

## Nothing Short of a

## Miracle

BY JANET SEEVER

Ancient rice terraces, looking like giant steps, filled the horizon. Wispy clouds floated in the blue sky. The setting in Barlig, Philippines, on April 24, 2004, looked every bit like a picture postcard. It was a marvelous day for a celebration!

Numbering nearly 1,000, an audience sat hushed, every eye focused on the six men standing in a circle before them. Representing the five church groups of the community, the men reached their hands out toward the boxes that held the Finallig New Testaments (see photo below).



Tim Ohlson

This display of unity was nothing short of a miracle.

Previously, the community had seen discord among the various church groups, with each claiming to have the truth. Over the past three years, an unprecedented unity of purpose developed and has prevailed as the groups worked together to make the Finallig New Testament translation a reality. Joy filled the hearts of the people as the words of Apo Dios—the name they call God—finally came to them.

The foundation for the translation project was laid nearly 30 years ago in 1975 by Wycliffe Canada Director Dave Ohlson, and his wife Joan. Soon, however, Dave was called on to serve as the director of SIL's Philippines branch and had to turn the project over to others. Over the years, workers continued the translation process. One of them was Kiyoko Torakawa of Wycliffe Japan, who worked on the translation for 18 years.

In 2000, Rundell and Judi Maree, from Wycliffe Canada and

Wycliffe U.S.A. respectively, began serving as the project's managers. (Previously the Marees had translated the Ibatan New Testament for a people group living on Babuyan Island, off the northern coast of the Philippines.) Ultimate credit for the completed Finallig New Testament goes to a team of hardworking mother tongue translators from various denominations, assembled for the task of redrafting, updating, and checking the Scriptures in the larger community. Greater community ownership has made all the difference. For example, between 125 and 150 people from five different religious communities were involved in reading through the final version of the translation to check for clarity.

The Finallig New Testament was one of two New Testaments completed in 2004 with Canadian participation. The Limos Kalinga New Testament, also from the Philippines, was dedicated on June 26, 2004. Canadians Hart and Ginny Wiens initiated the project in 1974 and served in the Philippines until 1991. Fred and Evelyn Caress helped complete the project. Hart was involved in the final checking in 2003. He currently serves as director of Scripture translation for the Canadian Bible Society.

Also noteworthy was the dedication this past year of the Coastal Arapesh New Testament for more than 16,000 people in Papua New Guinea. Alius Simatab, a national translator and



**A**  
Arapesh  
The Arapesh are a people group living in the high mountains of Papua New Guinea. They are for many years one of the poorest and most isolated people in the world. They have no roads and very few schools. The Arapesh people do not have a written language. They are for many years one of the poorest and most isolated people in the world. They have no roads and very few schools. The Arapesh people do not have a written language.

member of the Bible Translation Association (BTA), did the actual work, while Wycliffe's Bob and JoAnn Conrad served as project coordinators. This was the fourth New Testament project the Conrads have helped with in 40

years. This language group is one of several Arapesh groups. Arapesh was included in *From Arapesh to Zuni*, a children's book published in 1986 to initiate prayer for 26 languages needing Bible translation (see illustration above). The New Testament is an answer to the prayers of many.

These New Testaments were among 28 published Scriptures presented to people groups since our previous update in the Spring 2004 issue of *Word Alive*. Wycliffe translators and literacy workers have served these groups, which have a combined

total population of 9.87 million people. 🍁

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For a statistical summary of the 28 published Scriptures, visit <[www.wycliffe.ca/wordalive](http://www.wycliffe.ca/wordalive)>.