

these names is very important, for now I too can ask whether that woman understands, rather than whether women in general understand. Time and again, I have been able to test the validity of this approach by first asking the general question: "Will non-Christians understand this?" Invariably the translators will affirm that they all understand this. If I then ask the specific question: "Does non-Christian Mrs So-and-so (from the translator's own list) understand this?" there frequently is a short hesitation and then a negative answer—because the translator has just been replaying the scene of telling Mrs So-and-so in his mind and has just decided that to her he would say it differently. Once translators learn to imagine such personal communication situations all the time, the quality of their work usually improves dramatically.

If I visit a team only infrequently, I usually try to make sure that the representative audience list is still up to date, because non-Christians can become Christians, people move away, or they get more education. If a translator keeps his list up to date, and makes his translation with these people constantly in his mind, he will have several advantages: (a) he can readily go and check whether his translation is being easily understood or not; (b) if he does, he will reinforce his own consciousness of what the requirements of his chosen target audience actually are; and (c) the receptors of his translation will feel as if God were somehow addressing them personally.

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DEALING WITH PROPER NOUNS IN TRANSLATION

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The following notes discuss some of the most common questions arising in the treatment of proper nouns in the Bible. They offer some guidelines in accordance with methods frequently applied in new translations. Translators are of course also expected to refer to the standard "base" and "model" versions of the Bible, and to make use of the United Bible Societies' series of Handbooks and Guides for translators, which also offer suggestions and guidelines in specific instances.

Transliterating and borrowing

The normal practice in Bible translating is to borrow names by transliterating the original forms from the biblical source languages into equivalent forms appropriate to the language of translation (the "receptor" language). In many cases these borrowed forms are influenced by usage in languages predominant in the area, or by usage in a prevailing trade language or lingua franca such as English, French, Portuguese, or Swahili.

Two practical implications of this are:

- a) Biblical names are quite easily recognizable, whatever the language of the translation.
- b) Any translation may contain a mixture of proper nouns transliterated from Greek, Latin or Hebrew, and names written in forms influenced by a modern lingua franca.

Doubts and even conflicts may arise in determining how to write proper nouns, especially in new, joint translations where different traditions have to be reconciled. The United Bible Societies' policy is to recommend basing the name on the original Greek or Hebrew form. For instance, the name "Paul", following the Greek *Paulos*, can thus become *Paulos* or *Pawulos* in a receptor language. However, other criteria are noted below which must also be followed in applying this policy, and it needs to be adapted in some ways for most languages. Even in ecumenical projects, where differing traditions may have affected many names, agreement can usually be reached about applying this basic policy to all names of lesser importance. Its application may be more difficult to urge, however, where the spelling of names such as "Jesus", "Peter", "John", "Mary", and other major biblical names has derived from different source languages for the respective churches, and where the prospect of change can become an emotional issue. The United Bible Societies can propose and recommend this policy of direct transliteration from Hebrew and/or Greek but cannot enforce it. The actual decisions must come from the churches themselves.

It is perhaps worthy of note that in some areas where the policy of direct transliteration might be applied, the Roman Catholics would be the most likely to lose some traditional spellings, as in many cases the Protestant Churches have already been using the forms derived from Greek, following English tradition. Often the choice between *Yezu* (derived from Latin) and *Yesu* (derived from Greek) has been crucial to the general acceptance of new translations of the New Testament.

Translators may be able to make comprehensive use of Hebrew and Greek lists of names, adopting the closest acceptable equivalents all the way through. However, they should do so according to carefully defined principles applicable to their own language, as the transliteration of names from other languages must be made in accordance with the actual sounds of the language itself. A simple example: most names in most Bantu languages will naturally assume a final vowel, so that "Aaron" may become *Aroni*, "Abiram" may become *Abiramu*, and so on. In a language with no natural /r/ sound, they may become *Aloni*, *Abilamu*, and so on, where the closest natural sound is /l/.

Some other factors in transliterating are:

- a) If double vowels do not ordinarily occur in the orthography of the receptor language, the original double *Aa* as in *Aaroni*, for example, will not be reproduced in the written adaptation, but will be written simply as *Aroni*.

- b) If there is no /h/ in the receptor language, an original form like *Habel* will not be maintained, but a modification like “Abel” will be adopted (as in English, French, and many other languages where this is a common and longstanding usage).
- c) In some languages, as in most Bantu languages for example, an intrusive vowel occurs between consonants. For example, “Abraham” may become *Abirahamu* or *Aburahamu*, depending on which sounds more natural.
- d) In some languages a final consonant such as /s/ may not be wanted, even with an additional final vowel. This may result, for example, in *paulos* still being transliterated as *Paulo* or *Pawulo*.

With all such factors, and with others not noted here, the main concern will be to retain not only an acceptable written form, but also to allow for the most natural pronunciation when the names are read aloud.

In some languages, well-known name forms derived from a major related language or lingua franca have been widely adopted, and there would be no value in changing to a direct transliteration from Hebrew or Greek in such cases, even if less well-known names are transliterated. In English-speaking areas a form like *Jon* may have become firmly established, while in French-speaking areas a form like *Zan* may be widely used. There would be no point in trying to introduce forms such as *Johana*, *Yowane*, and so on, except as a possible way of reconciling different traditions, as in a new joint translation. Some may be quite close to the original form, for example *Davidi*, but in certain languages it may be written as *Devidi*, to reflect the English pronunciation where this has prevailed in the area. Similarly, “Simon” may be found written as *Saimon*, “Titus” as *Taitos*, “James” as *Chemisi*. However, it is more usual to find the original form being quite closely adhered to, e.g. *Davidi*, *Simoni*, and so on.

Translators must take care that with new name forms they do not accidentally introduce combinations of sounds which could be confusing, amusing, or offensive. This is of course a basic principle which applies to any aspect of translation. With regard to names, one possible problem is that an otherwise acceptable name form has the same sound as another word in the receptor language. For example, in one language the preferred written form for “Mary” would have been *Meri*—this being a long-established adaptation based on English pronunciation—but this was finally rejected for the new translation because in that language the word *meri* is a possessive pronoun. Although *Meri* is frequently given as a baptismal name, it can be ambiguous in written contexts, especially when these are read aloud with no way of “hearing” the initial capital.

To conclude this section on transliteration, it is probably worthwhile noting that in Africa the name “God” is rarely, if ever, transliterated. An equivalent may be borrowed by languages over a quite wide area—for example, *Mungu* from Swahili—but the general tendency is to use expressions already existing in the receptor languages, with meanings

such as “Creator”, “Great Spirit”, and so on.

Showing the meanings of names

In many places in the Old and New Testaments, the meaning of a name is extremely important to the understanding of the context and must be brought out in one way or another.

In a number of contexts the meaning of a name is already given in the original text together with the name. In such cases the original form of the name must be given, and the meaning (or explanation) translated. Some examples from the New Testament are:

Mt 1.23	Emmanuel	(which means “God with us”)
Mk 3.17	Boanerges	(that is, sons of thunder)
Mk 7.11	Corban	(that is, given to God)
Mk 15.22	Golgotha	(which means the place of the skull)
Lk 8.30	Legion	(for many demons had entered him)
Jn 1.38	Rabbi	(which means Teacher)
Jn 1.41	Messiah	(which means Christ)
Jn 1.42	Cephas	(which means Peter)
Jn 9.7	Siloam	(which means Sent)
Jn 19.13	The Pavement	(in Hebrew, Gabbatha)
Jn 20.16	Rabboni	(which means Teacher)
Acts 1.19	Akeldama	(that is, Field of Blood)
Acts 4.36	Barnabas	(which means, Son of encouragement)
Acts 9.36	Tabitha	(which means Dorcas or Gazelle)
Acts 13.8	Elymas the magician	(for that is the meaning of his name)

In John 1.41,42, the names “Christ” and “Peter” need further explanation to be really meaningful. “Christ” needs to be explained as “the Anointed One”, and “Peter” as “rock”. These translations can be included within the same parenthesis or in a footnote.

Similarly in Revelation 9.11 the Hebrew name *Abaddon* is “explained” by the Greek equivalent, *Apollyon*. The meaning of both names is “Destroyer” and needs to be included either in parenthesis in the text (as in the Good News Bible) or in a footnote.

In Acts 4.36, as in all similar contexts, a literal translation of “son of ...” should be avoided, in favor of something like “he who encourages”.

There are many contexts in the Old Testament where the point of the narrative is contained in the meaning of a personal name, but the meaning is not given explicitly in the original text. In these cases the accepted form of the name in the receptor language must be used and its literal meaning included, as a help for the reader, in either a footnote or in parenthesis within the text. A few examples from Genesis show an acceptable way of wording the footnotes:

16.11	Ishmael:	Hebrew = “God hears”
21.31	Beer-sheba:	Hebrew = “Well of the vow” or “Well of seven”
28.19	Bethel:	Hebrew = “house of God”

30.11	Gad:	Hebrew = "luck"
30.13	Asher:	Hebrew = "happy"
32.2	Mahanaim:	Hebrew = "two camps"
35.18	Benoni:	Hebrew = "son of my sorrow"
	Benjamin:	Hebrew = "son who will be fortunate"

Other contexts where the meaning of a personal name is important are those in which the **sound** of the name suggests the meaning. This is a pun, or play on words, and there are many such examples in the Old Testament. As in the examples given above, the original name forms should be transliterated, with footnotes to explain the meaning, although the form of the explanation will be a bit less direct. A few examples from Genesis are:

17.5	Abraham:	sounds like the Hebrew for "ancestor of many nations"
19.22	Zoar:	sounds like the Hebrew for "small"
25.26	Jacob:	sounds like the Hebrew for "heel"
25.30	Edom:	sounds like the Hebrew for "red"
29.35	Judah:	sounds like the Hebrew for "praise"
32.28	Israel:	sounds like the Hebrew for "he struggles with God" or "God struggles"
41.51	Manasseh:	sounds like the Hebrew for "cause to forget"
41.52	Ephraim:	sounds like the Hebrew for "give children"

Translating names

Some names have meanings which can be given either in footnotes or by direct translation in context, that is, by substituting the meaning for the form. This applies many times in the Old Testament, where place-names can be translated directly with their meaning, and where the dropping of the original form does not weaken the context in any way. For example: Genesis 38.8—*Allon-bacuth* can be translated directly as "Oak of Weeping". (Alternatively, the form *Allon-bacuth* can be transliterated, and the meaning "Oak of Weeping" shown in a footnote.)

An example of a personal name which could be translated at least in part is: Genesis 33.20—*El-Elohe-Israel*, which can be translated as "El, the God of Israel" (see Good News Bible, and similarly Français Courant). Alternatively, the full Hebrew form can be transliterated, with the meaning "God, the God of Israel" shown in a footnote.

There are many such places where a place-name and even a personal name can be translated rather than transliterated. It is important for the translator to recognize where this can be done without any loss to the context as a whole, and where it is essential to retain the transliterated forms, with the meaning indicated either in a footnote or in parenthesis within the text. It is also important to treat them consistently; for example, if it is decided to use a system of transliterations in the text plus meanings in footnotes, then all names to which this system is

relevant should be treated in this way. Some translators like to translate in the context and show the original form in a footnote. Whichever is chosen, a consistent pattern of footnoting should be followed.

A slightly more complex example is found in Hosea 1 and 2, where the meanings of the children's names are highly important to the context: *Lo-ruhama* (= "Not pitied") in 1.6,8 and *Lo-ammi* (= "Not my people") in 1.9; and then the positive forms *Ammi* (= "My people") and *Ruhama* (= "She has obtained pity") in 2.1. In 1.6 and 1.9 the transliterations could be retained, as the meanings of the names are brought out fully in the context. A footnote giving the literal meaning can also be provided, as is done in Segond. The Revised Standard Version and the Good News Bible, however, translate the names with no reference to the Hebrew forms even in a footnote. Either approach is valid.

Two similar and fairly complex examples come from the New Testament. The first is the name of one of Jesus' disciples, "Simon the Cananaean" (Mt 10.4; Mk 3.18) or "Simon the Zealot" (Lk 6.15; Acts 1.13). This is the same person, of course, but with a Hebrew description in two occurrences and an equivalent Greek title in the others. In neither case is a transliteration meaningful without an explanation, which can be given in context, probably in parenthesis, or in a footnote. Some new translations provide the explanation in a glossary note rather than in a footnote, as it is not always possible to find a brief way of explaining it.

Some versions translate directly in all four occurrences, using a generic equivalent such as "the Patriot" in the Good News Bible, and without reference to the original forms. In many languages it is not possible to find a one-word equivalent of "patriot", and a descriptive term may develop into a quite lengthy explanation of Simon as a nationalist working against Roman authority. This may argue in favor of retaining transliterated forms and providing a full explanatory footnote or glossary note.

Transliterations also need to be handled with care. French can transliterate as *Zélate* in all four contexts, since this has become a borrowed word with a familiar meaning (at least in fairly high-level language). In many receptor languages, however, a transliteration of "Zealot" is just as meaningless as a transliteration of "Cananaean". It may therefore be preferable, in the interest of faithfulness to the original texts, to transliterate the forms as found at each occurrence and to give the same footnote explanation each time. In transliterating "Cananaean", care must be taken not to give it the same form as "Canaanite". "Cananaean" is just the transliteration into Greek of a Hebrew word meaning "Zealot", and must not be identified with a geographical location.

The second example relates to the names Bar-Jona (Mt 16.17) and Bar-Jesus (Acts 13.6). *Bar* is the Hebrew for "son (of)...", and to translate is more meaningful than to transliterate. Most translators say

“son of Jonah/John” in Mt 16.17 but will not take the same step in Acts 13.6 (see also the Good News Bible and Français Courant), feeling that to say “son of Jesus” would be unacceptable even with an explanation that this was a different “Jesus”. For this reason these two formally identical names will usually be treated differently in new translations.

Other names or titles which can and probably should be translated rather than transliterated are:

Pharaoh	= king/ruler of Egypt
Caesar	= emperor/king/ruler of Rome
Candace	= queen of Ethiopia (Acts 8.27)

The transliterated forms are in many places so familiar and deeply entrenched in the awareness of the people that it can be difficult to give them up. If transliterated forms are retained, footnotes or glossary explanations must be provided as well, unless a brief descriptive phrase can fit conveniently into the text in apposition to the transliteration.

In Rev 1.8 **the Alpha** and **the Omega** are sometimes translated; but this can slightly weaken the similar context in Rev 22.13, where the Greek words are repeated together with a double explanation in the original text. For this reason it may be preferable to retain the transliterations and provide a footnote translation at 1.8 if necessary.

Some other matters

Compound names. Many place-names, especially in the Old Testament, are made up of two names: for instance, **Beth Aven, Kadesh Barnea, Padan Aram, Ramoth Gilead**. There are several possible ways of writing these, and the translator should choose one system and apply it to all such compound forms throughout. For example: **Kadesh Barnea, or Kadesh-Barnea, or Kadesh-barnea.**

Derived forms. Some names are derived from other names and need care in translation, in view of the variety of ways in which locatives, plurals, ethnic names, and so on, are formed in different languages. Some examples follow:

The name “Israelites” is very common in the Old Testament. The equivalent of this form in a Bantu language, for example, would possibly be *Abaisraeli*, in which the English suffix “-ites” is covered by the third person plural prefix *Aba-*. Sometimes, however, translators try to retain both, with a result something like *Abaisraeliti*. This is obviously unnecessary and outside the normal structure of the receptor language.

Similarly, other names ending in *-im*, the plural indicator in Hebrew, can usually be covered in a Bantu language by the prefix *Aba-*. For example, the group of names in Genesis 10.13, where the meaning is “Egypt became the father of the people of Lud, Anam, Lehab...” The receptor language should use its own plural indicator, not reproduce the Hebrew forms *Ludim, Ananim* and so on, nor combine it with, for example, the Bantu plural prefix, with a result something like *Abaludimi*.

A typical, correct form might be *Abaludi*, and so on. Similarly, words such as *cherubim* and *seraphim* are frequently transliterated, and this should be done, if possible, according to appropriate patterns in the receptor language. So in a Bantu language, for instance, an appropriate form would be *abakerubi*, with *aba-* representing *-im*, not *abakerubimi*.

Qualifiers. All translators should be familiar with the device of adding a noun qualifier to the geographical name, thus providing information for the reader: for example, “**river** Jordan”, “**mountain** Zion”, “**country** Syria”, “**city** Babylon”, “**desert** Negeb”. In the same way some personal names need to be qualified; for example “**king** David”, “**prophet** Isaiah”, and so on. This should be done according to the needs of individual contexts—it may not be necessary to add the qualifier every time, but probably just at its first occurrence in a section or chapter.

Variant spellings and readings. Some names are spelled differently in different places; for example, “Peniel” in Genesis 32.30, “Penuel” in 32.31. These are due to differences in the pointing of the Hebrew and could be equally correct. Versions such as the Good News Bible and Français Courant take one spelling for both occurrences: “Peniel” (GNB) and *Penouel* (FC). This is a valid general principle, and the model version most commonly used in the area concerned should be followed. Footnotes can be given, if desired, to show the possible variants.

Some differences in names are due to variant textual readings; for example, “Gadara” (Mt 8.28), “Gerasa” (Mk 5.1 and Lk 8.26). In such cases the name form occurring in the best-attested ancient manuscripts should be followed in each respective context, even though this results in different forms in parallel passages. The spelling of names in such contexts should not be harmonized arbitrarily. Footnotes can be given, if desired, to indicate the differences.

Book names. Some book names need to be translated, as transliterations of traditional titles do not hold any meaning; for example, “Genesis”, “Exodus”, “Leviticus”, “Deuteronomy”. A phrase giving the closest possible equivalent of the meaning in each case should be used. The subtitles “first/second/third book of Moses”, are sometimes included as well. If so, their inclusion should be consistent, and the formula used should be consistent.

There are of course many factors involved in deciding how to translate these titles as well as others not referred to here. Translators should consult with their translation officers for specific advice. We also recommend two articles appearing in *TBT-P* (April 1983): “Translating Old Testament Book Titles” by Dr John Ellington, and “Book titles (2): the Prophetic Books” by Dr Basil Rebera.

The above notes are not exhaustive but should give translators an indication of the most common concerns in the treatment of names. Further advice, on either general principles or on the treatment of specific names, should be sought from the translation officer responsible for the project.