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The Bible in Polynesia: Bridging the Cultural Distance

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A considerable distance between linguistic and/or cultural communities in question renders translation significantly more difficult. As the final translational solution is determined by a variety of (sometimes contradictory) factors, we cannot conclude that a single universally acceptable variant of translation exists; we only can maintain that some translational variants may be better or worse than others. When translating into an environmentally and culturally very distant language, the translator has to solve the problem of preserving the essential idea of the original on the one hand and of communicating it in a sufficiently intelligible way to the recipients of his translation.

Virtually all translational problems occur when translating the Bible into any of the Polynesian languages.¹ In the first place we have to do with marked divergences of (1) natural environment, (2) way of life, (3) religious and ethic norms.

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1 In this article there were used the following editions and translations of the Bible into European languages: Louis Segond (trans.), *Le Nouveau Testament*, Version revue, 1975: L'Association Internationale des Gedeons, Le Nouveau Testament est reproduit avec la permission de la Société Biblique de Genève. Copyright © 1984 National Maison d'Édition; Erwin Nestle – Kurt Aland (eds.), *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt 221963; *Písmo sväté Nového zákona*, Trnava: Spolok sv. Vojtecha 1952; *The New Testament*, Authorized (King James) Version, The Gideons International. Copyright © 1975 by National Publishing Company. Biblical quotations in Polynesian languages are from the following editions: *Te Pi'imau Hou me te tau Taramo / Le Nouveau Testament et les Psaumes en marquisien*, Taiohae: Ekaretia Eka ana i te Fenuaenata. Fa'e Epikopo / Eglise Catholique des îles Marquises. Diocèse de Taioha'e 1995; *Ko te Paipera Tapu ara ko te Kawenata Tawhito me te Kawenata Hou / The Holy Bible in Maori*, London: The British and Foreign Bible Society 1958; *Kauoha Hou s. a. / The New Testament*, Nu Yoka: Ua paia no ko Amerika Poe Hoolaha Baibala / New York: American Bible Society 1816; *Te Bibilia Mo'a Ra, oia te Faufaa Tahito e te Faufaa Apira, irihitia ei parau Tahiti*, London: The British and Foreign Bible Society 1953; *O le Tusi Paia o le Feagaiga Tuai ma Le Feagaiga Fou / The Holy Bible in Samoan*, (Revised Edition 1969), Wellington: The British and Foreign Bible Society 1970; *Ko e Tohitapu Katoa / The Bible in Tongan N. 53*, Wellington: The British and Foreign Bible Society 1966.

The Bible is a collection of quite diverse writings from the viewpoint of content and/or style and it was repeatedly underlined that translating the Old Testament into any of the Polynesian languages is considerably less exacting than translating the New Testament. In the early post-contact era, Judaism was more intelligible to the Polynesians than Christianity. After all, Judaism was a monoethnic religion, kinship was the foundation of Jewish society, the status of women in the society admitting polygamy was not much different either, changing names at various important opportunities was not unusual, and the day started not in the morning but the evening before. Other features familiar to both Jews and Polynesians (but not only to them) were slavery, hereditary priesthood, the principle of primogeniture, sacredness of head and hair, vendetta, and ritual purity.

The profile of divinity as a punishing and fearful being was well known to the Polynesians. And traces of such an attitude to God occur in the Old Testament. For example, in *Exodus* 8,11 we find the following passage: “Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods”, and in *Psalms* 96,4: “For Jehovah is great and exceedingly to be praised; he is terrible above all gods.” In the early post-contact phase, the person of Jesus Christ was rather strange to Polynesian ethics. In addition, some Protestant Anglo-Saxon missionaries tended to accentuate the Old Testament much more than the Catholic missionaries who settled in Polynesia later. The Protestant pastors liked to give the native children names taken from the Old Testament. In the light of this it would be hard to wonder that after 1840 (when New Zealand became English colony), the Maori (like the native Hawaiians) who subsequently lost a great majority of their hereditary lands, were inclined to perceive themselves as the Israelites, as a nation without a home, calling their country Canaan. Their “prophet” Te Ua Haumene rejected the New Testament. The British missionary Marsden himself believed that the Maoris are descendants of the lost Jewish tribes. In the early 19th century the Polynesians were not always prepared to understand the idea of the only God and sometimes distinguished Yahweh from Jesus, identifying one of the two with their people and the other with the Europeans. At the same time, the Christianization did not automatically imply any doubts about the existence of their tribal gods; the Maoris rather considered them to be weaker than the God of the Christians and that is why they have simply given them up.

A serious obstacle hindering the efforts of Biblical translators was **the natural environment** of the Pacific islands that is so different from the ancient Near East. The sea is incomparably more important for the inhabitants of Polynesia, the climate is likewise different, periods of drought occur rarely, and desert as an ideal space for meditation is virtually

unknown. The islands are generally small, the alternation of the four seasons of the year is unknown. The fauna of tropical Polynesia is scanty, mammals virtually absent, there are no snakes east of Samoa and the insular avifauna is likewise underrepresented. The Polynesians have brought along only pigs, dogs and poultry to the islands (not all of them to all the islands). They had no herds of cattle, no shepherds were needed, seafood (fish, turtles, molluscs, etc.) was of fundamental importance; their agricultural activities may be characterized as intensive gardening focusing upon tubers (kumara, taro, uhi) and calabashes – and upon coconut palm, breadfruit, pandanus, and banana. Their scale of trade products was modest; pottery disappeared many centuries ago and has been replaced by calabashes, shells and coconut shells. Weaving has given way to plaiting, and metal-working was unknown from the very beginning.

Social organization was based upon kinship and the process of integration of tribes into greater wholes was in its very early stages. The institution of priests overlapped at least to some extent with that of chiefs and artisans. Writing was unknown (with the possible exception of the Easter Island) and traditional literature, genealogy, myths, legends, and rituals were learnt by heart. Morality of the Polynesians was not specified by a set of principles reminiscent of the Biblical Ten Commandments but was derived from the behaviour and acts of the prominent gods and ancestors. Notions such as sin, conscience, forgiveness, compassion, good and evil, prayer, faith, soul, offering, eternity had no precise equivalents in the Polynesian languages and it was the behavior and acts of the ancestors and gods that the descendants adopted as their model. **The contrast of divine and humane** was not absolute and the idea of a continuous transition between the two domains seems to have been prevailing instead. Part of this transition were the ancestors and their spirits interacting among the living mortals. The links between the two domains were based upon their awareness of solidarity; if the people came to feel disappointed by a god of theirs, they might repudiate him and adore a new divine being. Such a pragmatic attitude to gods probably facilitated the conversion of the Polynesians to Christianity because the God of the Europeans has turned out to be indisputably more powerful than the ancient native gods.

The Christian missionaries were well aware of the gap between the culture of the islanders on the one hand and the Christian ideas on the other. The rapprochement required compliance and goodwill of both parties. After the first failures the missionaries came to understand that their activity may only lead to a true and permanent success if the islanders get acquainted with at least the foundations of the European way of life, thought and culture – and if the translated religious texts, not excluding

the Bible, take into account all tolerable links furnished by the religious ideas of the Polynesians. This has been repeatedly stressed by missionaries and scholars, for example by Louis Joseph Luzbetak, anthropologist and missionary of Slovak origin in New Guinea,² and by Ján Komorovský.³

Eugene Nida summed up **the peculiarities of translating Bible** in the following manner:

(1) ... the Bible represents a document coming from a relatively remote historical period; (2) the cultural differences between Biblical times and our own are considerable; (3) the nature of the documentary evidence ... is crucially deficient in many matters of word division and punctuation; (4) arbitrary traditional divisions into chapters and verses have tended to obscure meaningful connections; and (5) overriding theological considerations have in some instances tended to distort the meaning of the original message.⁴

The last item was confirmed by missionary experience in both Tahiti and New Zealand. The consequences of inadequate translational conceptions were anticipated as early as in 1789 by George Campbell in the introduction of his translation:

There is an additional evil resulting from this manner of treating holy writ (here he is hinting at the natural tendency toward conservatism and mysteriousness of religious discourse), that the solecisms, barbarisms and nonsensical expressions, which it gives rise to, prove a fund of materials to the visionary, out of which his imagination frames a thousand mysteries.⁵

The Christian missions introduced **an entirely new manner of propagating religious ideas** and doctrines in the South Pacific. Its basis was the Bible, a written authoritative summary of the sacred doctrine, so radically different from what the islanders had been accustomed to. The very word Bible is translated in several ways: *Paipera Tapu* (literally Holy Bible) in Maori, *Baibala* in Hawaiian, *Hamani Tapu* (Sacred Book) or *Pipiria* (from Biblia) in Marquesan, *Te Parau a te Atua* (The Divine Word) or *Bibilia Mo'a Ra* (Holy Bible) in Tahitian, *Tusi Paia* (Holy Writing) in Samoan and *Tohi Tapu* (Holy Writing) in Tongan.

In the gospels Jesus often uses **parables**. This efficient metaphorical – allegorical literary term is translated by various approximate equivalents,

2 Louis Joseph Luzbetak. *The Church and Cultures*, Techny: Divine Word Publications 1963.

3 Ján Komorovský, "Inkultúrácia v práci slovenských misionárov [Inculturation in the work of Slovak missionaries]", *Slovenský národopis* 39, 1991, 363.

4 Eugene Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*, Leiden: E. J. Brill 1964, 5.

5 George Campbell, *The Four Gospels: Introductory Volume to His Translation*, London: A. Strahan 1789 (quoted after E. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating...*, 5).

such as Maori *whakarite* “compare, liken”⁶ or *kupu whakarite* “words of likening” (*Matthew* 13,3; *Mark* 12,12); the Hawaiian Bible prefers the expression *’ōlelo nane* where *’ōlelo* means “to speak, speech” and *nane* “riddle, puzzle, allegory”;⁷ in Marquesan there is *tekao ha’apupua* (*tekao* “parler”, *pupua* “brillant”, *ha’apupua* “faire allusion”, and thus *tekao ha’apupua* “parabole, énigme, langage figuré, allégorie”);⁸ in Samoan *fa’ata’oto* “parable, proverb”⁹ and in Tongan (*lea*) *fakatātā* or *talanoa fakatātā* derived via semantic shift from *fakatātā* “representation, picture, drawing, plan, diagram, effigy, image, statue, copy, model, dummy, symbol, type, instance, illustration, analogy”.¹⁰ The semantics of Maori *whakarite* accentuates similarity, likeness while the respective terms in the other Polynesian languages contain the moment of hinting, mysteriousness, riddle, or even of modelling.

While translating into a very different culture we are inevitably aware of the fact that the semantic equivalence is as a rule only partial and the partial equivalence usually produces undesirable associations but at the same time gives the recipients a chance to at least approximately grasp what is essential. And thus the translator is forced to manoeuvre upon the level of hyponyms, between hyponyms and hyperonyms, and to utilize paronymy. When deciding to use a semantic shift, he reinforces it with an attribute.

Discrepancies upon the level of grammar are, naturally, quite common. The translator is frequently confronted with the problems of personal pronouns. In Polynesian there is the opposition between plural and dual (for example Maori *kōrua* “you two” versus *kōtōu* “you, plural”). Another complication may be seen in the contrast of inclusive and exclusive pronouns of the first person of non-singular numbers. The inclusive plural pronoun *tātou* means “all of us including you” while its exclusive pendant *mātou* means “we without you”; in the dual we have the inclusive *tāua* “me and yourself” versus *māua* “me and him/her” (examples are from Maori but the same contrast exists in other Polynesian languages). A wrong selection of one of those forms may distort the sense of the utter-

6 Herbert W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, Wellington: R. E. Owen 1957, 343.

7 Mary Kawena Pukui – Samuel H. Elbert, *English-Hawaiian Dictionary*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1957, 241.

8 Ildefonse René Dordillon, *Grammaire et dictionnaire de la langue des îles Marquises*, Paris: Belin frères 1904 (reprint: *Dictionnaire de la langue Marquisienne*, Tahiti: Société des Etudes Océaniques 1999), 240.

9 George B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan-English and English-Samoan*, London: Oxford University Press 1966, 50.

10 C. Maxwell Churchward, *Tongan Dictionary*, London: Oxford University Press 1959, 105.

ance. If a missionary while preaching would use in his utterance “We are sinful and therefore should repent and obey God’s commandments”, the wrong (exclusive) pronoun *mātou* instead of the correct inclusive *tātou* (“we all including you”), the audience would be inclined to interpret it as a reprimand addressed to himself and other foreign missionaries. And it may even happen that the translator would not have a sufficiently large context at his disposal to decide which variant could be adequate.

Another instance of a grammatically conditioned decision is the **selection of the correct possessive construction**; all Polynesian languages (with the exception of Niuean) distinguish so called active (termed by others alienable) possession marked by the morpheme “*a*” versus inactive (inalienable) possession marked by “*o*”; in this instance the choice of an adequate variant depends upon the translator’s knowledge of the whole social and cultural background. For example *my father* would require an inactive marker (“*o*”) while *my son* is an instance of active possession compatible with “*a*”. One and the same substantive may require either an active or an inactive marker, depending upon the essence of the possessive relation. And thus *tōku waiata* “my song” (marked with inactive “*o*”) is a song composed by someone else in my honour while *tāku waiata* “my song” (marked with active “*a*”) is a song composed by myself. Sometimes the translators seem to have chosen the wrong alternative: when in the Maori Bible the God’s kingdom is mentioned, we find an inactive construction *te rangatiratanga o te Atua* (marker “*o*”). This would be a correct choice in case the subject were speaking of the kingdom where he is living but God is the creator of his kingdom (not merely his inhabitant) and thus his relation to his kingdom is no doubt (theologically) active and therefore the version *te rangatiratanga a te Atua* (with marker “*a*”) would be more adequate. Likewise, the Almighty God is expected to have an active attitude to everything he is doing. This was ignored by the Hawaiian translation of the sequence *ke Akua nona mai ka manaolana* (with the inactive marker “*o*” instead of the more appropriate active marker “*a*”) “God whose is the hope”. The same holds for the Marquesan version of the sequence *te Atua, te tumu o tetaitina* (again the inactive marker “*o*” is used). However, the Maori translator has chosen the adequate active option, cf. *te Atua, nana nei te tumanako* (the active “*a*” in *nana* “his”).

In this connection it may be mentioned that the so called genitive of property, quite common in the Biblical and Classical languages, is avoided and replaced by a possessive construction (see above). The above mentioned examples from Hawaiian, Marquesan and Maori confirm it, being translations of Greek *ho theós tēs elpídos* and Latin *Deus spei* “God of the hope” (*Romans* 15,13).

* * *

Problems posed by the environment of Polynesian islands are numerous and varied. Some of them follow from **the restricted size of most of the islands** so different from the spacious Near Eastern environment. Exceptions are New Zealand and perhaps Hawaii and Samoa. In the rugged Marquesas *ka'avai* originally means stream, river, valley and also community, settlement or town (at least in Bicknell's translation of St. John's gospel).¹¹ Without the knowledge of the local environmental restrictions we might mistake it for an instance of homonymy. In fact we have to do with polysemy. The islands within the archipelago are notable for their extremely dramatic and rugged terrain. The mountain ranges are of a relatively fresh volcanic origin and so high and steep as to hinder communication with the neighbouring valleys. In a narrow, almost alpine valley at the bottom of which there is a short river flowing into the sea there is not enough space for large settlements. The inhabitants had to build their houses close to the water streams.

Town is in the Marquesan text described as *papua fa'e*, that is "fence for houses" (*Matthew 2,23*); in Bicknell's translation of St. John's gospel *ka'avai* occurs in the same meaning (see above). Neither has the Hawaiian translator managed to escape awkward paraphrasing; *kūlana kauhale*, the Hawaiian term for "town", means literally "place for many houses".¹² It undergoes a reduction to *kūlanahale*. The New Zealand Maoris were better prepared for the introduction of an equivalent expression. In the 18th and early in the 19th century the Maoris led untiring wars and in order to protect themselves against unexpected hostile attacks they began building fortified settlements known as *pā* (unlike *kainga*, villages without any fortification). As a consequence, the Maori translator could use *pā* for town – after all, the Biblical towns were fortified too. Samoan has at its disposal two terms for town or city – *'a'ai* "a settlement" or *taulaga* derived from the verb *tau* "to anchor" (most larger settlements comparable to towns or cities were situated at the shore and served as harbours), for example *Matthew 11,1*: ... *e a'oa'o atu ma tala'i atu i o latou 'a'ai* "... to teach and preach in their cities". A **larger territorial whole** is referred to in Samoan as *malo* "kingdom", in Tongan as *pule'anga*, in Maori as *rangatiratanga*, in Hawaiian as *aupuni* and in Tahitian as *hau*. However, the Marquesan translator decided to use the Greek word *basileia*, in Marquesan pronunciation *patireia* (e.g. *patireia o te 'ani* "the heavenly kingdom"). The preference given in Marquesan to a loanword is easy to

11 I. R. Dordillon, *Dictionnaire de la langue Marquisienne...*, 144.

12 M. K. Pukui – S. H. Elbert, *English-Hawaiian Dictionary...*, 165.

understand because of an absence of large settlements in this archipelago. These neologisms may be used metaphorically in the meaning of the Divine kingdom: Hawaiian *ke aupuni o ke Akua*, Marquesan *te patireia o te Etua*, Tahitian *te basileia o te Atua*, Samoan *le malo o le Atua*; Tongan *e Pule'anga a'o e 'Otua*; Luke 21,31). Once again we are confronted with a questionable use of the inactive possessive marker “o” in all the above instances. This illogical infringement of the rule probably was triggered by the respect to God.

The desert in the true sense is a purely abstract idea in Polynesia and its translational equivalents duly deviate from language to language. Its functional correlate in Marquesan is *va'o*, (“upper uninhabited part at the forest margin of a valley”) or the descriptive term *henua ataha* (literally “useless land/country”). The Hawaiian translator has chosen a close parallel – the compound *wao nahele*, that is, “inland forest” (for example in *Matthew* 3,1). The desert as a region suffering from a shortage of precipitations is unknown even in New Zealand. Another lexeme used as the Maori equivalent of the desert is *koraha* referring to an open country. Likewise the Samoan translator has selected the word *vao* with the basic meaning “forest, wild forest”.

Polynesian **diet** consisted, in addition to sea food, chiefly of fruits such as coconuts, breadfruit, bananas, and the islanders planted tubers such as *kumara*, *taro* (edible *Colocasia esculenta*), and *uhi* (“yam”, *Dioscorea*). When they were hungry, they could gather edible roots and various forest plants. They did not sow grain or plant rice and could not bake **bread** that plays a central symbolic part in both Old and New Testament. The translator had to improvise. The Marquesan Lord's Prayer mentions the hyperonym *o'a* “sustenance, food”. After all, bread is used synecdochically in the Biblical original too. However, in modern Marquesan there is a specific word for bread, namely *haraoa* (or *faraoa*) borrowed from English flour – and a similar situation is known from other Polynesian languages. Obviously *haraoa* (*faraoa*) would be out of place in the Lord's Prayer because bread is no stock food in Polynesia. The Hawaiian translator chose an analogous solution when he opted for the hyperonym *'ai* “food”. In the Maori translation bread is replaced by its (once) functional equivalent *taro*.

Absence of cereals implies the absence of **harvest**. A substitute solution in Marquesan was the free descriptive term *kohi 'i te puku* (“picking fruits, especially those of the breadfruit trees”) and *te tau puku pa'a* (“the time of ripe fruits”; Luke 13, 30). **The lord of the harvest** is translated as *fatu hei papua* “owner of the garden”. In Hawaiian, harvest is translated upon the abstract level as *'ai i o'o* “food that has ripened” and the lord of the harvest as *haku o ke kīhāpai* “lord of the garden or field”. In the Maori

text we find a different equivalent for the harvest, namely *kotinga* (literally a piece of land). The Maoris started sewing wheat quite early after the arrival of Europeans and the climatic conditions for the cereals were comparable to those in Europe. The lord of their harvest is called here *Ariki nāna te kotinga* “the high lord whose is the piece of land”.

The inventory of **terrestrial animals** is extremely poor in the Pacific and the number of species is decreasing from the west to the east being especially poor in the coral atolls. The Polynesians had three domestic animals – hens, pigs, and dogs – and used to take them along when planning to settle new islands. This triad, however, could not survive all far distance voyages. Hen, for example, never reached New Zealand and the Maoris applied its name to the biggest wingless bird of the world known even today as *moa*. An early presence of pig in New Zealand is still a subject of debate. The fourth mammal was imported as a stowaway by the Polynesians; it was the ever present rat. The occurrence of bats is not so surprising because they can fly despite being mammals.

Quadrupeds that were kept in the Near East, often in herds, for example sheep, camels, cows, asses, horses, goats, were unheard of during the first European voyages of discovery. The first European and American voyagers made attempts to breed some of those animals in the Pacific islands and this is reflected in early Biblical translations. Thus we have gained an opportunity to follow the process of creating animal terminology in the local languages.

Loanwords have been retained for the nomination of **cow** virtually everywhere; Marquesan *pifa* or *piha* is borrowed from English “beef” just as Hawaiian *pīpī* or *bīpī*. Maori has borrowed *kau* (from the English “cow”), Samoan *povi* (from Latin *bos*, gen. *bovis*), and Tongan uses both *pulu* (from English “bull”) and *kau* (from English “cow”). **Sheep** were adopted together with their nominations; the linguistic source was in most instances English (cf. Maori *hipi*, Marquesan *hipa*, Hawaiian *hipa*, from English “sheep”) and occasionally French, for example Marquesan *muto* (cf. French *mouton*). Samoan, however, uses *māmoē* borrowed from Tahitian *māmoē*; the latter’s origin is unknown and marked “new” in the Tepano Jaussen’s dictionary.¹³

The institution of a **shepherd** (one of the crucial figures in Biblical metaphors) was completely new to the Polynesians. The term could be made accessible to the islanders either by means of a loanword or translated as an explanatory paraphrase. In the Maori text we find the loanword *hepara* (from English “shepherd”): ... *a Ihu, taua Heparā nui o*

13 Tepano Jaussen, *Grammaire et dictionnaire de la langue tahitienne*, Paris: Musée de l’Homme 1969, 99.

nga hipi ... "... Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep ..." (*Hebrews* 13,20). This is understandable because the colonists have introduced cattle and sheep into New Zealand at a very early date and the Maoris sometimes used to guard the flocks. In other Polynesian languages shepherd is translated in a descriptive manner. The Hawaiian translator uses *kahu*¹⁴ ... *hipa*, i.e. "guardian ... of the sheep", (... *Iesu* ... *loaa i Kahu nui no ka poe hipa* ..., literally "... Jesus ... became the great shepherd of the sheep ..."; *Hebrews* 13,20); Marquesan uses a similar paraphrase, i.e. *te tia'i ... o te naho muto* "the guardian ... of the sheep".¹⁵ The same pattern occurs in Tahitian where sheep is translated as *māmoe*, in Samoan where the guardian is *leoleo* and sheep *māmoe*,¹⁶ and in Tongan, with *fungani* for the guardian and *sipi* for sheep.¹⁷

Another key term of the Bible is **snake** as an embodiment of the devil. Snakes live only in Western Polynesia and the Proto-Polynesian term **ngata* exists both in Tongan and Samoan (spelled as *gata* in Samoan). The word itself is widespread even in Eastern Polynesia (where snakes are absent), however, with a somewhat different meaning. Maori *ngata* means "snail, slug, leech";¹⁸ in Hawaiian *naka* refers to "a sea creature" and to the "land shell *Thaumatodon nesophila*"; the semantic link to snake is present in another of its meaning – "cracked and peeling, as the skin", which is typical of snakes;¹⁹ in the dialects of the Cook Islands *ngata* refers to a kind of "edible sea-slug".²⁰ Several East Polynesian languages have borrowed expressions referring to snake from the Biblical languages; in Maori it is *nakahi* and in Hawaiian *nahesa* (both from Hebrew) and in Tahitian *ophi* (from Greek). However, the Marquesan translator used a neologism *puhi fenua* "land eel" (*puhi* "eel", *fenua* "land"). It is an impressive solution because the eel plays in Marquesan mythology a part of the Biblical snake. Carl von den Steinen pointed out that the Proto-Polynesian **ngata* has been preserved as *nata* in Marquesan but acquired the meaning of eel. Traces of its original meaning may be seen in mythology – this "eel" climbs the trees, creeps in the bush and sloughs its skin.²¹

An analogous metaphor is known from Maori where *ika whenua* "fish of the land" refers to lizards.²²

14 M. K. Pukui – S. H. Elbert, *English-Hawaiian Dictionary*..., 105.

15 Cf. I. R. Dordillon, *Dictionnaire de la langue Marquisienne*..., 261.

16 G. B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*..., 106.

17 C. M. Churchward, *Tongan Dictionary*..., 463.

18 H. W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*..., 231.

19 M. K. Pukui – S. H. Elbert, *English-Hawaiian Dictionary*..., 239.

20 Jasper Buse – Raututi Taringa, *Cook Islands Maori Dictionary*, Rarotonga: Ministry of Education, Government of the Cook Islands 1995, 109.

21 Karl von den Steinen, "Marquesanische Mythen", *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 65, 1933, 29-30.

Snake, lizard, and arthropoda metaphors have been incorporated into the Polynesian Bible. An adequate illustration is found in *Matthew* 12,34: “O generation of vipers, how can ye being evil, speak good things?” This sequence is translated into Maori as *E te uri nakahi me pehea ka korero pai ai koutou, te hunga kino*; (“the offspring of snakes” instead of “snakes” or “vipers”), into Hawaiian as *E ka hanauna moonihoawa* (“family of scorio, viper, asp”) *pehea la e hiki ai ia oukou ka poe ino ke olelo i na mea maikai?* The Marquesan translator decided to be more didactic when translating this sequence as *E te tai enata tūū me te puhi fenua tekeo, pehea e peau otou i te tekao meitai e tahi, ohia ua pe nui otou?*, literally “You, people who keep company with poisonous land eels, how can you speak good things being evil?” The Tahitian translation is, as always, more literal – an opaque loanword echidna (from Greek) was used although it is perfectly unintelligible to the Tahitians.

A remarkable mythological animal is the **beast** in the *Apocalypse* (in Greek *thērion* and in Latin *bestia*). In the Maori translation of the sequence “And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them and kill them” (*Revelation* 11,7) the beast’s equivalent is *kararehe* “dog, quadruped”²³ and in Hawaiian *holoholona* “animal, beast, insect”.²⁴ The Marquesan translator preferred the loanword *animara* (from animal) with the attribute *kaimomoke* “wild”.²⁵ The Tahitian translator has chosen for its equivalent *pua’a* referring in most instances to “pig” and in addition to creating new zoological terms – goat, horse, and cow. Samoan prefers *manu*; the word originally referred only to birds (later to flying creatures in general) and nowadays its meaning has extended to cover quadrupeds (including for example cow).²⁶ In the sense of the mythical beast it takes the attribute *fe’ai* “wild”. The Tongan translator has opted for an identical procedure (*manu fekai*).

Polynesian religion rests upon two fundamental notions, namely **mana** and **tabu** (in most languages *mana* and *tapu* or *kapu*). Both terms have become inseparable parts of present day anthropological and even psychological instrumentarium. Mana is a supernatural internal power and its measure depends upon the closeness of the individual to the gods. The senior sons availed of more mana than their junior brothers, having inherited it from their parents. However, any individual might have

22 Edward Tregear, *The Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*, Wellington: Lion & Blair 1891 (reprint: Osterhout: N. B. Anthropological Publications 1969), 102.

23 H. W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language...*, 99.

24 M. K. Pukui – S. H. Elbert, *English-Hawaiian Dictionary...*, 73.

25 I. R. Dordillon, *Dictionnaire de la langue Marquisienne...*, 146-147.

26 G. B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary...*, 129-130.

acquired mana sua sponte, for example as a successful warrior, artisan, etc. On the other hand, he could lose his mana or at least weaken it. The greater the mana acquired by someone in the hour of birth, the stronger the tapu surrounding him/her. The first and foremost meaning of tabu is in the sacral realm. The transition from the sacral sphere to everyday life (*tapu* → *noa*) required a ceremonial purification. Prohibition was obviously not the essence of tabu for otherwise the word tapu could not have been used in the sense of “saint, holy” (cf. Maori *Wairua Tapu* “Holy Spirit”, Marquesan *Tameti Tapu* “Whitsunday”) in the Bible.

A universal Polynesian equivalent of Christian **God** is the original Polynesian term *Atua* (in Hawaiian *Akua*, in Marquesan *Etua*, in Tongan *'Otua*). His common attribute almighty is translated as *kaha rawa* “very strong” (Maori), *mana nui* “having much mana” (Marquesan), *mana loa* “having big mana” (Hawaiian), *mana hope* probably “having ultimate mana” (in Samoan), or *ona le malosi uma lava* “whose is the infinite strength” (Samoan), *aoniu* “supreme over all” (Tongan). Periphrastic, stylistically marked expressions as Samoan *Tapa'au i le Lagi* “(high) chief in the heaven” or in several languages *Fatu* or *Hatu*, *Haku* (and its synonym *'o Iēhowa ka Haku* “Yahweh the ruler”), or Maori *Ariki* “supreme chief”, may occur. However, the primary and unmarked equivalent is *Atua*.

No translator tried to give to God's antagonist, to the **devil**, a label of Polynesian origin. Instead we are confronted with a plethora of loanwords, such as *satana* and *daimono* in Hawaiian, *hatana* and *rewera* in Maori, *tiaporo* and *tatana* in Marquesan, *tēvolo* and *Sētane* in Tongan, and *tevolo*, *Satani* or *ti'āpolo* in Samoan. However, in Samoan we find – in addition to the above three synonyms – an explanatory neologism, namely *agaaga leaga* “an evil being”. Perhaps the absence of a universal negative pole in the Polynesian religious system corresponds with the absence of the Christian opposition **heaven** – **hell**. Heaven may be the seat of gods in Polynesia and that is why it was assigned the etiquette *rangi* (in other languages *lani*, *lagi*, *ra'i*, etc.). We perceive heaven as an opposition of hell and also of the earth where the mortals are at home. In ancient Polynesia it is the opposition of the world as the domain of light (*ao*, *aoma'ama*, *aomārama*, etc.) and of the underground of which the night, the darkness (*pō* “night”, *pō tango*, *pō tangotango*, *pō tano* “dark night”, etc.) is characteristic. Vaguely localized *pō* is overlapping with the vision of *Hawaiki* (*Hawai'i*, *'Avaiki*, etc.), the homeland of the eastern Polynesians (in western Polynesia it is *Purotu* or *Pulotu*) being at the same time the place where the souls depart after the death.

The nether world as a residence of good souls is called **paradise**. For reasons explained above the Maori translator used *pararaiha* (from

English paradise): *Ko aianeī koe noho ai ki ahau ki Pararaiha* “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23,43); the same solution is found in the Hawaiian text: *I keia la o oe pu kekahi me au iloko o ka paradaiso*. In the Tahitian text we find *paradaiso*, in Samoan *parataiso* and in Tongan *palataisi*. And yet the Marquesan translator has preferred a more transparent paraphrase *papua meita’i*, literally “good garden”.

The idea of a reward or punishment of the souls in after-life is not universally widespread. The Polynesians felt obliged to abide by the behaviour of their respected ancestors for they had no explicitly formulated ethic codex and it was the infringement of tabu (*hara* in Maori and Tahitian, *hala* in Hawaiian, etc.) that had been regarded as the most serious offence or **sin**, for example Maori ... *i horoia ano hoki o tatou hara*; Tahitian ... *ua tamā ia tatou i ta tatou hara* “... and washed us from our sins ...” (Revelation 1,5). And yet the Hawaiian translator decided to replace *hala* by *hewa* “mistake, fault, error, sin, defect, offence, guilt”,²⁷ probably with the intention to avoid the identification of *hala* with sin: ... *i holoi mai hoi ia kakou, i pau ko kakou hewa* (Revelation 1,5); in Marquesan we find *mikeo* “désobéissance, rébellion, offense, faute”²⁸ in the new translation of the New Testament.²⁹

Hell as a new idea strange to the Polynesians is usually translated by means of loanwords, for example Samoan *sēoli* (from Hebrew *she’ol*), Maori *gehena* (likewise from Hebrew), Tahitian *hade* (from Greek) or *gehena* (again from Hebrew), Tongan *heli* (from English “hell”) while Marquesan uses the neologism *havai’i pē* or *havai’i hauhau*, literally “bad Hawaiki”.

In the phrase **the gates of hell** (for example in *Matthew* 16,18: “... thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”) we may discover a somewhat different solution; the pre-Christian traditions are used here – as in Maori where *reinga* appears just as in Hawaiian the mythical *pō* (“night, darkness, abyss”) or *havaiki* in Marquesan. In the Maori text *Matthew* 16,18 we find *kuwaha o te reinga* (*kuwaha* “door, gate”); *kuwaha* as the place upon the northernmost tip of land where the souls of the deceased are leaving this world. However, in Samoan the familiar loanword *seoli* (*faitoto’a o seoli* “the gates of She’ol”) reappears and in Tongan we have to do with a loanword: *matapa ’o Hetesi* “the gates of Hades”.

The idea of **spirits**, especially of the evil ones, was not strange to the Polynesians. They had believed that the souls of the deceased sometimes

27 M. K. Pukui – S. H. Elbert, *English-Hawaiian Dictionary*..., 62.

28 I. R. Dordillon, *Dictionnaire de la langue Marquisienne*..., 186.

29 *Te Pi’imau Hou*..., 777.

tend to linger around the place where they lived and may harm the living people. The spirits need not be souls of the individuals who just died. They are called *wairua*, *vārua* (in the Tahitic languages) or *kuhane* (in the Marquesic subgroup) and may take the attribute *kino*, *'ino* (“evil, bad”).

Cross, the most representative symbol of Christianity, presented no problem for the translator because of the obvious formal motivation of the term. It is *ripeka* with its basic meaning “lying across one another”,³⁰ *peka* “croiser, fourré impénétrable”,³¹ *ke'a* “any crossed piece” referring also to interception, obstruction, etc.;³² in Tahitian inclining as so often to the Biblical original, we find *satauro* (borrowed from Greek *stauros* “cross”). The same holds for Samoan with its Graecism *sātauro* while Tongan prefers *kolosi* (from English “cross”).

The institution of a **prophet** was burgeoning during the early missionary era when various syncretic sects and movements were arising. Clairvoyance was no doubt of a pre-Christian provenience (cf. eschatological visions and prophecies from Tahiti and New Zealand) and the individuals reputed to foresee the future were called “seers”; cf. Maori and Marquesan *matakite* (*mata* “eyes”, *kite* “to see”), Hawaiian *maka'ike* (of the same etymology), Tongan *tangata kikite* (*tangata* “human being”, *kikite*, reduplication of *kite* “to see”), and in Samoan *ali'i 'i'ite* (*ali'i* “man”, polite style, *'i'ite* “to see”, reduplication of *'ite*). And yet the prophet in the Biblical sense is as a rule translated by means of the loanword: *poropiti* in Maori, *perofeta* in Marquesan, *peropheta* in Tahitian, *porofeta* in Samoan, *palofita* in Tongan; in Hawaiian we find the traditional term *kāula* (“prophet, seer”)³³ while in the Tahitian Bible false prophet (*Matthew* 7,15) is translated as *'orometua ha'avare* (*'orometua* “priest”, *ha'avare* “false”).

An exact equivalent of the Christian notion of **soul** was not available from the very beginning. One of the widespread Polynesian expressions is *vārua*, *wairua*, etc. An attempt to explain its etymology was undertaken by Annette Bierbach and Horst Cain. They arrived at the conclusion that the word is derived from **waru* “to scrape” and its participial form **warua* referring to the body of the deceased cleaned of everything that is transient.³⁴ Hawaiian, Rapanuian, and Marquesan *'uhane*, *kuhane* is more inclusive because it refers not only to the soul of living humans but also

30 H. W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language...*, 341.

31 I. R. Dordillon, *Dictionnaire de la langue Marquisienne...*, 221.

32 M. K. Pukui – S. H. Elbert, *English-Hawaiian Dictionary...*, 130.

33 *Ibid.*, 126.

34 Annette Bierbach – Horst Cain, *Religion and Language of Easter Island: An Ethnolinguistic Analysis of Religious Key Words of Rapa Nui in Their Austronesian Context*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer 1996, 7-15.

to the souls of the deceased ones, i.e. spirits. *Mauri* (*mouri*) is another expression of this category and is characterized as “life principle”.³⁵ In Tongan *mo’ui* simply means “live, life, alive, living”.³⁶ The link between the soul and life principle is present outside Polynesia – cf. Latin *anima* and *animus* – as well.

The notion of **death** is generally expressed by means of *mate*. However, *mate* means not only “death, dead, die” but also “to be stunned, nearly dead, utterly sick”;³⁷ “to die, defeated, killed, unfortunate, fainting”.³⁸ In Marquesan, *mate* requires the attribute *nui* “big” (*mate nui* “death”) when referring to death. And likewise, *ora* means not only life but also health; and this root is used to derive the expression “saviour” – in Maori *kaiwhakaora*, in Marquesan *ha’apoho’e*, in Hawaiian *ho’ōla*, and in Samoan *fa’aola*. Tongan *fakamo’ui* is constructed analogically (causative *faka-* plus *mo’ui* “life, living”).

Conscience, a notion typical of Christian ethics, was strange to Polynesian ethics. The problem of its translation was usually solved with the aid of hyperonymy as witnessed by Maori which uses the expression *hinengaro* “seat of thoughts and emotions, desire”³⁹ in *Romans* 2,15: ... *me te whakaae tahi ano o ratou hinengaro* ... (“... their conscience also bearing witness ...”); Hawaiian likewise employs a neologism, namely *luna mana’o*, literally “boss of the mind”. The Marquesan translator expresses the idea of conscience in varying and indirect ways. In the *Acts* 24,16 we find: “And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men” – *O ia te pi’o e hano au e poho’e teka ko’e, i mua o te Etua, i mua o te tau enata*, translated literally as “That is the reason I am trying to live without errors before God and before people”. And in *Romans* 2,15 (... *O to atou iho kaituto io he koekoe e hakatio ana i to atou hana pe* ...) conscience is described as *kaituto io he koekoe* “a trap for the mind”.

The notion of **eternity** is constructed syntactically, cf. Tahitian *ora mure’ore* “living not a short life”, Maori *ora tonu* “living on and on”, Hawaiian *ola mau loa* “living very long”, Marquesan *poho’e mau anatu* “living long ever” (in the recently translated New Testament *etereno* from Latin *aeternus* is used), Samoan *ola fa’avavau* “living lasting on”, Tongan *mo’ui ta’e ngata* “living without end”.

Water was widely used for cleansing and purification in Polynesia, however, **baptism** established an entirely new ritual. Several alternatives

35 H. W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language...*, 197.

36 C. M. Churchward, *Tongan Dictionary...*, 369.

37 *Ibid.*, 343; H. W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language...*, 192.

38 M. K. Pukui – S. H. Elbert, *English-Hawaiian Dictionary...*, 211.

39 H. W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language...*, 51.

occur in the Polynesian Biblical translations – *bapetizo*, *papatema*, *papitaiso* – however, all of them are derived from the same source. Only the Maori translator resorted to the Polynesian word *iriiri* “to perform some ceremony over a newly born child”⁴⁰ perceived as a partial functional analogy, cf. *Kotahi Ariki, kotahi whakapono, kotahi iriiri* “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (*Ephesians* 4,5).

Sacrifice, whether prescribed or meant as a donation is a universal in the realm of religions and cults. The translators had no problems with the absence of equivalents but rather with their selection. *Mark* 12,33 mentions offerings and sacrifices: “And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” In the Maori translation we find periphrastic expressions *tahunga tinana* (literally “burnt bodies”) for offerings and *patunga tapu* (literally “sacred killings”) for sacrifices. In the same Hawaiian text only *mōhai* (with *kuni* “to burn”) is used. Samoan likewise replaces both offering and sacrifice with one term, i.e. *tāulaga*. In Marquesan offering as a gift is translated by means of *te tau taetae kaoha* “things given with love” and in Samoan by means of *mea alofa* “the thing of love”. In case of a prescribed sacrifice *utuna* seems to be more adequate in Marquesan; the latter correlates with Tahitian *tusia*. Tongan distinguishes *feilaulau* as a propitiatory sacrifice from *’inasi*, originally presentation of food to the Tu’itonga in a way that came to be regarded as inconsistent with the Christian religion.⁴¹

Love of the neighbour was obviously perceived by the Polynesians as something new. The universalization of the idea of human being had to overcome the original ethnocentrism inherent in monoethnic religions including Judaism. The Mangaians regarded the inhabitants of the outlying islands as evil spirits in the guise of humanity whom they can kill if the need arises.⁴² In the Greek Biblical text we find the term *plēsios* (Latin *proximus*) with which the English term „neighbour“ corresponds. In the Polynesian equivalents of the term neighbour, the internal form has been motivated by the physical proximity, for example Maori *hoa tata* “close friend” (*Matthew* 5,43), Hawaiian *hoa launa* “sociable friend”, Tahitian *ta’ata-tupu* “neighbouring man”, Marquesan *hoa* “friend”, Samoan *tuā’oi* “neighbour”, and Tongan *kaungā’api* “neighbour”. Love of the neighbour is the law extended by Christ to one’s enemy (*Matthew* 5,43-44: “Ye have

40 *Ibid.*, 79.

41 C. M. Churchward, *Tongan Dictionary...*, 561.

42 William Wyatt Gill, *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific*, London: Henry S. King & Co. 1876, 17.

heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies...”). The Polynesian vocabulary has the expression *aroha* (*aloha*, *a’oha*, *alofa*, *a’ofa* or *alo’ofa*, etc.), fully applicable in this context because it covers a large emotional scale from friendly love through pity, compassion, affectionate regard, yearning, and pity to kindness, and charity.

Heathens (Greek *ethnikoi*, Latin *ethnici*) were distinguished from Christians and called *tauiwi* “strange tribe, foreign race” in Maori, *kanaka ʻē* “other people” in Hawaiian, *telona* “publicans” in Tahitian, *tagata fa’apaupau* “frightening, weird people” in Samoan, *Senitaille* (from English “Gentiles”) in Tongan while Marquesan adopted the English word *eteni* (from “heathen”) or *po’i eteni* “heathen people”.

Miracle as a supernatural act was something new for the Polynesian languages. The Maori translator has devised the explanatory term *mea whakamīharo* “an astonishing thing”; in the Hawaiian Bible it is named *mea kupaianaha* “surprising, strange, wonderful, unaccountable thing”; the Marquesan Bible alternates *hana maha’o* “admirable thing” and *hana mana* “act resulting from mana”; Tongan likewise prefers using *mana* while Tahitian text contains *tapao* “signe, marque, figure”.⁴³

Genealogies were in Polynesia as important as in Israel and each Polynesian language has a detailed terminology of descent; the latter was a basis of individual and group identity. In no instance borrowing was felt necessary; in Maori genealogy is *whakapapa*, in Hawaiian *kū’auhau*, in Marquesan *matatetau*, in Tahitian *aihua’a*, *parau tupuna*, etc., in Samoan *gafa*, in Tongan *hohoko*.

Unlike Near East and Europe, the **priest** (*tohunga*, *tahuna*, *tahu’a*, *kahuna*, etc.) was competent both in things sacral and secular, being artisan, builder of houses and canoes, orator and teacher of traditional wisdom and history; another term that could be considered as a translational equivalent was *tāura*, *kāula*, *tau’a*, etc. with a slightly different functional spectrum including esoteric, prophetic, and healing abilities. **The elder of the people** were likewise esteemed. A good example of dealing with both the elder and the priests is supplied by *Luke 22,66*: “And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests ... came together” In the particular linguistic versions we find the following solutions: in Maori *I te aonga tonutanga o te ra, ka huihui nga kaumatua* (“elders”) *o te iwi, nga tohunga nui* (“chief priests”) ..., in Tahitian *E tei te aoraa ra, ua putupu-tu maira te feia pa’ari* (“old, wise, aged”), *e te mau tahu’a rarahi* (“chief priests”) ..., in Hawaiian *A ao ae la, akoakoa koke mai la ka poe lunakahiko* (“elders”) *o kanaka, a me na kahuna nui* (“chief priests”) ..., in

43 T. Jaussen, *Grammaire et dictionnaire de la langue tahitienne...*, 131.

Marquesan *I te popou'i tika, u putuputu mai te motuhaka o te tau kokoo'ua* (“elders”) *o te mata'einaa, te papa tau'a nui* (“chief priests”) ..., in Samoan *Ua ao, ona faapotopoto ai lea o le taupulega* (“elders”) *o le nuu, o le au ositaulaga sili* (“chief priests”) ..., in Tongan *Pe'a 'i he'ene 'aho hake, na'e tefua mai 'a kinautolu na'e kau ki he Fakataha Fakamātu'a 'o Isileli, 'o 'ikai ko e hou'eiki taula'eiki pē ...* (“elders”).

The Polynesians respected the elder (*kaumatua* in Maori) especially because of their rich experience and prudence. In Hawaiian *'aumakua*, phonetically corresponding to *kaumatua*, referred chiefly to family gods (obviously ancestral deities).

Marriage as a sacred Christian and monogamous institution required a completely new term and the translators usually adopted loanwords from English, French or Latin – *mare, mali, matirimonio*; but in Samoan we find *fa'aipoipoga*, an old word that had been reinterpreted to adjust to the new content. The Marquesan translator is more acutely than the others aware of the difference between Christian and Marquesan family life when he uses the syntactic construction *te noho te vahana me te vehine*, literally “living of man with a woman” as an additional explanation of the term *matirimonio* occurring in the same verse: *A haapeato otou nui te noho te vahana me te vehine. A haapi'i te tau hoa matiri vaana i to atou tekao voto. E haavā ho'i te Etua i te hana mako me te hana haapi'o i te matirimonio* “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (*Hebrews* 13,4).

A relative isolation of the Polynesian archipelagoes from each other explains the absence of **ethnonyms** that would cover the whole population of the territory. They appeared as a result of contacts with the visitors from overseas in the 19th century, e.g. *Māori* (in New Zealand, Cook Islands), *Maohi* (Tahiti), *'Enana* (Marquesas). In New Zealand the word *iwi* tended to be generalized and is defined by H. W. Williams as “nation, people”.⁴⁴ Tribal consciousness based upon descent was omnipresent. *Hapū* referred to a “section of an *iwi*, clan, secondary tribe”⁴⁵ but according to some anthropologists it is *hapū* that deserves to be regarded as tribe; *waka* (sometimes viewed as a relatively loose confederation) represented those tribes which derived their common descent from one of the eight canoes that according to the tradition arrived to New Zealand.⁴⁶ The term *ngāti* (*ngai, kai*) consisting of the plural particle *ngā* and *ati* “descendants”, widespread in Polynesia, is used as a part of tribal names

44 H. W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language...*, 80.

45 *Ibid.*, 36.

46 Te Rangī Hiroa, *The Coming of the Maori*, Wellington: Maori Purposes Fund Board – Whitcombe and Tombs 1962, 39.

and as it occurs in the quality of a component of ethnonyms in the Marquesan translation, e.g.: *Ohia ua tata te koina Pakate o te tau ati Iuta, ua fiti Ietu i Ierutaremi* “And the Jews’ Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem” (*John* 2,13). In Hawaiian, *mamo* is perceived as an equivalent of tribe, e.g. *na mamo o Ikelaela* “the children of Israel” (*Exodus* 1,13). The term *kama’āina* (literally “the child of the land”) excluded those who had been born somewhere else; however, a strict tribal organization of the Hawaiian society was a matter of past by the end of the 18th century.

Covetousness is often interpreted by the translators as hoarding goods and money, e.g. Maori *Whakakahoretia atu te mahi apo taonga...*; in Hawaiian being not consumed by the love of dollars: *E noho oukou me ka punikala ole...*; in Marquesan consuming something insatiably: *Umoi e kaikino otou...* “Let your conversation be without covetousness...” (*Hebrews* 13,5); The Samoan translator used *matape’ape’a* “greed” and in the Tongan text *mānumanu* “covetousness” is used.

Freedom or liberty is a highly abstract notion the content of which may vary both individually, culturally, and historically. Its translation into a culturally distant language is exacting and easier to carry out successfully upon a less abstract level – when we know freedom of what it is. B. Biggs was no doubt aware of this problem when he in his English-Maori dictionary listed 11 (partial) equivalents for the entry “free”,⁴⁷ without even mentioning “liberty” at all. I have selected as an example the verse *2 Corinthians* 3,17: “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” The least abstract one is obviously the Marquesan version: *O te Fatu ho’i te Kuhane. Me haatee te Kuhane o te Fatu i te enata, u koana i hua enata e hana na ia ta ia* (literally “The Spirit is the Lord. Where the Spirit of the Lord is ruling the man, this may do whichever he wants,”). A very similar device is used by the Marquesan translator in the verse *2 Peter* 2,19: *... e poho’e to atou kou’a na atou ta atou*. The sense of the Maori version is based upon the syntactic construction *tikanga herekore* “(custom) without guidance”: *Na, ko Ariki ko te Wairua ia; ko te wahi i noho ai te Wairua o te Ariki, kei reira te tikanga herekore*. The expression *herekore* is used in the verse *2 Peter* 2,19. In this verse Hawaiian version seems to identify similarity of freedom with the absence of restrictions (*noa* as the opposite of *tabu*): *A o ka Haku, oia ka Uhane; a ma kahi e noho ai ka Uhane o ka Haku, ua noa ia vahi*. Elsewhere the Hawaiian translator employs *luhi’ole* “absence of burden”. The Tahitian equivalent of freedom is *ti’amā*; however, its etymology is vague.

47 Bruce G. Biggs, *The Complete English-Maori Dictionary*, Auckland: Auckland University Press 1989, 78.

Large scale contacts between local and Western cultures rendered an expansion of the vocabulary of all involved Polynesian languages necessary. The tide of new phenomena and objects stimulated a far reaching reaction in the form of borrowing from European languages (chiefly from English and French but also from Biblical languages), semantic shifts, calques, affixal derivation, composition and periphrastic explanatory innovations. The success of the particular types of vocabulary expansion depended upon their efficiency, transparency, adequacy as well as prestige value.

Loanwords were preferred in those instances when the application of domestic terms to imported notions was felt to be for various reasons culturally disturbing. Paraphrase is explicative and transparent but for communicative reasons awkward and inefficient. It may be regarded as a transitional solution and this view is confirmed by pidgins. Thus *rop bilong blut* “vein”, *windo bilong ai* “cornea”, *gras bilong pisin* “feathers”, *anis bilong kaikai haus* “termite” and similar expressions had been very useful in the first phase of the existence of New Guinean Pidgin but this way of expanding the vocabulary has gradually been replaced by English loanwords that meet the demands of efficiency and precision of the communication.

RESUMÉ

Biblia v Polynézii. Prekonávanie kultúrnych rozdielov

Pri prekladani Biblie do polynézskych jazykov narážame prakticky na všetky typy prekladateľských problémov. Lingvistická a hlavne kultúrna i environmentálna vzdialenosť medzi Blízkym východom a tropickou Polynéziou je značná. Prekladateľ musí riešiť problém zachovania podstaty sakrálneho textu, ak chce Bibliu sprístupniť svojim recipientom. Základný problém spočíva v hľadaní adekvátnych ekvivalentov biblických termínov. Má k dispozícii tri hlavné metódy – explanatórne parafrázovanie, sémantickú modifikáciu alebo priame preberanie, pričom každý z týchto spôsobov má svoje výhody i nevýhody.

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