

*Nomos* is here translated in Simplified Indonesian as “ordinances of God’s law”: “So he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled all the ordinances of God’s law.”

### Conclusion

To translate the term *nomos* meaningfully in Simplified Indonesian, the meaning of the term has to be brought out as clearly as possible for the target audience. This means that it sometimes has to be translated as *hukum* (“law”), *hukum Musa* (“law of Moses”), *hukum agama Yahudi* (“laws of the Jewish religion”), *Alkitab* or *kitab-kitab Musa* (“Bible” or “books of Moses”), *kehendak Allah* (“God’s will”), *kuasa* (“power”), or by a descriptive phrase. Occasionally it may be left untranslated, as its meaning will be understood from other elements in the translated text. If in a few instances the translator feels that Paul meant to be ambiguous, than the term can just be translated as *hukum*.

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## TRANSLATING “SERVANT” WORDS INTO RUNYORO-RUTOORO

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In Greek, Roman, and Hebrew societies, before and during New Testament times, slavery was accepted as a normal institution in society. There were social and legal provisions and practices which governed the relationships between masters and slaves and between slaves and the society at large, with details of duties and obligations.

Slavery had been quite beneficial to the stability and smooth running of many Greek and Roman households. Slavery was also tolerated in Jewish society, and there was hardly any effort to put an end to it as a social disgrace. Even the early Christian Church was not primarily concerned with attacking an entrenched economic, social, and political institution such as slavery.

The translation of terms in the Bible that arose out of this background of slavery have often presented problems. In the Runyoro-Rutooro translations there is a degree of consistency which is questionable in the rendering of the Greek term *doulos* “slave” and other terms related to it.

### Slavery and serving in Bunyoro and Tooro society

This leads us to observe the variable nature of the customs of slavery and serving in Bunyoro and Tooro society in Uganda. The view of society as made up of *abahuma* and *abairu* (similar to the old European nobles and serfs) was often the background of these customs. The *bahuma* were mainly pastoralists, while the *bairu* were mainly peasants who lived by farming the land. According to mythology, Kahuma was the ancestor of

the pastoralists, and Kairu was the ancestor of the peasants. Kahuma and Kairu, it was claimed, were originally brothers who simply chose and followed different occupations; but the descendants of Kahuma came to look down on those descended from Kairu, because of the comparatively greater toil involved in the production of crops. *Obwiru* "slavery" and *orwiru* "unpleasant and uncouth behaviour" were associated with the *abairu* "peasants" by the *bahuma* "nobility".

Although this was true of society in the past, these feelings still linger on in varying degrees of intensity in present-day society. The general impression I get in talking to the present translation team and reviewers for Runyoro-Rutooro is that the "noble" and "royalist" use of language has had the upper hand in both Bible translations, 1912 and 1977. This is seen in the resistance to modern and current terms, and in the continuing preference for royal language.

It should be noted that the *bahuma* have been a strong force in conserving culture and therefore in conserving old language also. Bible translating has been regarded as one of the areas they would like to use for the retaining of their heritage. The monarchy was abolished in 1967, removing the political base of this heritage. And today there is pressure for social integration in the forging of national unity. The language being promoted by the Church, particularly through the translation of the Bible, may be seen as a focus of identity, when other forms of identity are crumbling. Bible translators in Uganda (and perhaps in Africa generally) cannot escape from the issue of national unity against individual ethnic or language identity.

The term *mwiru* could be applied to slave and servant males, and also to any boy or man as a term of endearment. It was also the term used for a peasant, and in that sense it could refer to a female person as well. *Muzaana*, however, only referred to a female slave or servant; and it too could be used as a term of endearment. In the 1912 translation *mwiru rubaale* was used to render *doulos* with the sense of "bondservant". This expression referred to the most extreme form of slavery, where there was no hope of freedom and the worst possible social disabilities and forms of deprivation.

In Bunyoro and Tooro society "bondservants" were either bought for a high price or captured in war from bitter enemies, or were slaves who had tried to escape. The sure mark of *omwiru rubaale* was cutting off one or both of the ears. This would ensure easy identification in the case of any attempt to run away from the master. Information on these matters is all obtained orally from elderly people, some of whom have personally seen or experienced the conditions at the beginning of this century. There is no report of females as "bondservants".

So far there are only limited accounts of how people became servants or slaves, other than by the ways outlined above. Serving at the king's court or chief's enclosure did not technically make anybody a servant. This was one way of paying tribute, taxes, debts, or other obligations in a non-cash economy. Service was offered in person and in concrete terms; this is what

was called *kuheereza* “to serve”, like the way Jacob served Laban, not as a slave or servant but for a particular cause, and by mutual agreement (Gen 29.15-20). Debt or poverty could, however, lead to a more or less permanent form of servitude, bordering on slavery in the eyes of society; but this happened without such a relationship or status being made formal, and with no eagerness for it on either side. A servant in such a situation would be happy to be called *omuheereza*, but would be offended to be called *omwiru*. A person in this position could be a relative of the family, or someone who came as a stranger but was now adopted and accepted into the family circle. He could even raise a family and own property independently within the household.

This background makes it difficult for any good translation to stick to one term consistently, if the choice is between *mwiru* and *muheereza*. It is even harder to stick to the consistent use of *mwiru rubaale*, as the 1912 translation did, since this expression has a more restricted meaning. Comparing the two versions of the New Testament in Runyoro-Rutooro, the 1977 translation seems more accurate in adopting the more inclusive term for the majority of contexts.

#### **The female slave, Lk 1.48**

On the whole *doulos* and words related to it are not used much as direct terms for service and ministry in the Gospels. However one such usage is found in Lk 1.48:

For he has regarded the low estate of his *handmaiden* (RSV)

For he has remembered me, his *lowly servant* (GNB)

As part of Mary’s song of praise Lk 1.48 echoes the yielding to God’s will and purpose in the conversation with the angel at 1.38. The verse reflects the thinking of 1 Sam 1.11, though certainly not the circumstances which inspired Hannah’s vow. While the submission to God’s purpose makes Mary a true “handmaiden” or female servant of the Lord, regard for her “low estate” (often used to refer to childlessness) has been difficult to understand in the context. If we take the more likely and popular understanding, that of expressing her unworthiness for the honour of becoming “mother of the Lord”, there is the impression of self-congratulation. This element seems to be present in most translations, with the exception of GNB. The NEB has “so tenderly has he looked upon his servant, humble as she is”, while the NIV says, “for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.”

Both versions in Runyoro-Rutooro focus their attention on the humble state of Mary as the reason for God’s favour to her. The seeing and remembering of God expressed in the hymn are made to focus on the worthiness of Mary shown by her humble disposition: *obuculeezi* “quietness”, “silence”, and figuratively “humbleness”. This term does not carry the sense of being low in social standing. It is a personal quality rather than a status. The impression conveyed in both these translations is the fact that Mary was a virtuous woman set aside and waiting on God to “see her purity as the vessel suitable” for God’s purposes. The whole hymn

of Lk 1.47-55 could then be seen as an *engabu* "a poem of achievements". Lk 1.50 seems to support this understanding, "his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation." To deal with this distortion, the translation should focus on the idea of "remembering his mercy" rather than "having regard"; then Mary's song will become a thanksgiving, instead of a praise for the vindication of virginity, steadfastness, and humility.

The Greek term *doule* is found only in this chapter of Luke in the Gospels, and once only in Acts; the epistles of Paul use a word of the same meaning, *paidiske*. It means "slave girl", "slave woman", or generally "female servant". In Runyoro-Rutooro the closest rendering is *muzaana*. The status of the slave woman was in many ways much better than that of her male counterpart in Bunyoro and Tooro society. Her potential as a mother, wife, concubine, or partner of those in higher social circles more often than not gave her better prospects. She was often taken into marriage and treated like any other woman in the society, or else she served with her mistress on household chores—though often bearing the greater burden of the tiresome menial tasks of the home.

In the household of the king or great chief the female servant was called *muranga* and was quite well respected by virtue of the status of those she served. Though liable to fall into becoming "another wife" ("concubine" in the Bible), she might be given in marriage to one of the men by the king himself, just as any father often did with his daughters. In Bunyoro and Tooro society, as in other societies considered, to be called a "servant of the king" was a title of immense honour and authority. Since Mary accepted being a servant in order to fulfil God's purpose, her status was incomparable.

### **The word *pais*, "child" and "servant"**

Discussion about precedence and high status within the ranks of the disciples of Jesus is found in several contexts in the Gospels. These contexts have a lot to tell us about what Jesus regarded as the most important qualities of discipleship and leadership among his followers. He introduced the idea of becoming a servant, a slave, like a child, if a person was to achieve importance and greatness. (See Mk 9.33-37; Mt 18.1-5; Lk 9.46-48; these ideas are repeated with some variation in Mk 10.43-45; Mt 20.26-28; Lk 22.26.) Jesus drew attention to the innocence, trust, and simplicity of a child, as contrasted with the ambition of the disciples.

The servant, the slave, and the child are related in the various senses of the Greek word *pais*. This word has the meaning of "child (boy or girl)", as well as "servant" or "slave". In their *Greek-English Lexicon* Louw and Nida put it in the same field as *doulos*. In the Septuagint *pais* and the words related to it are used more often with reference to a servant, slave or subordinate, than for a child. In the Gospels *pais* is used for both servant and child, often in Matthew and Luke but hardly ever in Mark.

It has been pointed out that in the context of classical Greek usage *pais* seems to be a milder expression than *doulos* and the words related

to it, because *pais* and the words that belong with it lay emphasis on subordination, but *doulos* and the words related to it suggest bondage and subjection. However the two terms seem to have almost the same meaning in the Septuagint, with perhaps *pais* expressing a closer relationship with the master than *doulos*.

Some scholars attribute the association of the term *pais* with *doulos* to "the child's lowly position in society and his ancient function as a slave" (G. Braumann). The idea of the "Servant of the Lord" in Mt 12.18, adopted from Isaiah 42.1-4, is one example of the combination of the senses of child, boy, servant, and slave in this term. And Bible translators will find other contexts where the term *pais* seems to be ambiguous, or where it is difficult to determine which sense is intended.

In Runyoro-Rutooro the 1912 translation of the Bible uses the term *omwuru* "servant" or "slave", while the more recent translation, the New Testament of 1977, uses *omuheereza* "server", "waiter", "attendant". In past usage an endeared servant could be referred to as *mwojo* "boy" and very intimately as *mwana* "child", regardless of actual age. On the other hand, a son or a daughter could be referred to as *mwiru* "slave" or *muzaana* "female slave" as a term of endearment.

We need to examine more carefully the use of *pais* and the way it is translated. Of course some of its occurrences are not associated with serving or ministry, but there are a number of significant overlaps between its senses of "servant" and "child". If we take the case of the centurion at Capernaum in Mt 8.5-10, 13 and Lk 7.1-10, we can notice this overlap quite clearly. Luke uses *doulos* "slave" in most of the story, but turns to *pais* "boy" or "servant" at 7.7, and back to "slave" in verse 8. Matthew is more consistent in using *pais* "servant" or "boy". Assuming that the incident in Jn 4.46-53 is the same as that involving the centurion, Manson concludes: "Taking all these facts into consideration, the balance of probability is in favour of 'son' rather than 'slave'" (*The Sayings of Jesus*, page 64). Howard Marshall, on the other hand, firmly believes that the centurion's sick person was his *doulos* "slave". He argues that the appearance of *pais* at Lk 7.7 is simply to express and "stress the affection of the centurion for his slave. *Doulos* is, therefore, Luke's synonym for *pais*" (*Luke*, page 279). The trend of Marshall's argument is that Luke's use of *pais* is different from that of Matthew and John, and that this difference is deliberate rather than a misinterpretation of an original *pais* meaning "son". Probably the difference is based on person or theological inclination. There are, however, a number of instances where Luke clearly uses *pais* or a term related to it in connection with "boy" (2.43), "girl" (8.51, 54), "child" (9.47-48), and "children" (7.32).

The variation in understanding and interpreting the term *pais* in the Gospels is reflected in the Runyoro-Rutooro versions as indicated below.

<b>Ref</b>	<b>1912 version</b>	<b>1977 version</b>
Mt 2.16	<i>abaana aboojo</i> "male children"	<i>abaana aboojo</i>
8.6	<i>omwiru</i> "slave, servant"	<i>omuheereza</i> "servant"
12.18	<i>omwana</i> "child"	<i>omuheereza</i> "servant"
14.2	<i>abairu</i> "slaves, servants"	<i>abagaragara</i> "palace attendants"
17.1 8	<i>omwojo</i> "boy"	<i>omwojo</i>
18.2	<i>omwana omuto</i> "an infant"	<i>omwana omuto</i>
18.3	<i>abaana abato</i> "the infants"	<i>abaana abato</i>
21.15	<i>abaana abato</i> "infants"	<i>abaana</i> "children"
Lk 1.54	<i>omwiru</i> "slave, servant"	<i>omwiru</i>
2.43	<i>omwojo</i> "boy"	<i>omwana</i> "child"
7.7	<i>omwojo</i> "boy"	<i>omuheereza</i> "servant"
7.32	<i>abaana</i> "children"	<i>abaana</i>
8.51	<i>omwisiki</i> "girl"	<i>omwana</i> "child"
8.54	<i>omwisiki</i> "girl"	<i>omwisiki</i>
*12.43	<i>omwiru rubaale</i> "slave"	<i>omuheereza</i> "servant"
12.45	<i>abairu n'abazaana</i> "male and female slaves"	<i>abaheereza ...n'abakazi</i> "men and women servants"
Jn 4.51	<i>omwana</i> "child"	<i>omwana</i>

\* The Greek term is *doulos* in this case.

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## TRANSLATING "SIN" IN PÖKOOT

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In this article I will discuss something of what I have discovered in a first study of one particular aspect in the world view of the Pökoot people of Kenya.

The simple fact that people around the world are involved in Bible translation indicates that no particular culture is regarded as the only possible carrier of its message. In his book *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* Lamin Sanneh has demonstrated that it is not necessary to learn another language in order to understand the Word of God, but that God's revelation of himself is equally valid in different cultures and languages. It therefore goes without saying that in Bible translation in Africa translators have to make use of terms that draw their meaning from the context of the world view of their own culture. Hence it is very necessary to study and analyze the culture and language in order to find the right terms to use in the translation. If we do not undertake