



Bible translation for the emerging church

The Tavretsi and Khateni

Deep in a mountainous Eurasian country, two people groups—the Tavretsi* and the Khateni*—do not have a translation of the Bible in their language.

Their scriptural needs have been known for decades, but until recently, no one had started any translation projects in their languages. In recent years, a local church-planting network decided that it was time for the Tavretsi and the Khateni to receive the word of



LANGUAGE OVERVIEW

Region:	Eurasia
People group:	Tavretsi, Khateni*
Language:	Tavretsi, Khateni*
Native speakers:	400,000
Status:	Minimally Reached**

*name changed for security

**status from Joshua Project



TRANSLATION OVERVIEW

People involved: **70**

Time active: **Dec 2023 - present**

Current goal: **Full Bible**

Outside funding: **\$132,000 per year**

God in their language. But this was easier said than done. While the Tavretsi live in an accessible region, the Khateni live in the country's remote mountains. To make matters worse, the Khateni do not have an established church. How can Bible translation happen when there is no church?

The local denomination envisioned a translation effort owned and led by the local believers—Church-Based Bible Translation. This would not only result in Scripture for the Tavretsi, who had an established church, but it would also allow the few known Khateni believers to translate portions of the Bible as an integral part of their growth to maturity and the consequent establishment of the church in their people group.

In order for this vision to become a reality, they needed a team. The denomination's leaders went from church to church, raising awareness about their plan and identifying potential team members—translators, leaders, and pastors. They assembled a team of translators to work on the text, selected a committee of pastors to lead quality assurance, and identified which portions of Scripture they would translate first in



accordance with their ministry needs—all before reaching out to a Western partner.

In September of 2023, the team was eager to get started—they just needed training. They contacted Wycliffe USA, who trained the team for two weeks in November. Translation of the word of God into Tavretsi and Khateni was underway by Christmas.

The work begins

The team used the Audio-Visual Translation Tool from the American Bible Society for the translation work. This allowed them to create both an oral translation



and a text translation. Though many of the tools they used were created by outside organizations, the translation work was carried out and led by the church the entire time.

The first text they translated was Mark 4:35-41, the story in which Jesus calms a storm. As soon as they had finished it, they turned it into a lively group song! Right away, the local churches were experiencing the fruits of the translation work.

The denomination's leaders arranged for a thorough translation review process, ensuring that the translators produced a trustworthy text. The process included community review, review by the church, and exegetical accuracy checks carried out by the pastors' committee.

At one point, one of the translators showed a portion of the translation to his brother and sister-in-law. What they saw inspired them so much that they decided to join the translation work themselves! In another instance, a translator shared the translation with her mother, who was not a believer. What she read drove her to tears, and she said, "You are creating history!"



You are creating history!

Just three months after the translation work began, the translators finished Mark 1-8 in both Tavretsi and Khateni, taking into account the feedback and suggestions they gathered from a rigorous review



process. This was the first ever portion of the Bible in these languages, and it was available in both audio and written formats. On February 29, the pastors' committee officially authorized the portion of Scripture for use in the local churches.

Conclusions

The case of the Tavretsi and the Khateni provides an excellent example of the flexibility of Church-Based Bible Translation. CBBT works both in the presence of an established church and in the absence of one. The Tavretsi had an established church, while the Khateni did not. Nevertheless, these two translation projects proceeded side-by-side.

So what's next? The team is continuing their translation work and moving at a fast pace. While proceeding with Mark, they soon plan to start translating the Psalms. In a remarkable display of the unity that CBBT can bring to different church networks, an Ethiopian team will train the Eurasian team in techniques that they learned in their own translation of the Psalms. Teams from two Global



South countries, far removed from each other geographically and culturally, are working together in Bible translation! One day, the Eurasian team will likewise be able to train neighboring church networks, multiplying their impact to unreached people groups in the region.

CBBT removes barriers to Bible translation and enables the advance of the church in remote regions.

Because of this paradigm, the Tavretsi and Khateni are equipped to continue the work of Bible translation, bringing the word of God into their languages at long last.

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