

	'amutsim	psaros	strong
Zech 6.6	shakhor	melas	black
	laban	leukos	white
	barod	poikilos	grey
Zech 6.7	'amutsim	psaros	strong
Rev 6.2	-	leukos	white
Rev 6.4	-	purros	brown
Rev 6.5	-	melas	black
Rev 6.8	-	chlōros	grey
Rev 19.11	-	leukos	white
Rev 19.14	-	leukos	white

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THE RENDERING OF THE DIVINE NAME *YHWH* IN SOME GHANAIAN BIBLE TRANSLATION PROJECTS

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Introduction

In the Hebrew Old Testament (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*), the divine name *YHWH* [usually referred to as the Tetragrammaton = “having four letters”] occurs 6,828 times. Apart from the fact that the etymology of this divine name, as revealed particularly in Exod 3.14-15, has been a subject of heated debate among scholars, serious attention has also been devoted to the vital subject of how best *YHWH* could be rendered in various Bible translation projects across the world. Several relevant articles on “Names of God” in the Old and New Testaments as well as selected languages in Africa and Asia were, for instance, published by the United Bible Societies in *The Bible Translator*, *Practical Papers* 35/2 (April 1984), 35/4 (October 1984). The 1985 (vol. 36) issue also paid attention to the subject in European languages. A lot more discussion has since been done and summarized in other scholarly publications. Rather than reinvent the wheel, this article will simply focus on specific issues facing some major Bible translation projects in Ghana and offer some suggestions that will hopefully prove useful to translation projects in other countries.

The divine name in some ancient and modern translations

According to Exod 3.13-15, God (Hebrew: *'elohim*) responds to Moses' inquiry about God's name by declaring *YHWH* as his name forever, and as his title to be remembered throughout all generations. In the text of Exod 3.15, God specifically instructs Moses to communicate this to the Israelites. According to Exod 6.3, however, this name was not revealed to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In the Hebrew text of Exod 3.14, God declares to Moses: *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*, usually translated as I AM THAT I AM or I WILL BE WHAT I WILL

BE, thereby bringing out the eternal and dynamic aspects of God's being. It may also be understood as a reference to God as the absolute and necessary being who is the source of all created beings. It is interesting to note that the Greek translation of the Old Testament, also known as the Septuagint (LXX), renders it as *Egō eimi ho ōn* = "I AM the one WHO IS." The Latin translation, also known as the Vulgate (*Biblia Sacra Vulgata*) puts it as *ego sum qui sum* "I AM WHO I AM."

In Exod 3.15, the Hebrew text zeroes in on God's identity as *YHWH 'elohē 'avotekem* "YHWH, the God of your fathers." This is translated by the Septuagint as *Kyrios ho theos tōn paterōn humōn* "[The] Lord, the God of your fathers," and by the Vulgate as *Dominus Deus patrum vestrorum* "[The] Lord, the God of your fathers."

How did this shift from *YHWH* to *Kyrios/Dominus* "The LORD" come about? The following is a brief comment on the issue by way of summarizing what is already well-documented in several scholarly works:

From the 3rd century B.C. onwards, the divine name *YHWH* was considered too sacred to be mentioned in Judaism. Jews consequently avoided pronouncing it. When reading the Scriptures in Hebrew, the word 'Adonai "[my] Lord" was substituted for *YHWH*. Following the introduction of vowel points to facilitate the reading of the consonantal Hebrew Scriptures around the 9th century A.D., the vowels of 'Adonai were inserted into the consonants *YHWH*. In line with established tradition, however, every Jew who read the Scriptures avoided pronouncing *YHWH* and instead read it as 'Adonai. It was this reading as 'Adonai that most probably influenced the Greek and Latin renderings of *Kyrios* and *Dominus* respectively.

In 1520, Petrus Galatinus combined the consonants *YHWH* and the vowels of 'Adonai to create the hybrid form "Jehovah," a form which is used in a number of Bible versions, including some translations in Ghana. It must be admitted, however, that this was a serious violation of the traditional Jewish practice of reading the divine name. But the fact that the name "Jehovah" has come to stay and continues to exert a powerful impact on some communities (Ghanaian ones inclusive) shows the authority that a divine name carries, even after undergoing some adaptation.

In dealing with the divine name *YHWH*, modern versions of the Bible adopt the following approaches:

1. translation,
2. substitution,
3. transliteration.

By way of **translation**, J. Moffatt (1935) renders it as "the Eternal," a rendering possibly influenced by the etymological nuances of God's identity as revealed in Exod 3.14-15. He is supported by French versions such as J. F. Ostervald (1904) and L. Segond (1910, 1938) which also render *YHWH* as "l'Éternel." In Ghana, the Nzema Bible published in 1998 comes quite close to this by rendering *YHWH* as *Edenkema*, the "Eternal All-Powerful Creator and

Sustainer.” Interestingly, the suspended Union Akan OT translation, initiated by the Bible Society of Ghana in 1979 had, at one time, opted to render *YHWH* as *Mberasantenhene* “The Everlasting King.” But this was later changed to *Yawe* in an attempt to stay as close as possible to the transliteration of the Tetragrammaton. As will be shown in subsequent sections, a few other Ghanaian translation projects have chosen this option.

By way of **substitution**, versions such as the KJV, NKJV, NRSV, RSV, NIV, and GNT capitalize it as LORD. But this capitalization is not used in the Ghanaian Akuapem-Twi, Asante-Twi, and Fante translations where *YHWH* is rendered as *Awurade* “Lord,” *Awurade* “Lord,” and *Ewuradze* “Lord” respectively. [The first full Akuapem-Twi and Fante Bibles came out in 1871 and 1948 respectively when Ghana was known as the Gold Coast; the first full Asante-Twi Bible came out in 1964].

In the ongoing revision of the Akuapem-Twi, Asante-Twi, and Fante Bibles, we have recommended the following:

1. where *YHWH* occurs as a self-revealed divine name, it should be left as *YHWH* together with the capitalization in brackets as (*AWURADE/ EWURADZE*);
2. where *YHWH* occurs as a divine name communicated by the authors of the Jewish Scriptures, it should be capitalized as *AWURADE/ EWURADZE*.

Although these options do not exhaustively address the issue, we believe nonetheless that they are honest attempts to come to grips with a dilemma that has “haunted” scholars for centuries. Another option to be considered is the full-scale adoption of the Jewish reading practice where *YHWH* will simply be rendered as ‘*ADONAI* (*AWURADE/ EWURADZE*) or *IDIN NO/IDZIN NO* (Hebrew: *hasshem* “The Name”). Although this latter option may not sound as popular as the previous ones, it should nonetheless be considered as an attempt to adapt the Jewish tradition to various languages of translation.

In some existing translations, where ‘*Adonai* occurs together with *YHWH* as ‘*Adonai YHWH* (see for example Jer 1.6 and Ezek 3.11), they are rendered as follows:

KJV/NKJV; RSV/NRSV		Lord GOD
NIV/GNT		Sovereign LORD
Akuapem-Twi	<i>Awurade Nyankopɔn</i>	Lord God
Asante-Twi	same as above	
Fante	<i>Ewuradze Nyankopɔn</i>	Lord God.

It is fascinating to observe how, with the exception of NIV and GNT, all the other translations bring ‘*elohim* on board as an “equivalent” for *YHWH*, perhaps in order not to sound unduly repetitive in the use of the TITLE/NAME SUBSTITUTE Lord/LORD. In our opinion, the NIV, GNT rendering is highly commendable since it ingeniously captures the nuances of ‘*Adonai YHWH*, at least from the perspective of the “Substitution Principle.” Going by this

principle, we would suggest the following renderings for Akuapem-Twi, Asante-Twi, and Fante:

Akuapem-Twi	<i>Abɔso</i> AWURADE	The All-Sealing LORD
Asante-Twi	<i>Abɔsoɔ</i> AWURADE	same as above
Fante	<i>Abɔɔ</i> EWURADZE	same as above

It is interesting to remark that the Nzema translation also renders '*Adonai YHWH* as *Awulae Nyamenle* "Lord God." One wonders why, for purposes of consistency (going by the "Translation Principle"), the Nzema did not render '*Adonai YHWH* as *Awulae Edenkema* "(The) Lord (who is) The Eternal One." Maybe this can be considered in future revisions.

By way of **transliteration**, versions that transliterate *YHWH* as *Yahweh* include NJB, JB, and the Christian Community Bible (1988). It is significant to mention in passing that within the Roman Catholic tradition, the Vulgate's substitution of *Dominus* for *YHWH* continued to prevail until *La Bible de Jerusalem* (1956) transcribed the name as *Yahvé*, in an attempt to stay close to the Hebrew. This opened the door for the transcription *Yahweh* in the Jerusalem Bible, its English counterpart.

The Ghanaian Dangme Bible published in 1999 has also followed this trend by transliterating *YHWH* as *Yawe*. '*Adonai YHWH* has been rendered as *Nyɔmtse Yawe* "Lord Yahweh."

The just-completed Ghanaian Dagbani OT translation has also held on to *Yawe* and it remains to be seen whether there will be a change of mind in the foreseeable future. '*Adonai YHWH* has been rendered as *Duuma Yawe* "Lord/Master Yahweh."

Those that transliterate it as *Jehovah* include the ASV (1901), J. N. Darby (1949), and New World Translation (1981). The Ga Bible (1910 revision in the then Gold Coast, now Ghana) also transliterates it as *Jehowa*; '*Adonai YHWH* has been rendered as *Nuntsɔ Jehowa* "Lord/Master Jehovah."

Similar to the Ga, the Ewe Bible (1931 revision in the then Gold Coast, now Ghana) transliterates it as *Yehowa*. '*Adonai YHWH* has been rendered as *Afetɔ Yehowa* "House-Owner Jehovah."

It is significant to remark that in the ongoing new translation of the Ewe OT, there has been a shift from *Yehowa* to *Yawe*. But there is stiff opposition from some circles that would wish to see *Yehowa* retained. At the opposite end, however, the completed new translation of the Ga Old Testament has settled on *Yehowa*, [the new Ga orthography has changed the original *lehowa* to *Yehowa*] even though until quite recently, it transliterated *YHWH* as *Yawe*. It would be worth commenting on this intriguing return to the use of *Yehowa*. As a matter of fact, *lehowa/Yehowa* appears in all the Ga Scriptures, hymnbooks, and devotional material from the mid-19th century to the present. It is difficult to imagine how the current readership can be convinced to relinquish a usage that has continued for a century and a half in favour of *Yawe*. Similar reasons can be assigned to the reaction within Ewe communities. It needs to be borne in mind that the Dangme and Dagbani projects entail first translations for communities that have not been in possession of the Jewish (Old Testament) Scriptures. The

issue of *Yawe* as a transliteration of *YHWH* would not therefore generate as much controversy as it would among the Ewe and Ga communities each of which has a long tradition of Scripture use. Admittedly, the Dangme case is a very uncertain one, considering the fact that Dangme communities [immediate neighbours of the Ga communities] were, until the printing and launch of their Bible, highly dependent on the Ga Bible. The politics and ramifications of this controversy for the readership can be taken up in another discussion. Equally uncertain is the Ewe case which needs to be handled judiciously. We can at best settle for two versions of Ewe Scripture, one containing the *Yawe* transliteration for groups that are comfortable with it [e.g. Ewe Roman Catholics acquainted with *Yawe* through the Jerusalem Bible], and the other containing the more-than-a-century-old *Yehowa* transliteration.

Concluding remarks

We may conclude our short discussion by remarking that the question of how best to render God's specially-revealed name *YHWH* defies a simplistic and straightforward answer. Religious language and indeed a subject as delicate as the use of the divine name cannot be exhaustively expressed with human vocabulary.

Be that as it may, if *YHWH* is indeed God's personal name by which God was revealed to the ancient Israelites, then its transliteration and use by other communities who yearn for a deep personal relationship with this God cannot be brushed aside. It is in fact arguable whether the use of *YHWH* as a proper name for God should also be avoided in non-Jewish communities. If, as the historical evidence seems to suggest, this name was in use among the Jews prior to the 3rd century B.C., then its later avoidance can be viewed as an attempt to address an issue that was specifically Jewish and not necessarily binding on non-Jews who would wish to retain that name in their reading of the Scriptures. It is in fact difficult to tell whether this changed Jewish reading tradition was in response to a divine revelation. Some would even argue that it was done out of a misinterpretation of the commandment forbidding misuse of the name *YHWH* (Exod 20.7; Deut 5.11). According to this viewpoint, the commandment actually means: "You shall not swear falsely by the name of *YHWH* your God."

Still another challenge is the uncertainty surrounding the correct pronunciation of *YHWH* by the ancient Jews. If this point is anything to go by, then we can make a case for the legitimacy of both Yahweh (and its variants) and Jehovah (and its variants) as attempts to read an otherwise consonantal name, with the help of vowels already in use within the Jewish reading tradition. In the case of Jehovah, we would see here a further attempt to adapt the consonants YW of the divine name to an environment in which JV function as equivalents. The phenomenon of transliterating words across cultures amply demonstrates that words are likely to undergo some alterations in spelling and pronunciation within certain linguistic environments. The English, French, Dagbani, Dangme, Ewe, and Ga examples regarding attempts to transliterate *YHWH* speak for themselves.

Therefore an open approach to the subject across cultures is highly recommended.

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TRANSLATING EZEKIEL'S VISION OF THE DRY BONES —VISUALLY!

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Introduction: Catch the vision

Chapter 37 of Ezekiel is one of the most familiar portions of the entire book and certainly among the better known passages of OT prophetic literature. This is in large measure due to its vivid vision of a valley full of scattered human bones that are dramatically brought to life by the Lord. I will briefly examine this captivating revelation, which comprises the first half of Ezekiel 37 (vv. 1-14), first from a structural and stylistic perspective. My aim is to show certain aspects of the literary *artistry* of this text as well as the *purposeful* manner in which the discourse is fashioned. What is it that gives this divine vision its special visual appeal and persuasive power as the prophet gives his exiled people a message of hope?

Next we will consider the equally important question: How can translators enable their audience to catch a glimpse of that same spectacular scene today—that is, to see (and hear!) a portion of what “the Sovereign Lord” (*Adonai YHWH*—vv. 3, 5, 9, 12) prophesies about giving new life to his people. This article explores one possibility of capturing this vision—namely, through a “poetic” rendering of the passage in the target language (TL). That is not the only way to do it, of course, but it seems to be an especially appropriate method when we consider the colorful rhetorical qualities of the original text. In passing, I will also comment on several of the notable problems involved in communicating the relevance of this dynamic prophetic imagery to a contemporary audience, namely, a Chewa Christian constituency in south-central Africa.

What does the text say, and how does it say it?

Both these questions are important for translators to answer as they carry out a study of the original text in preparation for rendering it meaningfully in their language. What is the *content* of the passage and how has this been conveyed by means of the *form* of the text, namely, its structure and style in the source language (SL)? The following is a partial discourse analysis of Ezek 37.1-14. (Normal English citations of the biblical text are taken from the NIV and indicated by double quotes; more literal renderings of specific Hebrew terms and expressions are noted by single quotes.)

The beginning of this pericope (v. 1) is marked by a twofold announcement of the vision. First the prophet says “the hand of the Lord was upon me.” This is coupled with a reference to spiritual inspiration (“and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord”). This replaces the usual prophetic