

TRANSLATION OF THE BRETON SONG *KENAVO* INTO CORNISH

Background

The Breton language has four conventional dialects, three of which are similar and one is distant from the three. The Breton names for the similar dialects are Kerneveg (K), Leoneg (L) and Tregerieg (T); the fourth is Gwenedeg (G). A single orthography can serve KLT, but it is difficult to devise one which adequately represents G as well. (For more details, and the relationship of the Breton dialects to Cornish, see ref. 1.)

The words of the well-known song *Kenavo* were composed by Job le Bayon, a priest from Pluvigner in the south of Brittany. He wrote in Gwenedeg, in which words are normally stressed on the final syllable instead of the penultimate syllable, as in KLT and Cornish. This means that anyone who speaks KLT Breton, such as myself, will find that the stress in the music falls on the wrong syllable. This may not matter greatly, because stress in Breton songs is often misplaced (ref. 2), but it would prevent me from singing it.

As translator, I have been supplied with the song in four-part harmony, with the lyrics in an orthography corresponding to the Gwenedeg dialect. (The score is stamped 'Loveny Male Voice Choir', which makes sense, because their base of St Neot is twinned with Malgeneg, in a part of Brittany where Gwenedeg is spoken.) This I take to be the original spelling of the author; it is reproduced in the left-hand column of the next page.

Because of the popularity of the song in Brittany, it is often sung by choirs who use a KLT dialect; one therefore finds on the internet and elsewhere a version in a KLT orthography: one such is printed in the right-hand column of the next page. Close comparison of the two shows that the differences are not restricted to those of spelling; there are also occasional differences of vocabulary. For example, the second phrase of verse 2 line 2 was composed as *séhein en dar* 'to dry the tears', rhyming with *douar* 'Earth' in line 4. In KLT, *douar* is the same, but 'to dry the tears' would be *sec'hañ an daelou*, which manifestly does not rhyme. So the phrase has been changed for singers using KLT to *pellaat glac'har* 'to push away misery'.

There are also differences of pronunciation; the rhyming words *levenez* 'joy' and *trugarez* 'thanks' in the KLT version of the chorus are pronounced in Leoneg with [-z], but the original spellings *lewéné* and *trugéré* show that the [-z] has been lost in the Gwenedeg dialect. Here the two words are at least internally self-consistent in the two versions, but in verse 1 the word for 'love', *karantez* in KLT, is rhymed with *Zoue* 'God'; this means that singers using a Leoneg dialect would have to unnaturally drop the [-z].

LYRICS IN GWENEDEG DIALECT

- 1 Kanet hon eus a galon vat
 En énou d'er vro ha de Zoué,
 Mall é klomein kent 'em guitaat,
 Get ur sonenn hor haranté.

Diskan

Kenavo d'oh, gwir Vretoned,
 Bleuein e ra el lewéné
 É pep kalon doh ho hwélet
 Énou d'oh-hwi, ha trugéré.

- 2 Sonet hon eus, breudér karet,
 'Eit hadein joé, séhein en dar,
 Ha déskein d'en dason laret:
 Éh eus Bretoned ar en douar.

- 3 Éh eus ar en douar ur vro kær,
 Tud vat ha kaloneg énni,
 Hag en deus taolet é splandér
 Ar hent en énou hep fari.

LYRICS WHICH FIT KLT DIALECTS

- Kanet hon eus a galon vat
 en enor da'r vro, da Zoue
 mall eo skoulmañ, kent 'n em guitaat
 gant ur sonenn hor karanté'.

Diskan

Kenavo deoc'h, gwir Vretoned!
 Bleuniañ a ra al levez
 e peb kalon, ouzh ho kweled,
 enor deoc'h-c'hwi, ha trugarez.

- Sonet hon eus, breudeur garet,
 'vit hadañ joa, pellaat glac'har,
 ha deskiñ d'an dason laret
 ez eus Breizhiz war an douar.

- Ez eus er bed-mañ ur vro gaer,
 tud vat ha kaloneg enni,
 hag he deus taolet he splander
 war hent an enor, heb fazi.

Words by Job le Bayon

Translation

Cornish and Breton are quite close to each other, perhaps as close as Spanish and Portuguese, so that certain phrases may be translated with closely equivalent words; for instance in verse 3 line 4 *war hent an enor* becomes *war hyns an enor*. But to my mind, more important than closeness of the words is the prosody. It is important to me as translator that the rhythm of the translation fits the rhythm of the music, ensuring that the Cornish words when sung reflect the natural stress-pattern of the language. On the next page I present the KLT version of the Breton song, and my translation into Cornish. The literal English translation of each is also given, so that one may judge how close the meaning of the Cornish is to the Breton. Colour-coding is applied to those syllables which are stressed in the music: green means that these syllables are naturally stressed in the spoken language, and red means that they are not. Note that the red in the Breton applies to the KLT version, and not necessarily to the original G version.

BRETON LYRICS

English translation

- 1 Kanet hon eus a galon vat
We have sung good-heartedly
en enor da'r vro, da Zoue
in honour to the country, to God
mall eo skoulmañ, kent 'n em guitaat
there is haste to bind, before we depart
gant ur sonenn hor karante'.
with a song our love.

Diskan

Chorus

Kenavo deoc'h, gwir Vretoned!
Farewell to you, true Bretons,
Bleuniañ a ra al levenez
Flourish doth the joy
e peb kalon, ouzh ho kweled,
in every heart, on seeing you,
enor deoc'h-c'hwi, ha trugarez.
honour to you, and thanks.

- 2 Sonet hon eus, bredeur garet,
We have sung, beloved brothers
'vit hadañ joa, pellaat glac'har,
to sow joy, to banish misery
ha deskiñ d'an dason laret
and to teach the echo to say
ez eus Breizhiz war an douar.
that there are Bretons on the ground.

- 3 Ez eus er bed-mañ ur vro gaer,
There is in this world a beautiful country,
tud vat ha kaloneg enni,
good and brave people in it,
hag he deus taolet he splannder
and it has projected its splendour
war hent an enor, heb fazi.
on the path of honour, without doubt.

TRANSLATION INTO CORNISH

English translation

Yn enor dh'agan bro, dhe Dhuw
In honour to our country, to God
re gensyn ni dre golonn dha
we have sung good-heartedly
kyns moz dhe-ves, dhyn mall yth yw
before departing we are in a hurry
gul kolm kerenza dre don da.
to make a bind of love through a good tune

Diskan

Chorus

Duw genowgh-hwi, Bretonyon lel!
God be with you, loyal Bretons,
An heudh a wra bleujowa glas
The joy doth flourish green
yn kolonn wir, pan y'gas gwel;
in a true heart, when it sees you,
dhywgh meur a vri, ynwedh meur ras.
to you great honour, also great thanks.

Re sensyn, agan breder ger,
We have sung, our dear brothers
rag haza joy, ha skonya sorr,
to sow joy and reject anger
dhe'n dason dyski leva kler
to the echo to teach to voice clearly
yma Bretonyon war an dor.
that there are Bretons on the ground.

Yma y'n byz-ma bro fest teg,
There is in this world a very beautiful country,
tuz vaz kolonnek ynni-hi,
good brave people in it,
re dewlis hi hy splannder hweg
which has projected its sweet splendour
war hyns an enor, yn tefri.
on the path of honour, for sure.

On the next page is a copy of the translation into Cornish, with a transcription in the International Phonetic Alphabet as a guide to pronunciation. If Loveny Male Voice Choir or any other choir wish to sing the Cornish translation, I would be willing to help with the pronunciation.

TRANSLATION INTO CORNISH

PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION

- 1 Yn enor dh'agan bro, dhe Dhuw [ɪn 'ɛ:nɔr 'ðɑ:gɑn 'brɔ: ðə 'ðʊʊ]
 re gensyn ni dre golonn dha [rɛ 'gɛnʃɪn 'ni: drɛ 'gɔ:lɔn 'ðɑ:]
 kyns moz dhe-ves, dhyn mall yth yw [kɪns 'mɔ:z ðə 'vɛ:ʃ ðɪn 'mal: ɪ'θɪʊ]
 gul kolm kerenza dre don da. [gyl 'kɔlm kɛ'renzɑ 'drɛ: dɔ:n 'da:]

Diskan

- Duw genowgh-hwi, Bretonyon lel! [dʊʊ 'gɛ:nɔx 'hwi: brɛ'tɔnjɔn 'lɛ:l]
 An heudh a wra bleujowa glas [ɑn 'hœ:ð aʊ'ra: blœ'dʒɔʊɑ 'glɑ:ʃ]
 yn kolonn wir, pan y'gas gwel; [ɪn 'kɔ:lɔn 'wi:r pɑn 'ɪ'gɑʃ 'gwe:l]
 dhywgh meur a vri, ynwedh meur ras. [ðɪʊ 'mœ:r a 'vri: ɪn'we:ð mœr 'ra:s]
- 2 Re sensyn, agan breder ger, [rɛ 'ʃɛnʃɪn 'ɑ:gɑn 'brɛ'dɛr 'gɛ:r]
 rag haza joy, ha skonya sorr, [rɑk 'hɑ:zɑ 'dʒɔɪ hɑ 'skɔnjɑ 'sɔ:r:]
 dhe'n dason dyski leva kler [ðən 'dassɔn 'dɪ'ski 'lɛ'vɑ 'klɛ:r]
 yma Bretonyon war an dor. [ɪ'mɑ: brɛ'tɔnjɔn 'wɑ:r ɑn 'dɔ:r]
- 3 Yma y'n byz-ma bro fest teg, [ɪ'mɑ: ɪn 'bɪz'mɑ 'brɔ: fɛst 'tɛ:g]
 tuz vaz kolonnek ynni-hi, [tɪz 'vɑ:z kɔ'lɔnnɛk 'ɪnnɪ 'hi:]
 re dewlis hi hy splannder hweg [rɛ 'dɛʊlɪʃ 'hi: hɪ 'splɑndɛr 'hwe:g]
 war hyns an enor, yn tefri. [wɑr 'hɪnʃ ɑn 'ɛ:nɔr 'ɪn tɛ'fri:]

References

- 1) GEORGE, K.J. (2005) "Cornish - a fifth dialect of Breton?" Paper presented at a conference on "Near Languages", University of Limerick, June 2005. Available at <https://cornishlanguage.info/CorLing/phon/5DB.pdf>.
- 2) GEORGE, K.J. (1999) "Rhyme and scansion in Cornish" Paper presented by invitation at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. Available at <https://cornishlanguage.info/CorLing/rhyme/rimskan.pdf>.