

way, related to the type of sin committed. These terms have the meaning of sin or evil, but give a direct indication of the kind of deviating behavior involved. Some examples are:

- a. *Pan*, the term is used for witchcraft. This belongs to the category of very heavy sins for which purification is hardly possible. It involves only a few people. In some cases the son or the brother of the *ponin* (person committing *pan*) is called and has to hang him. The *ponin* cannot bewitch his own people. In other cases help is called in from specialists in the society to detect the *ponin* and take measures which eventually also result in his death.
- b. *Ptakal*, which is generally associated with deviating sexual behavior, such as incest, homosexuality, intercourse with animals.

### Conclusions

1. This study has covered only part of the process. The biblical material also has to be analyzed carefully in order to complete it. In particular the relationship between sin and peace (*shalom* and *eirene*) has to be studied carefully in order to make accurate recommendations.

2. Eichrodt (*The Theology of the Old Testament*, 1987, page 166) states that "in Israel every sin is a case of an offence against the will of Yahweh." It is at this point that the Pökoot perspective differs strongly from the biblical viewpoint. Any development in Pökoot of a concept of sin in the biblical sense has to focus on this element. This is also closely linked to a biblical understanding of the nature of God.

3. The analysis of the different terms for sin makes it clear that there is no basis for using only the word *ngoki* to cover the whole field of meaning of sin and evil. The term *lelut* in particular has relevant elements of meaning as a general term in this respect.

4. Since Hebrew (to limit myself to the Old Testament) uses in total about 30 words in the area of sin, with 3 terms being employed more prominently to refer to the breach of Law, it is recommended that in Pökoot attention be paid to the context in which words from this area occur, after which an informed choice can be made.

5. It also follows that the Pökoot translation should make more use of the range of terms that the language has in this area of meaning.

6. Additional research among the Pökoot people is necessary. More study is needed on the element of ritual as it relates to the various concepts in the area of sin. The meaning of symbols in ritual may reveal much about the nature of the concept of sin in Pökoot.

## NOTES

### An Attempt at Translating a Psalm

One of our greatest concerns when translating the Scriptures is to ensure that the people who read or hear our translation will understand it. In practice this means that we often aim at uncomplicated language.

This in turn results in some of our work failing to exploit the full potential of the language, both in matters of syntax and of vocabulary.

Especially when we are faced with translating the poetry of the Hebrew Scriptures, trying to limit ourselves to simple language may put us under a severe constraint. Poetry uses the verbal potential of a language to the fullest, and it may therefore be difficult to understand at a first reading. But we are prepared to try to understand, because we accept that the meaning of a poem is conveyed both in the words the poet used, and in the way he used them, even if they are sometimes hard to appreciate immediately.

The Hebrew psalms are poetry. Their meaning is expressed in words that exploit the full potential of the Hebrew language. In order to translate them faithfully, therefore, shouldn't we attempt to translate them as poetry, and in our turn exploit the full potential of our own language? Shouldn't we aim at recreating in our language the particular verbal configurations which the poet created as his work? In many translation projects all over the world, this is what is being attempted more and more. Below is a modest effort to do it for English, for one psalm.

#### **Psalm 110: King and Priest**

- 1 The LORD's word to my King:  
"Be seated on my right,  
your enemies all conquered!
- 2 From Zion your power goes out:  
rule over them!"
- 3 Your people are willing to fight;  
young men in majestic attire  
sparkle like the dew at dawn.
- 4 The LORD made an oath,  
he won't change his mind;  
"You are priest for ever,  
of Melchizedek's kind."
- 5 The Lord is at your right.  
On the day of his anger  
he will crush kings,  
he will judge nations,
- 6 he will pile up the slain;  
he will crush the head of their ruler,  
reduce it to dust.
- 7 But our King will drink at a roadside brook,  
he will then raise his head.

#### **Commentary**

**Title:** I am assuming the oath of verse 4 is addressed by the LORD to the king, and not by the king to the priest (see Translators Handbook on Ps 110.4).

**Verse 1:** *Yahweh* is untranslatable and should be kept as a proper name; however it is not well known as such. And repeating “Lord”-“lord” (as is usually done) does not do justice to the Hebrew. To double each title “Lord God” and “(my) Lord the king” (FrCL, GeCL) burdens the text. (The Hebrew has three words only: *ne’um YHWH la’doni*).

“The Lord my king” or “my Lord, the king”: The word “king” is not in the Hebrew, but it is important in the context and I would rather retain it than “lord”. Also, to avoid confusion in the psalm about who is speaking and who is being addressed, I have avoided calling the king “lord” (see Handbook on 110.5-6). I would capitalize “King” (FrCL *Seigneur*) because of the importance of the person being addressed.

“Said” (TEV) or “says” (NIV) is too weak to translate *ne’um*, a solemn pronouncement. “Oracle” (NIV) is too quaint; *Declaration* (FrCL) too official-sounding. “Word” in present day English hits the right note of directness and authority. (As in: “But the word from the White House was that no concessions would be made”.)

*Sheb limini*: “Sit here at my right side” (TEV) sounds too colloquial, not solemn enough. “*Viens siéger à ma droite*” (FrCL) is much better. “Be seated” is accepted as a formal way of asking people to take a seat or to sit down. An alternative would be “Take your seat on my right”. “Side” (TEV) is redundant if we use the preposition “on” instead of “at”. GeCL and DuCL have “side”, but there the language demands it.

The traditional literal rendering of the Hebrew *’ad* as “until” (NRSV, TEV) gives the impression that the king will sit only until the time when God has placed all the enemies under his feet: once that’s done, the king will get up from God’s right hand side. But the idea is rather that the king is seated with the enemies conquered “under his feet” (see Handbook). Note that FrCL and GeCL seem to want to render “until” by using “I want to...”, but is this necessary? DuCL has (literally): “I will lay your enemies down...”

In addition, I think the idea of the “footstool” and “being under the king’s feet” should not be maintained literally. It is distracting and certainly not a commonly used image today. The verb “to conquer” is not too common either, but will be understood correctly here, I think. “Your enemies all conquered” is short and to the point. (For once the English comes out shorter than the Hebrew!). An alternative such as “your enemies destroyed”, or “**I want** your enemies destroyed/conquered” (like FrCL, GeCL) could be considered.

**Verse 2:** “The LORD extends your scepter of power from Zion” is certainly a heavily loaded line. Who acts? Who is really powerful? It is the King’s power, but the LORD is extending it from Zion. Do we have to mention the LORD by name? If we change the future which describes the LORD’s action using a third person form into a continuation of the command of the first line (“be seated”), we can assume that the LORD is behind the King’s power extending from Zion, and we can render as we have.

The next line is a command, translated literally, which fits well into

the context (and makes the previous lines fit in as well). I changed “your enemies” to “them” for stylistic reasons, to avoid a heavy repetition. “Them”, it is hoped, is clear in the context as referring to the “enemies” two lines before, the only plural noun that has been used.

**Verse 3:** The next lines contain difficult expressions (TEV note: “Hebrew unclear”). I have made the three lines refer to the same subject: the soldiers of the King’s army. If the Hebrew is not clear anyway, the translator may as well pick a rendering that makes sense, rather than one that only shows the reader that the Hebrew is unclear.

“To fight” may be considered too short to render the idea of “the day of your battle”; but in the context of the preceding lines, where the king is told to rule over the enemies, it should be clear enough.

“The womb of the dawn” (NIV, literally from the Hebrew) is quaint in English, or poetic with a vengeance. FrCL has tried to capture it with *comme la rosée née de l’aurore* (literally “like the dew born of/from the dawn”), but I don’t think this translates well into English. (The same may be said for GeCL: “Fresh (!) like the dawn in the morning”.)

“Majestic attire” is heavy, of course, but what can we do with the Hebrew *behadere-qodesh*? I tentatively assume the Hebrew itself sounds a bit quaint and the translation therefore allows for a few big words.

**Verse 4:** *Nishba’ YHWH*, is literally “the LORD’s oath”. “The LORD made a solemn promise” (TEV) avoids “oath” and “swearing” but lacks power. FrCL with *serment* is better, while GeCL has *Schwur* (from the same Germanic root as the English “to swear”) which is strong. I think “oath” in the present context is acceptable, but is the expression “made an oath” solemn enough?

*Welo’ yinachem*, again only two words, results in many words in most translations. GeCL “He does not take this promise back”, TEV “and will not take it back”, FrCL *il ne s’en dédira pas*, are all correct. I have put “he won’t change his mind”, which provides a rhyme with the second line down ending in “mind”. Using rhyme risks producing doggerel, but doing it once in the whole psalm should be permitted. Another possibility would be “The LORD made an oath/irreversible it is”.

For the (famous) next two lines, the Hebrew has few words. We should try to keep the translation succinct as well. TEV “You will be a priest forever/in the priestly order of Melchizedek” is wordy and prosaic. And why “priestly order”? To make it all extra clear to the reader? Surely if we say (to a student, for example): “You will be a magistrate, like your father”, the listener will know that the student is going to be a magistrate as well. There is no need to say in full: “like your father was a magistrate”. (But see DuCL below.)

I put on purpose “you are priest...” (and not “a priest”), in order to make the pronouncement more abstract and general (I hope), and less reminiscent of the pastor of any particular denomination.

“The order/lineage/genealogy” is not a family line that the poet is talking about. Rather it is a tradition, or even “the kind of, the type

of”; so I think my translation is valid, as well as concise. The DuCL rendering should be considered as well: “You will be priest for ever,/priest like Melchizedek”.

**Verses 5-6:** “The LORD is at your side...” begins a new strophe or verse in the poem. I am following the Hebrew text rather literally, with “crush” twice. FrCL has “He fills the valleys with corpses”, but according to the Handbook it is either “valleys” or “corpses”, but not both. In TEV the “battlefield” is filled, but do we have to tell the reader where the corpses will be? In the context of crushing kings and judging nations, does it matter where the dead lie? Anyway, “slain” (my translation) should be clear enough.

The most debatable line is “he will crush the head of their ruler, reduce it to dust”. I wanted to use “head” because the Hebrew uses *ro’sh* here, probably in the figurative sense of “the one who heads”, and again in the last line in a literal way as the head of the king (though it may have an extended meaning there as well, see TEV and GeCL below). Here the head is crushed (down), there the head is lifted. So I used “head of their ruler”, wondering whether it is appropriate. NIV uses “rulers” in “and crushing the rulers of the whole earth” which might be more accurate but lacks rhythm. “To dust” is a free rendering, hopefully according to the sense of the lines, and preparing for the image of the coolness of the king’s drinking at the brook.

**Verse 7:** The last two lines form an anticlimax to the gore of the preceding lines. The first of the two I have tried to give a flowing rhythm: “But our King will drink at a roadside brook”, allowing it to sound deliberately poetic. This makes the very last line stand out by its simplicity.

“**Our King**” is a free interpretation of the text. And why not? After all, even “king” is not in the text, although many translations insert it to avoid having the readers think the actor of the last two lines is the same as in the previous lines, God. “Our” is in contrast to the other kings who run afoul of the LORD, as described in the previous lines. (I wondered about “my King”, as in the first line, but it seems to suit the context less well here.)

“He will then raise his head”. This is what the text says. (Note FrCL *Après quoi il relève la tête.*)

“And strengthened he will be victorious” (TEV) is an unjustified addition, as is the German *und so gestarkt, behalt er den Sieg*, which means literally “and thus strengthened he obtains the victory”. DuCL is a little more conservative with “strengthened he lifts his head”. But I think we should let the reader figure out for himself why the king lifts his head after drinking cool water. I think the hint a few lines before (the crushed “head of their ruler”) should be sufficient to give the last line a context. Anyway, interpreting the line as an allusion to the king’s victory is, to my mind, distorting the poetry and limiting its simple power to a single prosaic explanation. (Why after **drinking water** anyway? Why not elaborate on that line as well, “After refreshing himself in the presence of God” or something?)

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Since I am neither a native English speaker nor a poet, an exercise such as the above will be viewed with justified scepticism. My aim, however, was to try to show that the translator should play with his language and not be afraid to experiment with words, trying to capture something of the simple conciseness of the Hebrew poetry, and in this way transfer the poetry of the source text into poetry in translation. Others will surely do much better in this, and I hope they too will try, each one for his own language.

JAN P. STERK

## FOCUS ON TRANSLATORS

*The following contribution has been provided by Rev. Hermogenes Ugang and Dr Daud Soesilo of the Indonesian Bible Society. It deals with a question which is important for translators in a number of languages.*

-Editor

### **Are Honorific Terms of Address Necessary in the Indonesian Bible?**

The question of honorific terms of address for God in the Indonesian Bible has been raised by some friends of the Bible following the launching of the New Translation New Testament in 1971.

In response to this new publication, one Christian from East Java wrote to the Indonesian Bible Society (IBS): "Shouldn't we use *Yehowa* 'Jehovah' or *Tuhan* 'Lord' instead of *Engkau* 'you', *-Mu* (objective 'you' or possessive 'your') in referring to God? Although in Indonesian there is no equivalent of the English 'thee' and 'thine' used in the King James Version, or the Dutch *U* (in contrast to *jij*), we ought to do something to show more respect to God." He did not realize that *Engkau* is the equivalent of "thou/thee" as second person pronoun singular, even though the plural form "you" has now replaced "thou" as the singular, which was originally used as an honorific. When the complete Bible in the New Translation (TB) was published in 1974, the pronouns for God were still second person pronouns, *Engkau* or *-Mu*, and third person pronouns *Dia* or *-Nya*.

This same person sent IBS a stronger criticism when the Indonesian Common Language Translation (BIS) was released in 1985. He found it unacceptable that the BIS Bible continues to use *engkau*, *-mu* "you or your", *nya* "he, him or his." And worse still BIS does not capitalize the pronouns for God. Other people also wrote and questioned whether the IBS had paid attention to the use of honorific terms of address in the Indonesian Bible translation. The criticism now is not only against the absence of honorific terms of address for God and Jesus, but also against the nature of the translation itself. Indonesian speakers of Javanese background are sincerely concerned that the BIS Bible will downgrade the