

particular problem, but the rendering of God's names is often one of them. In this article we have focused attention on one particular language. But we hope that other colleagues might provide examples and solutions on the same subject from other languages; and also that solutions found here might apply elsewhere.

DAVID HOGAN

THE NAMES OF GOD IN THE URAK LAWOI' SCRIPTURES

David Hogan is a missionary serving in the south of Thailand

Urak Lawoi' is spoken by about 3000 people of Malaysian stock, on the islands off the west coast of South Thailand. Since 1971 various portions and selections of Scripture have been published in this language, the most recent being Jonah (July 1983). During the preparation of Jonah for publication, the policy for translating the words used for God, His names and titles, into Urak Lawoi' was reviewed. For simplicity I will refer to them all as "names" in this article.

This paper first considers the various words available in Urak Lawoi', and contrasts the names of God used in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. The usage in the Malay and Indonesian Scriptures is discussed as Urak Lawoi' is closely related to these languages. Terms employed in Thai translations are also considered because of the impact of the national language on Urak Lawoi'.

The names of God available in the Urak Lawoi' language

The Urak Lawoi' have legends which speak of a God who is the Creator of the world, who exists in some vague form above the world, and who will be the final judge. Some of these concepts may have been imported from the Moslem faith, with which they have had some contact; but they claim their beliefs go back to their own ancient legends. These legends include stories of Adam and Eve and of Nabi Noh, who appears to be the Noah of the Scriptures. The younger generation is not familiar with the old legends, but have this general background of a God who is somewhere above the world, and who does not need to be worried about.

The Urak Lawoi' name for God is *Tuhat besal deq-atas*, "God great above", which occurs modified as *Tuhat besal*, "God great", *Tuhat deq-atas*, "God above", and just *Tuhat*, "God". The word *tuhat* also means "owner", but when used with this meaning it is usually linked with the object owned: *tuhat rumah* (the owner of the house), *tuhat tanah* (the owner of the land), and *tuhat prahu* (the owner of the boat). When *tuhat* occurs alone, it normally means "God". The four expressions are used interchangeably referring to "God", with no

indication that there is any difference of meaning or person intended. *Tuhat* and *Tuhat deq-atas* are probably the most commonly used, with *Tuhat besal deq-atas* a little more formal.

These four expressions seem to be suitable to use for "God". The central core meaning is quite appropriate, and there do not seem to be any undesirable meanings which might come in. The main problem lies in how to use this small group of words to cover the variations on the names of "God" and "Lord" as used in the Bible.

Extensive enquiries over many years have failed to reveal any other word for "god" in the Urak Lawoi' language. The Urak Lawoi' use the word *Lah*, an abbreviation for *Allah-ta'alah*, a Moslem word for "God", as a swear word. And they know that *Lah-ta'ala* is the God of the Moslems; but they do not regard him as their "god", and they do not use this name for God. In the same way they use *toh* as a swear word or exclamation of surprise. This word is related to the Thai *phudthoo* and its variants, which are derived from the Thai word *phraphudthacaaw*, "the Lord Buddha". Many Urak Lawoi' regard *phraphudthacaaw* as the Thai word for "God", but they do not appear to equate the word *toh* with "God".

It has not been thought appropriate to introduce any foreign word as a word for "God", such as the Hebrew *YHWH* or the Thai *phracaaw* or the Malay *Allah*. Such words would have essentially no meaning in Urak Lawoi', and would imply that it was the God of the Hebrews, or of the Thai or the Malays who was being presented to them.

The names of God in the Bible

The problem of rendering the names of "God" into Urak Lawoi' is different for the Old Testament and the New Testament. In this section I want to refer briefly to the names of God used in the Old Testament, then show how these were translated in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament in Greek, and how they were treated in the Greek New Testament.

In the *Old Testament* there are three primary names for God.

- (1) The singular form *el* means "God" or "god" in the widest sense. When used of the true God it is usually connected with one of his attributes, such as "a merciful God" (Dt 4.31). The plural form *elohim* is the most common form for "God", but it may also be used of "gods" in the plural.
- (2) The name *YHWH* is the personal name of God, and particularly his special covenant name in his relationship with Israel. In most English versions this name is represented by "LORD" spelled in capital letters.
- (3) The word *adon*, *adonai*, normally means "lord", "sir", "master". When used of God it is translated "Lord".

"God" and "LORD" occur frequently in combination with other terms, such as those translated in English by "Almighty", "Most High", "Everlasting", "Sovereign".

In the Septuagint (The Greek translation of the Old Testament) and the Greek New Testament, we find that Greek uses only two words for deity.

These are *theos*, "God", and *kurios*, "Lord". The translators of the Septuagint used *theos* consistently for the Hebrew word *elohim*.

The world *kurios* is variously translated in the New Testament by "Lord", "master", "Master", "owner", "Sir". The customary and general use ranges from a title of respect to a title of the Emperor, but in the Septuagint and the New Testament, it is used to translate the Hebrew *YHWH* (Mt 4.7; Jas 5.11), *adon* (Mt 22.44), *adonai* (Mt 1.22), and *elohim* (1 Pet 1.25). In Psalm 110.1 (Psalm 109 in the Septuagint), "The LORD said unto my Lord . . .", the first "LORD" is *YHWH* in the Hebrew and the second "Lord" is *adon*, but the Septuagint renders them both with *kurios*, and New Testament passages which quote this verse use *kurios* in the same way. In this way the Greek Scriptures hide the Hebrew distinction between *YHWH* and *adonai*.

In the New Testament the word *kurios* is used to refer to the *YHWH* of the Old Testament, and is also used as a title of Christ. Sometimes in the Gospels, it may be just a polite form of address, as in John 12.21 where KJV translates it as "Sir". But frequently it is used as a title of Christ, either alone, or in the combinations "Lord Jesus" or "Lord Jesus Christ", (Jn 20.28; Acts 2.36; Rom 10.9 & 13; 1 Cor 12.3). When used in Acts or the epistles with reference to Christ, it implies his deity.

The names of God used in the Malay and Thai translations

Malay is relevant as Urak Lawoi' is related to it as a dialect. As spoken in Malaysia it is called "Bahasa Malaysia", and in Indonesia it is called "Indonesian" or "Bahasa Indonesia".

We will consider Thai usage also, as the syntax of the Thai language has affected Urak Lawoi'. In addition it is necessary for the Urak Lawoi' scriptures to be compatible with the Thai scriptures, so that Urak Lawoi' readers may compare them.

In contrast with Urak Lawoi', Malay has two distinct words for "god". *Allah* is the Arabic word for "God", and the various Malay translations have generally used this for *Elohim* in the Old Testament, and for *theos* in the New Testament. As mentioned above this word is unknown in Urak Lawoi' except as a swear word.

The second Malay word for "God" is *Tuhan*, which is equivalent to Urak Lawoi' *Tuhat*. The Malay translations generally use this for *YHWH* and *adonai* of the Old Testament and *kurios* of the New Testament. However Malay has other words available, such as *Tuan*, "master, lord, lady", and *rabbi*, "Lord", and this allows the translator more flexibility.

Thai is more flexible than Malay or Urak Lawoi' as it has a number of words, mainly of one syllable, which can be linked in various combinations, with slight variations in the overall meaning. Unfortunately the basis on which they were employed has varied from one translation to another. The older Thai Bible was consistent in using *phra?caaw* for "God", *phra?ya?hoowaa* for "LORD", *phra?ya?hoowaa-caaw* for "LORD God" Gen 2.4 and Jonah 4.6), and *ong-phra?phuu-pen-caaw* for "Lord", throughout the Old Testament. In contrast, the newer Thai version, published in 1971, uses *phra?caaw* almost always, with just occasionally some variation.

In the New Testament the older version translates “God” with *phra?caaw*, and “Lord” with *ong-phra?phuu-pen-caaw*. When “Lord” is used as a title of Christ, sometimes the full old Testament title of *ong-phra?phuu-pen-caaw* is used (Rom 1.4), and sometimes *caaw* (Lord) is affixed after “Jesus” or “Jesus Christ” (Rom 4.24; 13.14). The newer version follows the older version closely in the verses checked, except that in Matthew 22.44 where “Lord” referring to God is rendered as *phra?ya?hoowaa-caaw* in the older version, the newer version simply says *phra?caaw*. Checking the new Popular Language Thai New Testament, it is noted that it also tends to use *phra?caaw* both for “God” and “Lord”.

It seems that the older Thai version made a deliberate attempt to use different Thai expressions to represent the variations in the names of God. Even if those variations did not convey any significance to the average Thai reader, they provided the serious student with an opportunity to note the variety in the names used for God. The distinction between names has been largely lost in the more recent versions.

Principles to be followed

In considering the terms to be used for the names of God in Urak Lawoi’, the following principles now apply:

- (1) The term chosen must represent as accurately as possible the word in the original Hebrew or Greek, but must be a genuine Urak Lawoi’ word, not a transliteration. Proper names such as the name of “Jesus” can be transliterated, but it is not considered that *YHWH* should be treated in this way.
- (2) It is necessary to choose some word for God which has the same general area of meaning in the language of the translation, providing that it has no other undesirable meanings in the minds of local speakers of that language. Where there are two words in the language which have practically the same meaning, it is possible to use one of these for the name of “God” and one for “LORD”. This usage must be adhered to consistently, and the differences of meaning must be taught.
- (3) In a translation made for a minority group such as the Urak Lawoi’, the translation should be consistent with the usage of the official or trade language version. This will enable the minority group reader to refer to the official language version without unnecessary confusion. In this case, the Urak Lawoi’ translation should attempt to be consistent with the Thai version which shows the fuller range of differences, that is the older version.
- (4) Where the structure of the language permits a (royal or divine) pronoun to be used, referring back to the last name of God used, this pronoun can be used in place of the appropriate name of God. Where there is any doubt, or where particular emphasis is necessary, the relevant name of God should be written in full.

The names of God in Urak Lawoi’

These will be discussed firstly in terms of the names that have been used in previous translations, and secondly in terms of the names it is proposed to use in the future, in the light of the principles just listed.

The translations made previously have been based on the assumption that

the various forms of the names of God in Urak Lawoi' had basically the same meaning to the people. So, in general, the main determining factor has been a question of emphasis according to the patterns of the language. Frequently an Urak Lawoi' sentence commences with a noun or noun phrase as a Topic, and that sentence and possibly several following sentences have a personal pronoun as the subject, referring back to that Topic. In such cases the Topic has been *Tuhat besal deq atas* whether translating "God" or "LORD". The subject pronoun referring back to this is *nya* "he" or *Tuhat* used here as a pronoun for deity, paralleling the Thai *phra?ong*. In other contexts *Tuhat* has been used for "God" or "Lord", if it is not subject to special emphasis.

One place where a different pattern was followed was in the booklet of selections from Genesis 1 to 11, and from Isaiah 42 to 53. It was desired to distinguish between the names of "God" and "LORD" in the early chapters of Genesis, and so *Tuhat* was used for "God" and *Tuhat besal deq atas* for "LORD" and "LORD God". The selections from Isaiah were treated in the same way. Elsewhere this practice has only been followed where it is necessary to distinguish between the names for a specific reason. For example in Ruth 2.12 "the LORD God of Israel" has been translated *Tuhat besal deq atas, Tuhat naq Isra'en*, which actually means "God great above, the God of Israel". Similarly in Mark 12.29 "the Lord our God is one Lord" has been rendered:

Tuhat besal deq atas, Tuhat naq kita, nya ter Tuhat ler.
"God great above, God of us, he – God –."

(Here the – stands for special function words required by the language.)

In Titus and the Epistles of John, the problem did not arise as those books only use *theos* and never *kurios* in Greek. In James, there are few occasions when the names "God" or "Lord" are in the emphasised position, so *Tuhat* has been used in most cases. Some exceptions are James 1.1 where the full title of *Tuhat besal deq atas* has been used for initial emphasis; James 3.9 where "God, even the Father" has been rendered *Tuhat Apok deq atas* "God, Father above"; and James 5.4 where "the Lord of Sabaoth" has been translated *Tuhat nu megah sungoh* "God who is great truly".

In the Easy Reader booklets which have been printed, one of the main objects has been to keep the language as simple as possible for the benefit of unskilled readers, so the name *Tuhat* has been used in most cases. Particular care was taken in Book 1 and the first half of Book 2 to avoid the use of *Tuhat besal deq atas* since *besal* is one of a group of words ending in "l" which have different pronunciations in the three dialects of Urak Lawoi'. In four places in Book 2, to give emphasis to the word "God", the expression *Tuhat deq atas* "God above" was used instead. In Book 3 the word *Tuhat* was used throughout for both "God" and "Lord". In four cases where more emphasis was desired, *Tuhat besal deq atas* was used: Luke 17.15, "praising God"; Luke 18.7, "Shall not God avenge his own elect"; Luke 12.20, "But God said to him, Thou fool . . ."; and in the great commandment in Matthew 22.37, paralleling the usage in Mark 12.29, referred to above.

As the policy to be followed has been reconsidered in the preparation of the Book of Jonah, the following decisions have been made:

— “LORD” (*YHWH*) has been normally translated by *Tuhat besal deq atas*.

Where it comes in a subordinate position following closely after the full title *Tuhat besal deq atas*, it has been rendered by *Tuhat* as a royal pronoun referring back to the preceding title (for instance in Jonah 2.2–4; 2.7–9). In verse 9 of chapter 2, “Salvation is of the Lord” is a fresh statement repeating a general principle, so the full title *Tuhat besal deq atas* is used. Similarly in verse 10, “the LORD” is translated in Urak Lawoi’ as a Topic at the beginning of a sentence, followed by *nya*, “he”, as the subject of the sentence.

— “God” has been translated by *Tuhat deq atas* (“God above”). In places where it is not emphasised, or where it follows closely on an occurrence of *Tuhat deq atas*, it may be replaced by *Tuhat* (but there are no occurrences of this in Jonah). Where “God” refers to a heathen god, or is used by heathen in a general way, the word *Tuhat* is used (Jonah 1.5,6).

— “Lord” (Adonai) does not occur in Jonah, but could be translated by *Tuhat besal* where emphasis was desired, or simply by *Tuhat*.

— “the LORD, the God of heaven” (Jonah 1.9) has been rendered:

Tuhat besal deq atas, nya ter Tuhat deq atas langaeq . . .

God great above, He – God above heaven . . .

— “the LORD, his God” (Jonah 2.1) is translated:

Tuhat besal deq atas, Tuhat naq nya

God great above, God of Him.

Jonah 2.6 has been treated similarly.

— “the LORD God” (Jonah 4.6) has been translated:

Tuhat besal deq atas ter, Tuhat nya buwac bri . . .

God great above –, God He prepared . . .

Here “LORD” has been translated as the Topic, while “God” has been linked with “he” in the Subject position, which is permissible in Urak Lawoi’ syntax.

— Where “God” is coupled with some attribute or title of His, the word *Tuhat* alone is used, followed by the relative pronoun *nu* (which) and the attribute or title. The only illustration of this in Jonah occurs in chapter 4, verse 2:

Tuhat nu terjihat sungoh ter . . .

God who merciful truly – . . .

In this case, Urak Lawoi’ has only one word for the two words “gracious” and “merciful”, and so it has been emphasised by the following word *sungoh*.

Applying this last principle to some of the compound names referred to above gives the following titles:

Almighty God *Tuhat nu megah* “God who is powerful”

Most High God *Tuhat deq atas troq* “God above truly”

Everlasting God *Tuhat nu selalu* “God who is always”

Mighty God *Tuhat nu kras* “God who is strong”

LORD of Hosts *Tuhat nu megah sungoh* "God who is truly powerful"
the only God *Tuhat leh sa* "God only one"

The name "Lord GOD" is difficult, but it can be placed in a Topic position in the sentence and rendered *Tuhat ter, Tuhat besal deq atas* ("God - , God great above").

For Easy Reader booklets, the previous policy can be followed, using *Tuhat* normally, plus *Tuhat deq atas* when emphasis is desired. In later books in the series, from Book 3 on, the full title *Tuhat besal deq atas* can be used.

Conclusion

The previous policy on the names of God in Urak Lawoi' has therefore been modified, to enable greater precision in translating these names. This will not, however, cause any confusion or loss of understanding to those who are not instructed in the use of the various titles.

RODNEY VENBERG

THE PROBLEM OF A FEMALE DEITY IN TRANSLATION

The following is a reprint of an article which first appeared in The Bible Translator in April 1971. We are printing it again here, along with other articles about translating the names of God, because the topic it deals with is very closely related to the names of God.

When this article was written the Rev. Rodney Venburg was a translator serving in the Chad Republic.

The Problem

The Pèvé tribe numbering between forty and fifty thousand speakers is located for the most part in the Pala sous-préfecture of the Mayo-Kebbi in South-Western Chad, Africa. After spending our first two years in linguistic analysis of this language in order to put it into written form, we began some translation work. One of the very first problems we faced was to find a word for "God". Without any hesitation the Africans with whom I was working gave the word *Ifray*. Upon checking into just what this word meant I found that an earlier form of the word was *Yafray*: *Ya* being the Pèvé word for "mother" and *fray* being the word for "sky" or "the heavens".

In Pèvé legends on the creation of man it is said that God (*Ifray*) gave birth to two children—a boy and a girl. And it was from these two children that the tribe began.

The use of the word *Ifray* by itself caused no problems as a translation for God. The problem came when we began to look for a pronoun to use when referring to God, and also in the translation of such things as "Our Father" in the Lord's Prayer and "I believe in God, the Father . . ." in the Apostles' Creed.