

LATEST NEWS # 472, January 11, 2008

The following news concerns Burkina Faso.

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Dagara New Testament, fruit of a long friendship, launched with joy in Diébougou

BURKINA FASO — “You help others to translate the Bible even though nothing is available in your own language!” This is the comment Abbot Der Raphaël Kusiélé Dabiré (now the Archbishop of Diébougou) made to his childhood friend Dr Joachim Somé, who had become a Translation Consultant with the United Bible Societies, when the two met up again in 1992 and he learned of



his friend's profession. “It's on the hunter's field that the deer dies and rots,” he added, quoting a local proverb with a similar meaning to the English one: “The children of the shoemaker are always the worst shod.”

Out of this reunion arose the idea to set up a project to translate the Bible into Dagara. This project would be led by the Bible Society in Burkina Faso in partnership with local Churches, which would supply translators and revisers: the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Pentecostal Assembly, the Assemblies of God Church and the Full Gospel Mission.



The translation of the Scriptures into Dagara, which is spoken by around one million people, 300,000 in central-west Burkina Faso and 700,000 in the north of neighbouring Ghana, began in 1997. Gradually, the Churches, which until then had been using Bibles in French, English or Mooré or draft translations in Dagara, began to have access to parts of the Bible in their own language.

“Translation was always one of our concerns. For many years, the Church produced draft translations of parts of the Bible using the French alphabet,” says Monsignor Dabiré. “Now, though, we will be able to use a totally new translation of the New Testament, official, complete and using the standard alphabet, in our services.”



While it took less than four years to translate the New Testament – an average length of time for UBS projects, according to Dr Somé – delays with the typesetting and printing meant that this eagerly-awaited publication was not launched until December 1, 2007.

It was therefore with great joy and eagerness that people flocked in large numbers on the launch day to the diocesan training centre in Diébougou, in the heart of Dagara country. The ceremony, which was to last five hours, was jointly led by the ministers responsible for literacy and technical training respectively, Ousséni Tamboura and Maxime Somé. Along with local worshippers, the participants included Church leaders, representatives from the administrative, civil and military authorities and Bible Society staff. Supporters of the Bible cause and of the Dagara community also travelled to Diébougou for the occasion.



Following a short introduction, the ceremony proceeded with a prayer and several speeches about the origins of the work, interspersed with wonderful singing from choirs representing three Churches. Then came the most significant part of the ceremony: the arrival of a procession bringing the New Testament, carried by one of the translators, Abbot Anasthase Somé, to the sound of singing and the rhythm of a Dagara dance. Complete silence fell as everybody listened very attentively to the first 18 verses of John's Gospel being read in Dagara.



The New Testament was then officially presented by Dr Somé, who oversaw the work from beginning to end, to the Rev Dramane Yankiné, General Secretary of the Bible Society. The President of the Board of the Bible Society, the Rev Aly Congo, then handed the New Testament to Dagara Church leaders and to several other people who had been specially invited to the ceremony.

A prayer of gratitude delivered by the Rev David Zoloula of the Evangelical Pentecostal Assembly brought the ceremony to an end. Mr Zoloula also prayed for the ongoing work of the translation team.

Indeed, its work has not come to an end. Some 60 per cent of the Old Testament has already been translated and it is hoped to complete the translation of the entire Bible by 2012. Furthermore, an audio version of the New Testament has just been produced and will soon be made available to the Dagara people through the *Faith Comes By Hearing* program.



"The Dagara people are very attached to their traditions and their animist practices," says Nicolas Sawadogo, the Bible Society's Marketing Officer and National *Faith Comes By Hearing* Coordinator. "There is no doubt, therefore, that the first ever translation of the New Testament into Dagara will be a great source of encouragement for the Church and will help Christianity to become established in the region."

This report refers to project 72913.

For an earlier report about the Dagara translation project, see World Report 370/22.

Photos:

BRK01C5_10A: A Dagara village in the west of Burkina Faso. (United Bible Societies/Geoffrey Stamp)



BRK07DJ-2: Church leaders at the Bible Society in Burkina Faso's bookstall before the launch of the Dagara New Testament on December 1, 2007. Diébougou, Burkina Faso. (Bible Society in Burkina Faso/Aimé Nicolas Sawadogo)

BRK07DJ-3: Some of the people who gathered for the launch of the Dagara New Testament on December 1, 2007. Diébougou, Burkina Faso. (Bible Society in Burkina Faso/Aimé Nicolas Sawadogo)

BRK07DJ-4: The Rev Aly Congo (left), President of the Board of the Bible Society in Burkina Faso, handing the Dagara New Testament to the Rev Zacharie Delma, of the Assemblies of God Church, at its launch on December 1, 2007. Diébougou, Burkina Faso. (Bible Society in Burkina Faso/Aimé Nicolas Sawadogo)

BRK07DJ-5: From left to right: Monsignor Der Raphaël Dabiré, Bishop of Diébougou, Maxime Somé, minister for technical education, Dr Joachim Somé, UBS Translation Consultant, the Rev Dramane Yankiné, General Secretary of the Bible Society in Burkina Faso, and Ousséni Tamboura, minister for literacy, following the launch of the Dagara New Testament on December 1, 2007. Diébougou, Burkina Faso. (Bible Society in Burkina Faso/Aimé Nicolas Sawadogo)

BRK01DJ-116: Anthill near Bobo-Dioulasso, west Burkina Faso. (United Bible Societies/Geoffrey Stamp)

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