *éit* [eight] (Lk 1:59) and the same numeral appears in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 2:21). *Seven*, [seven] (Lk 2:36; 11:26), *éite* [eighty-four] (Lk 2:37), *therte* [thirty] (Lk 3:23), *forte* [forty] (Lk 4:2), *tuelev* [twelve] (Lk 6:13; 8:43) and *sevente* [seventy] (Lk 10:1, 17) are some of the many examples throughout the Gospel of Luke. It is in these examples that the translator enacted normalising the foreign and altering the numeric system of the language. The standardisation of Setswana as if the receptor culture had no numeric system of its own was an exercise of power and hegemony. I would counterargue Canton's assertion that the use of the English numeric system was unavoidable. His explanation and description of eight is problematic. Moffat could have used the following numerals in his translation: *pedi* [two] (Lk 1:6); *tlhano* [five], (Lk 1:24), *tshelera* [six] (Lk 1:36), *tharo* [three] (Lk 1:59), *supa* [seven] (Lk 2:36), *robedi* [eight] (Lk 2:37), *masome a mararo* [thirty] (Lk 2:23), *masome a mane* [forty] (Lk 4:2), *some le bobedi* [twelve] (Lk 6:13, 8:43) and *masome a supa* [seventy] (Lk 10:1, 17).

It can be submitted that the introduction of these numerical concepts created serious linguistic problems for the Batswana. As these numerals were in English, most of the Batswana would not have known how to pronounce them. Furthermore, the letters of the 19th century on matters such as the language illustrate the uneasiness of the Batswana. While these letters may not touch on the debate about numerals, they do illustrate the various layers that caused the Batswana to be uneasy with the way their language was written. This includes the authority the missionaries bestowed upon themselves regarding the language. The writers of a newspaper called *The Words of the Becwana/Mahoko a Becwana 1883–1896* referred to the Moffat Bible as the English–Setswana Bible (Mgadla & Volz 2006). The following letters point to the way Moffat translated the Bible. It further illustrates the frustrations of the Batswana in respect of their language being transcribed in the Bible. The content of the letters not only illustrates their frustrations but also the resistance of the Batswana by challenging the orthography and how the missionaries were writing their language. In the letter to the editor, dated November 1889, Dilokwane Gaboutlwelwe made the following argument (Mgadla & Volz 2006):

... I include all the Setswana together, and I say that, in the language of Setswana, anyone who speaks Setswana does not pronounce 'didiba' [wells] as 'liliba', or say 'go ètèlèla pele' [to lead] as 'go etelèla pele'. They will not say 'mogoloo' [your elder sibling] as 'mogoloo' or 'mogolou', or 'mokgōrō' [shelter] as 'mokgoro', or 'oena'

[you] instead of 'wena'. I see the old written Setswana in the Bible, as we read in Genesis, chapter one. There we find it written like this: '*Morimo o lo ua tlola magorimo le lehasi mo tsimologong*' [in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth]. But when we read it aloud, we say, '*Modimo o lo wa tlhōla magodimo le lehatshe mo tshimologong*'. Now, I do not despise this first written Setswana ... I am happy with 'Tafita' not 'Davida', 'Taniela' not 'Daniela', and 'Teutoronome' not 'Dueteronome'. (pp. 28–29)

In another letter dated December 1889, Sekaelo Piti boldly raised these concerns (Mgadla & Volz 2006):

We have complained much about our language in the books, because they have not been representing true Setswana but rather Setswana and English an English Setswana that is read as only a reminder of the real thing. For example, 'go diha' [to make] has been written as 'go riha', 'didimala' [be quiet] as 'ririmala' or 'lilimala' also 'Modimo' [God] as 'Morimo', and 'legodimo' [heaven] as 'legorimo'. But when we saw hymn books in the year 1883, we were very happy because a missionary had arrived who speaks the language of our mothers and who speaks proper Setswana. He says, '*Yesu kwana ea Modimo*' [Jesus lamb of God] and not '*Yesu koana*' or '*kuana*'. (pp. 29–31)

Various levels of domestication are found in the Gospel of Luke. The first level is the introduction of various foreign names. Mothoagae argues that the introduction of such names should be viewed as part of the colonial agenda to normalise and standardise Setswana, as these names would inevitably form part of the broader Setswana (Mothoagae 2017:1–9). Furthermore, the domestication of such names formed part of the cultural transfer from the source text to the receptor language. The act of domestication then is rewriting and retaining the sign with its significance.

Similarly, as Dingwaney and Maier (eds. 1995) argue, translation is often a form of violence. These examples demonstrate translation as rewriting and illustrate the observation made by Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) that translation was at the heart of the colonial encounter. Furthermore, they maintain that it was used in various ways to establish and perpetuate the superiority of some Western cultures over others. Thus, it created unequal power relations in the transfer of texts across cultures (Bassnett & Trivedi 1999:16). Throughout the Gospel of Luke, the translator introduced and domesticated Western numerals instead of using the Setswana numeric system. This article argues that the domestication of the numeric system points to the argument advanced by Bassnett and Trivedi (1999):

Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or Systems. (p. 2)

Niranjana (1992:2) goes further and suggests that translation of both shapes takes shape 'within the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism'. The introduction of the Western numeric system indicates the discursive practice in the translation of the Gospel of Luke. Furthermore, it shows the asymmetrical relations of power that operated under colonialism. Niranjana's argument, which has its context in the opening paragraph of Moffat's (1842) book, demonstrates

the asymmetrical relations of power based on the discursive practices and the regimes of truth that informed his cultural translation. He maintained that 'Africa still presents a comparative blank on the map' and 'that to this day its interior region constitutes a mystery to the white man, a land of darkness and terror, to the most fearless traveller' (Moffat 1842:2). The role played by the translation of the English–Setswana Gospel of Luke and subsequently the entire Bible in facilitating colonisation is evident. This includes the notion of a metaphor of the colony as a translation (1999:5).

In summation, in this article, it was argued that the translation of the Gospel of Luke from English into Setswana had linguistic implications for Setswana as a language. While there are no equivalences for biblical names and locations, the domestication/naturalisation/transliteration and *Tswanafication* of such names altered the linguistic heritage of the Batswana. These names would filter in, leading to them becoming part of the Setswana reservoir of names (including the use of these names within the theatre of baptism, abandoning indigenous names and taking on these names). The domestication/naturalisation/transliteration and *Tswanafication* of these symbols and concepts, together with their meanings, into Setswana illustrate the dynamics of power and knowledge within the colonial matrix of power embedded in the act of translation. The domestication/naturalisation/transliteration and *Tswanafication* of foreign concepts mean that the 1840 Gospel of Luke was used as a tool for cultural change and the title of West's (2016) book *The stolen Bible: From tool of imperialism to African icon* demonstrates the technological strategies applied by the translator in making the Bible accessible in indigenous languages to serve the empire. The infusion of these symbols and concepts also functioned as a transfer of the imperialist culture, knowledge system and traditions, thus at the same time altering the indigenous knowledge system. This process was aimed at elevating the Western epistemological paradigm and Western norms and cultures, leading to the infiltration, marginalisation and epistemic violence performed on Setswana.

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Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

I.D.M. declares that they are the sole author of this article and contributed to the conceptualisation, research, compilation and writing of the final draft of this study.

Ethical considerations

The article was exempted as it had no human participants involved because of the negligible risk nature of the

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, I.D.M.

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