

Figurative usages of the verb ξηραίνω and adjective ξηρός in the New Testament health conditions

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Researching translation techniques employed to gap the language-and-culture barrier imposed by culture-specific concepts/items¹ one cannot escape lexemes which we can categorize as physiological processes and states – namely sickness, disease, and weakness. The basic source for collecting the study material was the Louw & Nida lexicon² based on semantic domains. Their list of 42 terms includes:

(1) General expressions which do not refer to any particular disease: ἄρρωστος, κάμνω, μαλακία, νόσος, κακῶς/ἐσχάτως ἔχω etc.

(2) Specific expressions perceived as of not strictly technical nature: δυσεντέριον, πυρέσσω/πυρετός; or names of disabilities: ἄλαλος, κωφός, τυφλός, κυλλός, χωλός etc.³

¹ Term “culture specific item” refers to a definition by Javier Franco Aixelá: *Culture specific items in translation*. In: Translation, Power, Subversion. R. Álvarez – M. C.-A. Vidal (Eds.). Clevedon – Philadelphia – Adelaide: Multilingual Matters Ltd. 1996, p. 58: “Culture specific items are textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the non-existence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text.”

² Johannes Petrus LOUW – Eugène Albert NIDA: *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains*. 3rd ed. rev. New York: United Bible Societies 1989, 2 Vols.

³ In this respect Wynn’s suggestions on translating disabilities are of some value; cf. Kerry H. WYNN: *Disability in Bible Translation*. *The Bible Translator* 52/2001, Nr. 4, pp. 402–414.

(3) Terms often perceived as technical: αἰμορροέω/ πηγῆ/ρύσις αἵματος, ἔλκωμαι/ἔλκος, παραλύομαι/παραλυτικός, σεληνιάζομαι, σκωληκόβρωτος, ὕδρωπικός.

Judging the obtained corpus of lexical items from a translation point of view, initially only expressions termed here as technical were thought to pose a translation problem, as they require additional interpretative effort from both the translator and the target language receptor. Nevertheless, when compiling accessible study material, a group of lexical units that would not typically be perceived as a technical medical vocabulary, yet still signify physiological processes and states, was also considered to be worthy of closer inspection, among them various usages of verb ξηραίνω and adjective ξηρός.

In the translation practice it is widely believed that in these cases not much space is left for the translator. Basically he is either advised to reproduce the concepts of the ancient world and risk that for many modern readers they would seem odd, old fashioned, that they attract unnecessary attention, or even convey false impression – in other words the translator is urged to use foreignizing strategies; or, he can use domesticating strategies and replace such concepts with our modern categories of thought. Then he would risk, that the meaning of the concept is narrowed down possible connotations are lost and in the worst cases the original meaning is disrupted. In practice, the two basic approaches are however not so strictly separated and there are definitely several levels of literalness or free rendering of the source text.

These will be illustrated on four examples of usages of verb ξηραίνω and adjective ξηρός as found in the corpus of New Testament texts. Before going further, particular usages of these lexical items shall be discussed; the dictionary entries and especially different contexts in which this verb and its adjective are used in the figurative meaning will be revisited and a few convenient collocations quoted.

XĒRAINŌ AND XĒROS IN DICTIONARY ENTRIES

The entries in all lexicons⁴ commonly used in the field suggest that verb ξηραίνω and adjective ξηρός are used literally as well as figuratively in abun-

⁴ We work with all lexicons included in Bibleworks® 8.0: LOUW – NIDA, op. cit. (note 2); BDAG = Frederick William DANKER – Walter BAUER: *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2000;

dance, and different meanings are testified on material from the New and Old Testament Greek (Septuagint), but also from extra-biblical sources. What literally dries or becomes dry are above all:

(1) *Bodies of water and earth* – (Red) sea ([ἐρυθρά] θάλασσα), brook (χειμάροος), river (ποταμός), trench (διῶρυξ), stream (ῥέος); or earth (γῆ ξηρά, τὸ ξηρόν); places and regions (τόπος);

(2) *Vegetation and parts of plants* – vegetation (βοτάνη), fig tree (συκῆ), grass/hay (χόρτος/ἄγρωστις), grapevine (ἄμπελος), corn (σίτος); wood/tree (ξύλον), branch (κλάδος), root (ρίζα), leaf (φύλλον);

(3) *Food and its volumes* – bread (τροφή/ἄρτος), cereals (καρπός), cheese (γάλα/τυρός); measure of content (μέτρον).

Majority of all other documented usages are figurative extensions of the meaning and we were interested in those contexts where ξηραίνω and ξηρός are connected to different parts of body which become somehow dry or deprived of their natural capabilities.

(1) *Incapacity to produce what is expected* – μαστοὶ ξηροί⁵ – breasts that are dried up are unable to produce milk and nurse; ὄμματα ξηρά⁶ – dried eyes are unable to produce tears; νηδύς/κοιλία ξηρά⁷ – infertile or miscarrying womb is unable to give birth to a an offspring;

(2) *Incapacity to control the movement of hands* – partial or complete, but only temporary incapability: “... καὶ ἐκώλυσεν [ὁ Θεός] ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ δράσιν χειρῶν.

FRIBERG = Timothy FRIBERG – Barbara FRIBERG – Neva F. MILLER: *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker 2000; THAYER = *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament* (originally Grimm’s Wilke’s *Clavis Novi Testamenti*). J. H. THAYER (Transl., rev. and enl.). Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark 1908; LSJ = Henry George LIDDELL – Robert SCOTT: *A Greek-English lexicon*. Revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart JONES. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1968; PREUSCHEN = Erwin PREUSCHEN: *Griechisch-deutsches Taschenwörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 2005; M & M = James Hope MOULTON – George MILLIGAN: *The vocabulary of the Greek Testament illustrated from the papyri and other non-literary sources*. London: Hodder-Stoughton 1930; TDNT = Gerhard KITTEL – Gerhard FRIEDRICH: *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. G. W. BROMILEY (Transl. et ed.). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans 1964–1974, 10 Vols.

⁵ Hosea 9:14 (Greek text according to Bibleworks® 8.0).

⁶ Aeschylus, *Septem contra Thebas* 696.

⁷ Hippocrates, *Aphorisms* 2, 20. W. H. S. JONES (Transl.). London: Harvard University Press 1953, Vol. IV, p. 112.

ὅτι ἡ χεὶρ μου ἢ δεξιὰ ἡμίξηρος ἦν ἐπὶ ἡμέρας ἑπτὰ⁸”; similarly in LXX: “καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐξηράνθη ἡ χεὶρ αὐτοῦ [...] καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνήθη ἐπιστρέψαι αὐτὴν πρὸς ἑαυτὸν [...] καὶ ἐδεήθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ προσώπου κυρίου καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν τὴν χεῖρα τοῦ βασιλέως πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ ἐγένετο καθὼς τὸ πρότερον⁹”;

(3) *Incapacity to control (the movement of) hands* – partial or complete but apparently long term incapability, which is believed to be irreversible; either one of the extremities is affected: “χεὶρ αὐτοῦ (ἢ δεξιὰ) ἦν ξηρά¹⁰”; half of the body: “γυνὴ ... ξηρὰ τὸ ἥμισυ τὸ δεξιόν¹¹”; or body as a whole: “οἱ ξηροί¹²”;

(4) *Unhealthiness* – ξηραίνεται τὰ ὀστά¹³ – while fat bones signify a healthy body¹⁴, dry bones imply health problem, lifelessness; ξηρὸν δέμας¹⁵ – withered, lean (?), body wasted with sorrow;

(5) *Coined medical expressions* – βήξ ξηρά – dry cough, πυρετὸς ξηρός – dry fever, γλωσσο ξηρά – dry tongue as a result of fever or thirst.

In the New Testament texts verb ξηραίνω and adjective ξηρός are used in four different contexts to describe physiological processes and states. In the following text all four contexts will be inspected and commented from a translation point of view.

HAEMORRHAGING WOMAN

The least problematic from a translation point of view is the case of a haemorrhaging woman in Mark 5:25 – 34. Despite the difficulties connected to the rendition of the woman’s health condition (ἡ πηγή τοῦ αἵματος)¹⁶, the verb ξηραίνω does not pose a particular translation problem here. The euphemistic

⁸ *Testamentum Symeonis de Invidia* II/12. In: Spicilegium SS. Patrum ut et haereticorum, seculi post Christum natum I–III, J. A. GRABE (Ed.). Oxoniae: E Theatro Sheldoniano 1698, Vol. 1, p. 153.

⁹ 1 Kings 13:4 and 6.

¹⁰ Matthew 12:10, Mark 3:1, Luke 6:6.

¹¹ *Lucian Works, Toxaris, or on Friendship*. A. M. HARMON (Ed.). Harvard University Press: London 1936, Vol. 5, p. 142ff.

¹² John 5:3.

¹³ Proverbs 17:22.

¹⁴ Cf. Proverbs 3:8; 15:30 or 16:24.

¹⁵ Euripides, *Electra* 239.

¹⁶ For discussion on the woman’s disease, cf. Marla J. SELVIDGE: *Mark 5:25–34 and Leviticus 15:19–20: a reaction to restrictive purity regulations*. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103, 1984, Nr. 4, pp. 619–626.

references to woman's menstruation apparently reflect Jewish purity system. The most commonly, biblical authors tend to be intentionally unclear or indirect when speaking about blemished people or about the cause of their social and ritual exclusion. Selvidge (1984: 619) observes that no major Greek writers refer to menstruation using nouns πηγή (spring) or ρύσις (flow) with genitive αἵματος and links these two examples to the LXX usage, where these expressions are found in the Book of Leviticus predominantly.

A woman from the New Testament story is described as being subject to the bleeding for an extensive period of time – “οὕσα ἐν ρύσει αἵματος δώδεκα ἔτη” (Mark 5:25), and despite treatment by physicians she is only healed when she touches Jesus' clothes. Her suffering is stopped immediately when the source from which the blood springs dries up: “καὶ εὐθὺς ἐξηράνθη ἡ πηγή τοῦ αἵματος αὐτῆς καὶ ἔγνω τῷ σώματι ὅτι ἴαται ἀπὸ τῆς μάστιγος” (Mark 5:29). The verb ξηραίνω is here used to refer to the flow of liquid that literally dries up and thus what is figurative here is not the verb itself but the euphemistic expression for an abnormal gynaecological condition.

From a translation point of view, what gives us sufficient clues to translate the verb successfully here is a combination of the broader context in which it is used and tendency to harmonize synoptic parallels (paraphrased account of Luke replaces the verb ἐξηράνθη by the verb ἔστη, Luke 8:44). Therefore, ἐξηράνθη is frequently rendered using verbs as stop, cease, stanch (Slovak *prestat', zastavit' sa, ustat'*) even in some more form-oriented versions (Revised Standard Version, Slovak Catholic version).

MAN WITH A DRY HAND

As a more challenging task for the translator we perceive the case of χεῖρ ξηρά in Matthew 12:10 and following verses and in parallel accounts by Mark and Luke. In all three instances the condition of a man is described almost identically: “ἄνθρωπος χεῖρα ἔχων ξηράν” (Matthew 12:10); “ἄνθρωπος ἐξηραμμένην ἔχων τὴν χεῖρα” (Mark 3:1); “ἡ χεῖρ αὐτοῦ ἡ δεξιὰ ἦν ξηρά” (Luke 6:6).

Variations that could eventually narrow the meaning are of a minor significance. The perfect passive participle is sometimes argued to be a term of technical nature used predominantly by physicians, but evidence is far from conclusive¹⁷, and we are cautious also when accepting the perfect passive participle here to be a proof that a man's condition is not congenital but acquired.

¹⁷ Henry J. CADBURY: *Lexical notes on Luke-Acts : II. Recent arguments for medical language.*

Further, the Gospel of Luke specifies that the affected hand is the right hand, but the detail is of no value from diagnostic point of view. The detail mentioned in Luke's account is commonly being ascribed to the alleged medical education of the author of this Gospel, but it would be safer to interpret it as an extra emphasis on the importance of hands and as an accentuation of the desperate condition of the unfortunate man¹⁸, or just read it as an symbol of power and strength. The same is probably heightened in the variant reading of Gospels of Nazarenes and Ebionites mentioned by Jerome¹⁹ *In Evangelio, quo utuntur Nazaraeni et Ebionitae, [...] homo iste, qui aridam habet manum, caementarius scribitur. Istius modi vocibus auxilium precans: "Caementarius eram, manibus victum quaeritans. Precor te, Iesu, ut mihi restituas sanitatem, ne turpiter mendicem cibos."*

As accounts in synoptic Gospels offer no details instrumental to the successful specification or even identification of the condition or narrowing of the meaning; and, the collocation χεῖρ ξηρά is not among typical collocations in biblical or extra-biblical evidence, we assume that what we deal here with is not a coined medical condition, but a figurative extension of the literal meaning, some sort of euphemistic expression or just an native Greek expression of non-technical nature. Both the Greek adjective ξηρός and perfect passive participle ἐξηραμμένος allow for quite broad interpretation of the man's condition, and taking into account possible movement restrictions and no specification whether the hand's incapability is temporary or permanent; virtually, here we have to deal with anything from that of congenital handicap to deformity caused by trauma or disease.

The majority of commonly used Greek lexicons conjecture in these three parallel accounts on paralysis, but they also underline different aspects of the hand's affection and the meaning remains broad²⁰: Louw & Nida (23.173) and BDAG (5170) lay stress on the hand's immobility; FRIBERG (19262) on its uselessness; in THAYER (3678) the hand is just deprived of a natural moisture; in LSJ (39159) as well as in PREUSCHEN (3652) it is lean and parched. Hesseling (1908: 146) points out that semantically we should probably look for

Journal of biblical literature 45, 1926, Nr. 1/2, p. 204ff.

¹⁸ Affected hand would be perceived as a physical flaw, cf. Leviticus 21:16–20.

¹⁹ Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Matheum libri IV*. D. HURST – M. ADRIAEN (Eds.). CCSL 77, Turnholti: Brepols 1969, II, 12, 13, p. 90.

²⁰ Numbers in brackets signify the number attached to the lexical item in the quoted source as it appears within Bibleworks8® software, for abbreviations of particular lexicons cf. note 4.

a connection between dried branches of trees and hands, and inserts that ξηρός in the New Testament refers either to the wasted, weakened or decayed hand or alternatively to the whole body as in the case of John 5:3²¹.

Since for paralysis there is a specific and more technical term in the New Testament Greek – παραλυτικός or παραλελυμένος – one is tended to presume that there would be at least the slight shift in the meaning between different expressions. Wettstein offers here a cross-reference to 1 Kings 13:4 and 6, and the Hebrew root “yābēsh”²². As we observed, the Septuagint substitutes a Hebrew root “yābēsh” quite systematically with passive forms of the Greek verb ξηραίνω or the adjective ξηρός. Its primary meaning is “to be or become dry losing moisture” but its usage in 1 Kings 13:4 and 6 is figurative: “καὶ ἐξέτεινεν ὁ βασιλεὺς τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου λέγων συλλάβετε αὐτόν καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐξηράνθη ἡ χεὶρ αὐτοῦ ἦν ἐξέτεινεν ἐπ’ αὐτόν καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνήθη ἐπιστρέψαι αὐτὴν πρὸς ἑαυτόν”. From the situational context it is possible to deduce that while “withering” a King Jeroboam’s hand probably becomes rigid, stiff and motionless, and he loses control of it.

Similar, but not so definite context with same Hebrew root is found in Zechariah 11:17, where both eye and hand lose their natural capabilities completely: “ὦ οἱ ποιμαίνοντες τὰ μάτια καὶ οἱ καταλειπότες τὰ πρόβατα μάχαιρα ἐπὶ τοὺς βραχίονας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν τὸν δεξιὸν αὐτοῦ ὁ βραχίον αὐτοῦ ξηραίνεται ξηρανθήσεται καὶ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς ὁ δεξιὸς αὐτοῦ ἐκτυφλούμενος ἐκτυφλωθήσεται”. However, while we are positive that the eye becomes blind here, it is not so straightforward what happens when it comes to the arm. Most likely when drying completely up, the hand becomes useless, deprived of its former strength and capability to work and move.

Absolute majority of translations of Matthew 12:10; Mark 3:1; Luke 6:6 and following verses still opt for classical equivalents here – dry or dried, withered (Roháček’s version, Slovak Protestant version, Slovak Catholic version and partially also Slovak Ecumenical version; King James Version, New King James Version, Revised Standard Version etc.). We suggest that the emphasis here could be shifted from anything that refers either to the primary meaning of dry-ness or enforces such health condition which would imply that a hand is stunted²³ or

²¹ Dirk Christiaan HESSELING: Ξηρός, In: Sertum nabericum. S. A. Naber – J. J. Hartman (Eds.). Lugdunum Batavorum: Brill 1908, pp. 145–156.

²² Johann Jacob WETTSTEIN: *Novum Testamentum Graecum*. Amsterdam: ex officina Dommeriana 1751, Vol. 1, p. 388, n. 10.

²³ Fitzmyer in Luke 6:6, quite extraordinarily, translates “stunted” by which he means atrophied

dead²⁴, because there is lack of evidence to assume such a devastating condition of the hand.

Equivalents that express complete paralysis seem to be more reasonable, but strictly speaking, the man's hand, even though affected, is still able to stretch in all three parallel versions (Matthew 12:13; Mark 3:5; Luke 6:10): “τότε λέγει τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ· ἔκτεινόν σου τὴν χεῖρα. καὶ ἐξέτεινεν καὶ ἀπεκατεστάθη ὑγιῆς ὡς ἡ ἄλλη”. Therefore, if the condition in the target language is rendered in a way that suggests total movement restriction, the order of events could seem unlikely. Moreover, we think that if the meaning of the adjective ξηρός and forms of the verb ξηραίνω could be distinguished from those of παραλυτικός or παραλυμένος it would also be useful for the two following usages. Equivalents that express rigidity, weakness and stiffness or loose of control appear to be the most reasonable here and seem to be better related to the Old Testament root “yābēsh”. One of the desirable translation solutions is found in two occurrences (Matthew 12:10 and ff.; Mark 3:1 and ff.) in Slovak free version “limp” (Slovak *bezvládný, nevládný*).

POSSESSED BOY

In Mark 9:18 a passive verbal form ξηραίνεται is used in what is believed by many²⁵ to be a description of an epileptic seizure. The case of a lunatic or moonstruck boy is described in all three synoptic Gospels differently²⁶, with Mark being the most abundant in details. Among several typical symptoms such as foaming or gnashing of teeth, muscular rigidity is also mentioned in medical literature. Wilkinson²⁷, while attempting to equate σεληνιασμός with epilepsy, comments also on the verb ξηραίνεται: “The meaning of wasting is

in its growth; unfortunately he does not give further explanation to such translation choice; cf. Joseph A. FITZMYER: *The Gospel according to Luke* (The Anchor Bible series). Garden City – New York: Doubleday 1981, Vol. 28, p. 604.

²⁴ Bible in Basic English; English text as it appears within Bibleworks8® software.

²⁵ The rendering epileptic for the Greek verb σεληνιάζομαι was introduced by Revised Standard version in 1881 for the first time on the ground of evidence coming from Byzantine physician Leo Philosophus, nevertheless, it was never widely accepted by form-oriented versions.; cf. Jozefa ARTIMOVÁ: *Diseases and health conditions of the New Testament texts as a translation problem: the case of a lunatic boy revisited*. In: *Fragmenty z dejín medicíny, farmácie a veterinárnej medicíny*. I. Vojteková – V. Ozorovský (Eds.). Kancelária WHO na Slovensku: Bratislava 2012, p. 13.

²⁶ Matthew 17:14–20, Mark 9:14–29, Luke 9:37–43.

²⁷ John WILKINSON: *The case of the epileptic boy*. *The Expository Times* 79, 1967, Nr. 2, p. 42.

inappropriate here for epilepsy does not usually interfere with nutrition of its victims. It seems preferable to extend the meaning to include the result of the wasting, namely lack of movement, and so understand the verb as meaning that the boy becomes completely exhausted and motionless after his convulsion.”

Even if we have to be cautious when introducing modern ideas about sickness and physiological states into the world of Scriptures, we favour here Wilkinson’s interpretation against typical translation solutions of form-oriented Bible versions. Languishing (Slovak *chradnúť*) or withering away (Slovak *schnúť*) in this context seem to be much more unnatural than rigidity or stiffness, and it is a less preferred translation solution even in form-oriented English versions (Revised Standard Version, New International Version – he becomes rigid, stiff).

We propose that the state of the boy after an epileptic seizure could be rather seen as a similar rigidity, stiffness and motionlessness that was observed when speaking of King Jeroboam’s hand or of the hand of the nameless man in Matthew 12:10 and parallel accounts. BDAG (5169) quotes here another similar phrase from Theocritus²⁸ – “ξηρόν ὑπαὶ δειοῦς” (lit. stiff with fright, scared stiff). Hesseling (1908: 147) understands this rigidity as a secondary derivation of the meaning of adjective ξηρός and quotes two expressions in which rigid should be understood as inanimate, spiritless or simply dead: “ξερὸς ἀπὸ τῆν τρομάρα” and “ἔπεσε ξηρός” (cf. Spanish *quedar seco*). Slovak free translation prefers²⁹ rigidity (Slovak *celý zmeravie*) against coined terms he languishes, he withers away (*chradne, schne*) found in all other Slovak Bible versions.

HEALED ON THE SABBATH

The last context where the adjective ξηρός is used figuratively to denote a physiological condition is John 5:3. Here, the adjective stands alongside other health conditions: πλήθος τῶν ἀσθενούντων, τυφλῶν, χωλῶν, ξηρῶν. The usage

²⁸ Theocritus, *Idylls* 24, 61.

²⁹ For the Slovak free translation see *Hope for all* (= *Nový Zákon, Nádej pre každého. Druhá časť Svätého písma – Biblie v modernom jazyku*. Denmark: International Bible Society & Creativpress 1993; for the rest of Bible versions see: Slovak Protestant version (= *Biblia. Písmo Sväté Starej a Novej Zmluvy*. Liptovský Mikuláš: Tranoscius 1984); Slovak Catholic version (= *Sväté Písmo Starého a Nového Zákona*. Trnava: Spolok Svätého Vojtecha 2004); Slovak Ecumenical version (= *Písmo Sväté. Nová Zmluva a Žalmy*. Slovenský Ekumenický preklad. Banská Bystrica: Slovenská Biblická Spoločnosť 1995), Version by Roháček (= *J. ROHÁČEK: Nový Zákon našeho Pána a Spasiteľa Ježiša Krista*. Praha: Biblická spoločnosť Britická a zahraničná 1937).

has no parallel in other Gospels, and cross-references point again to 1 Kings 13:4 or Matthew 12:10. Similar enumerations of different diseases or disabilities are to be found in many places in the Old and New Testament texts. The most typical ones are Matthew 4:24, 15:30 and Luke 7:22, 14:13. Such lists almost always mention a parallel pair of blind, τυφλοὶ, and lame, χωλοὶ. In the two occasions – Matthew 4:24 and Acts 8:7 – paralytics, παραλελυμένοι, are mentioned as well.

The adjective ξηρός is found in such context only in John and it is also the only occurrence of ξηρός within whole Gospel of John. From our point of view ξηρός in this context would not specify any particular malady, but could refer to those who are greatly affected by their disease and probably almost motionless. Further details in the story may be seen as supportive to such an interpretation. Man, who becomes the main figure in the further text, has a health problem that is persisting for a long period of time: “ἦν δέ τις ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖ τριάκοντα [καὶ] ὀκτὼ ἔτη ἔχων ἐν τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ αὐτοῦ” (John 5:5) and he is unable to act quickly when needed “κύριε, ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἔχω ἵνα ὅταν ταραχθῆ τὸ ὕδωρ βάλῃ με εἰς τὴν κολυμβήθραν· ἐν ᾧ δὲ ἔρχομαι ἐγώ, ἄλλος πρὸ ἐμοῦ καταβαίνει.” (John 5:7)

Meaning-oriented versions usually replace literalistic and vague expressions “withered/wasted” (Slovak *vyschlí, vychradlí, vychradnutí*), with the more expressive term “paralytics”, but we perceive such replacement as unnecessary. Equivalent paralytic here may be also based on variant reading in the Western text that adds παραλυτικῶν after ξηρῶν³⁰.

From a fairly abundant lexis denoting physiological processes and states in the New Testament texts, only a few terms could be labelled as technical medical lexis. Even in such cases the identification of disease in terms of precise medical diagnosis is not only unfeasible, but also not desirable as we would hardly ever be able to know the true nature of most of the medically related conditions mentioned in this corpus of texts. The ordinary language of the writers of the New Testament makes the use of any precise terms that suggest our modern medical understanding inappropriate. Ferngren and Amundsen in this context write: “Even when the vocabulary becomes more specific, if it is symptomatic or rather pathological, it nevertheless must be understood more

³⁰ Roger Lee OMANSON: *A textual guide to the Greek New Testament*. Stuttgart: German Bible Society 2006, p. 174.

phenomenologically than scientifically. And when the vocabulary becomes precise in its pathological specificity, it is always an expression of a particular nosology or medical paradigm that may have little meaning in a different culture or may inadvertently convey the impression of a different pathological state.”³¹ This is much more applicable in cases where the lexis is vague and imprecise.

Form-oriented translations aim to preserve as many parts of the source text as possible and many times treat the lexis concordantly. In such versions the terms employed for different physiological conditions when translated literally may sound unnatural or even misleading (e. g. withering/drying in Mark 9:18). Another problem with such literalistic names of different health conditions is that in the target language such expressions or phrases are perceived as marked or uncommon collocations. While being intuitively comprehensible, they still alert a perceptive reader that there maybe something wrong with the text or it’s rendering in the target language.

On the other hand, meaning-oriented translations are in an effort to convey as much meaning as possible, sometimes too interpretative and too fast with equating ancient health conditions to our modern medical paradigms. These translation solutions often sound too technical in the ancient biblical text.

The New Testament health conditions that contain adjective ξηρός or verb ξηραίνω are figurative extensions of the primary meaning. Except for the usage in Mark 5:29, we are confident enough that they should be translated in a way that emphasizes more rigidity or stiffness than dryness and emaciation in languages where collocation “dry with different parts of body or body as a whole” is not a typical one. Also, they do not have to be necessarily substituted by terms suggesting paralysis as it is a specific lexical item within the New Testament corpus with its own range of meaning. Nevertheless, the final decision on how to treat this kind of lexis should be probably spelled out in the *skopos* of the particular Bible translation project, which would be under usual circumstances defined before the translation work itself.

³¹ Gary B. FERNGREN – Darrel W. AMUNDSEN: *Disease and disease causality in the New Testament*. In: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*. W. Haase (Ed.). Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter 1996, Part II, Vol. 37, 3, p. 2956.

R e s u m é

Obrazné použitie slovesa ξηραίνω a adjektíva ξηρός v Novej zmluve

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Novozmluvní autori používajú na opis rozličných fyziologických procesov a stavov bežnú hovorovú lexiku, ktorá sa v mnohých prípadoch vymyká našim snahám o presnú medicínsku interpretáciu. Také sú i prípady použitia adjektíva ξηρός (suchý, vyschnutý, vyprahnutý) a slovesa ξηραίνω (vyschnúť, vysušiť sa). V každom kontexte (Mk 5,29; Mt 12,10; Mk 9,18, Jn 5,30), kde slúžia na opis chorobných stavov, ide o obrazné použitie. Okrem prípadu, ktorý opisuje Marek 5,9 (ξηραίνω je použité v spojení s patologickým krvácaním vo význame ustať, zastaviť sa), nemá slovesný či adjektívny tvar význam suchý, vyprahnutý, zbavený tekutiny/vlhkosti, ale skôr znamená tuhý, meravý, nevládny, nehybný, nemohúci. Spojenia typu muž s vyschnutou rukou (Mt 12,10), chlapec, ktorý počas (epileptického) záchvatu schne, či chradne (Mk 9,18), a napokon vyschlí či vychradnutí nemocní (Jn 5,3) síce nie sú úplne nezrozumiteľné, no zároveň vyžadujú viac čitateľovho interpretatívneho úsilia. Výhodou formálne presných prekladov je ich konkordančná jednota, ktorá umožňuje rýchlu orientáciu v texte a naznačuje súvislosť s inými výskytmi toho istého slova. Je však otázne, či sa nedá naznačiť aj iným spôsobom ako prenášaním netypických, a tým aj príznakových kolokácií do cieľového jazyka.