Translating the Bahá'í Writings into Languages other than English

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Abstract

Given its belief in the transformative power of the Word of God, the Bahá'í Faith places great importance on the translation of its sacred writings into as many languages as possible. Translations into languages other than English need to be approved by the National Spiritual Assembly of the country in which they are published, but are often initiated by individuals, meaning that institutions and individuals have distinct and complementary roles in the translation process. Most of these translations are from English versions—usually those produced by Shoghi Effendi—of the original Bahá'í writings in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. As linguists who have been involved in translating and reviewing translations of the writings, the authors have encountered a number of challenges in their translation work, including questions about spelling, terminology, and the politeness strategies employed in the original work, as well as idiosyncrasies of English usage. We illustrate these issues and possible approaches to dealing with them using the case of a short passage from Bahá'u'lláh's Writings translated into Japanese and Tok Pisin. It is hoped that this article will lead to exchanges among translators and reviewers and possibly to the development of a database of exegesis literature on the Writings and other aides to translators.

Résumé

Convaincue du pouvoir transformateur de la parole de Dieu, la foi bahá'íe accorde une grande importance à la traduction de ses écrits sacrés dans le plus grand nombre de langues possible. Les traductions dans des langues autres que l'anglais doivent être approuvées par l'assemblée spirituelle nationale du pays dans lequel elles sont publiées, mais elles résultent souvent d'initiatives individuelles. Les institutions et les individus jouent donc des rôles complémentaires dans le processus de traduction. La plupart des traductions sont réalisées à partir de versions anglaises—généralement celles de Shoghi Effendi—des écrits bahá'ís originaux en arabe, en persan et en turc. En tant que linguistes ayant participé à la traduction et à la révision de traductions de ces écrits, les auteurs ont rencontré un certain nombre de difficultés dans leur travail, notamment des questions relatives à l'orthographe, à la terminologie et aux formules de politesse utilisées dans l'œuvre originale, ainsi qu'à des particularités de l'usage anglais. Nous illustrons ces problèmes et de possibles solutions à l'aide d'un court passage des écrits de Bahá'u'lláh traduit en japonais et en tok pisin. Nous espérons que le présent article donnera lieu à des échanges entre traducteurs et réviseurs, et peut-être à la création d'une base de données de littérature exégétique relative aux Écrits

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ainsi qu'à d'autres ressources à l'intention des traducteurs.

Resumen
Dada su creencia en el poder transformador de la Palabra de Dios, la Fe Bahá'í pone gran importancia en la traducción de sus escrituras sagradas en tantos idiomas como sea posible. Traducciones a los idiomas que no sean inglés necesitan ser aprobadas por la Asamblea Espiritual Nacional del país donde son publicadas, pero frecuentemente son iniciadas por individuos, lo cual significa que las instituciones e individuos tienen papeles distintos y complementarios durante el proceso de traducción. La mayoría de estas traducciones son de las versiones en Inglés—usualmente aquellas producidas por Shoghi Effendi—de los Escritos originales bahá'ís en persa, árabe y turco. Como lingüistas que han estado involucrados en la traducción y revisión de las traducciones de los escritos, los autores han encontrado un número de retos en su trabajo de traducción, que incluyen preguntas acerca de autografía, terminología, y las estrategias de cortesía utilizadas en el trabajo original, asimismo, las idiosincrasias del uso de Inglés. Ilustramos estos asuntos y posibles abordajes de cómo tratarlos utilizando el caso de un corto pasaje de los escritos de Bahá'u'lláh traducido al Japonés y tok pisin. Se espera que este artículo conduzca a intercambios entre traductores y quienes revisan las traducciones y posiblemente al desarrollo de una base de datos de literatura de exégesis sobre los Escritos y otras formas de ayudar a los traductores.

Introduction

This paper represents the fruits of a joint research project, funded by Kansai University in Osaka, Japan. It is aimed at exploring the challenges of translating the Bahá'í writings into languages other than English, especially those used in societies that are not Western or Middle Eastern and in which familiarity with the teachings and Holy Writings of Islam and Christianity is not a given. The authors began by compiling a review of the literature outlining general problems encountered in this specific kind of translation work, as well as summarizing our own experiences in translating the writings into Japanese and Tok Pisin.

Then, to illustrate general and language-specific issues that arise in such work, we selected a short passage from Bahá'u'lláh's *Lawḥ-i-ibn-i-Dhi'b* (*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*) that has not yet been translated into either Japanese or Tok Pisin and translated it into these two languages. The passage (shown in Appendix A) was chosen for two reasons. First, it presented a variety of translating challenges, including terms that were difficult to translate or could be interpreted in multiple ways, as well as the names of people and places that might pose problems in transliteration or translation. Second, as linguists we were drawn to the fact that it touched on the burden of dealing with the many languages in the world and Bahá'u'lláh's teaching on the need for a universal language. The translations, shown in Appendix B (Japanese) and Appendix C (Tok Pisin), were made for use in public and private devotions, so both an appropriate style and accurate content were important

in these translations, and a conscious effort was made to avoid footnotes.

In this paper, when we talk about the "Bahá'í writings," we are referring to the canon of sacred texts that include the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, all written in Arabic, Persian, or, in the case of a small number of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings, in Ottoman Turkish. These texts are the only recognized scripture of the Bahá'í Faith, and therefore play an important part in private and communal prayer and worship. By 2010 the Research Department of the Bahá'í International Archives in Haifa had identified approximately 20,000 works written or dictated by Bahá'u'lláh, 30,000 by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and 2,000 by the Báb (Eschraghi, "Schwierigsten Künste" 72).[2] These works range from lengthy books to short letters.

The importance of translating these works is shown by the encouragement 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave to translators:

> Regarding the translation of the Books and Tablets of the Blessed Beauty, erelong will translations be made into every tongue, with power, clarity and grace. At such time as they are translated, conformably to the originals, and with power and grace of style, the splendors of their inner meanings will be shed abroad, and will illumine the eyes of all mankind. Do thy very best to ensure that the translation is in conformity with the original. (*Selections* 66)

A few works by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were translated into European languages by Western travelers and academics during Bahá'u'lláh's lifetime. The Bahá'ís began to make their own translations of the Sacred Writings during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the translation into English and publication of an increasing number of the most important works of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was an important priority of Shoghi Effendi during his Guardianship of the Faith.

In 1998, the Universal House of Justice stated that "the Sacred Writings and other literature of the Bahá'í Faith" had been translated into "over 800 . . . languages, major dialects and scripts" (qtd. in *Bahá'í World* 1043). Some of these are international languages such as French and Spanish, with nearly as much of the Bahá'í writings translated

2 The authors are indebted to Armin Eschraghi and have quoted him at length as he is one of the few academics to have discussed issues related to the translation of the Bahá'í writings into languages other than English. His 2010 annotated translation into German of Bahá'u'lláh's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* is noteworthy both for being a direct translation from the Arabic original with close attention paid to the English translation by Shoghi Effendi, rather than a translation from the English translation, and for its appendix with copious notes discussing the translation and historical points related to specific passages. These features clarify numerous passages that might be misinterpreted by German readers who have limited or no access to the Arabic original or to an understanding of the cultural and literary environment in which Bahá'u'lláh composed it.

into them as is available in English, while translations into a great many other languages are limited to one or two short prayers. Of course, the quality of the translations varies, as does their acceptance and use by target language communities. Nevertheless, for all practical purposes, these translations are seen and used by believers as Sacred Writings in the same way that the original texts are by their Arabic- and Persian-speaking counterparts.

The authors of this article are linguists who have been involved in translating and reviewing translations of the Bahá'í writings, and who undertook a joint research project to explore some of the specific challenges that we have faced in our work. Mary Noguchi works with Japanese, while Craig Alan Volker has experience with several languages, including Tok Pisin, the most widely spoken language in Papua New Guinea. We each translated a short selection from Shoghi Effendi's English translation of Bahá'u'lláh's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* into our respective languages of expertise and then used a back translation technique to consult with each other, in order to improve the quality of our translations and discuss the challenges we faced.

Tok Pisin is an interesting language to compare and contrast to Japanese for a number of reasons, the most important of which is the fact that Japan and Papua New Guinea are both Asia-Pacific island countries and are united by what Shoghi Effendi called a "Spiritual Axis" (*Japan* 89). Furthermore, their cultures are neither Western nor Middle Eastern, although the educated members of both societies are very well informed about the rest of the world and take a great deal of interest in it. Moreover, the average person in these countries has little or no knowledge of Islam or the Qur'án.

On the other hand, Japan and Papua New Guinea are vastly divergent societies: Japan has one of the world's strongest economies and a literacy rate of almost 100%, while Papua New Guinea is a developing nation in which much of the population is illiterate. While Japan is culturally quite homogeneous, Papua New Guinea's population of between eight and ten million speaks over 800 languages, making it one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse nations on earth (Jackson and Standish n.p.). The Bahá'í communities in the two countries also differ, both in numbers and relative strengths and weaknesses. The authors therefore felt that the challenges of translating the Bahá'í writings into Japanese and Tok Pisin could illustrate a range of issues faced by other translators into languages other than English, especially those of non-Western and non-Middle Eastern cultures.

We hope that this contribution will encourage a wider conversation among translators of the Bahá'í writings about the service they render, and will help Bahá'í individuals and institutions in a wide range of linguistic contexts become more aware of the nature of the translated writings with which they interact daily.

The Transformative Power of the Word of God

In order to comprehend the role of translated texts in the Bahá'í community, we first need to consider the concept of the transformative power of the Word of God as understood by Bahá'ís. All the world's major religions have sacred texts that are given particular significance in the religious community, with Hinduism upholding the Bhagavad Gita as well as the Vedas, Zoroastrianism honoring the Avesta, Buddhism cherishing a number of sutras, Judaism the Hebrew Bible, Christianity the Bible, and Islam the Qur'án. The well-known beginning of the Gospel according to John in the New Testament highlights the importance religions have attached to the Divine Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

However, many religious traditions do not encourage lay persons to read and comprehend these texts. For example, in Tibetan Buddhism, spinning a prayer wheel is deemed to have the same merit as chanting a sutra or prayer ("Prayer Wheel" n.p.). In Japan, sutras are often chanted in Sanskrit or classical Japanese that is not readily accessible to the lay person. A number of other religions also have liturgical languages that are accorded special religious status, and often not spoken or even understood by the laity, for example, Sanskrit for Hindus, Hebrew for non-Israeli Jews, and Coptic for Egyptian Christians.

As Armin Eschraghi ("Schwierigsten Künste" 76) has pointed out, one reason for this emphasis on liturgical language may be that having a monopoly on the knowledge of a sacred language can be one basis for the authority of religious leaders. In contrast, the Bahá'í community places value on what Eschraghi calls "a democratization of knowledge," with an emphasis on universal literacy and the responsibility of individual believers to interact with the writings daily. This responsibility is reinforced by the fact that the Bahá'í Faith has no clergy or other group of people who are in a position to offer authoritative explanations of the writings; instead, Bahá'u'lláh enjoined universal education ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 99) and made it a duty of all believers to read the texts for themselves each morning and evening (*Kitáb-i-Aqdas* 149).

One compelling reason for this emphasis on the individual's interaction with the Sacred Writings in the Bahá'í Faith is Bahá'u'lláh's teaching that the Holy Word has transformative power. For example, He writes: "We bear witness that through the power of the Word of God every leper was cleansed, every sickness was healed, every human infirmity was banished" (*Gleanings* 36:3) The Universal House of Justice frequently emphasizes the ways in which this transformative power has a real effect in the world, for example noting that "[a]s a person cultivates the habit of study and deep reflection upon the Creative Word, this process of transformation reveals itself in an

ability to express one's understanding of profound concepts and to explore spiritual reality in conversations of significance" (29 Dec. 2015).[3]

In recent years, the Universal House of Justice has continued to stress the transformative power of the Word of God by encouraging the use of a series of books published by the Ruhi Institute in global efforts towards expansion and consolidation of the Bahá'í community. These books are designed to help individuals fulfill their "twofold moral purpose: to attend to one's own spiritual and intellectual growth and to contribute to the transformation of society" (*Reflections* v). The key to this transformation is a focus on understanding quotations from the Holy Writings and applying them to one's daily life. In describing the learning process that the worldwide Bahá'í community has undergone in its focus on the Institute Process during the previous twenty-five years, the Universal House of Justice in its 2021 Riḍván Message writes that it is based on a "vision of personal and collective transformation occurring simultaneously, founded on study of the Word of God and an appreciation of each person's capacity to become a protagonist in a profound spiritual drama."

The Role of Translation in the Bahá'í Faith

Given the emphasis in the Bahá'í Faith on spiritual and societal transformation through a growing understanding of the Divine Word, access to the writings in one's native language is vital to the Bahá'í community. There is thus no liturgical language in the Bahá'í Faith, nor is special status given to the languages used by its Founder and in which its sacred texts were first written. This is in contrast, for example, to the status of Arabic in Islam. Because of the central role of the Qur'án in Islam and because it was revealed in Arabic, many Muslims try to memorize the Qur'án in Arabic, even if they do not speak the language and may have little understanding of what they are memorizing. In spite of ḥadíths claiming that during the lifetime of Muḥammad, the opening surah of the Qur'án was translated into Persian by Salman the Persian, a companion of Muḥammad, and the third surah into Greek as part of a letter from Muḥammad to the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (Tibawi 5–6), the tradition of *i'jaz* ("inimitability") took root. This tradition held that the Qur'án was the literal Word of God, and therefore untranslatable. This, in turn, meant that "translations" of the Qur'án could only be regarded as commentaries or explanations (Tibawi 15).

In contrast, in the Bahá'í Faith, the learning of Arabic and Persian might be seen as an important academic tool for the study of the original texts, but the use of these languages is not required

3 It should be noted here that, while the writings and talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the writings of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice are not considered the Word of God in the same way as the Writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, they are also treated with great reverence by Bahá'ís.

for private or public devotions of any kind. Indeed, few Bahá'ís who do not have a Middle Eastern background learn Arabic or Persian, and almost all devotions and studies of the Bahá'í writings are conducted in a language commonly used by the individual or community. These translations of the writings are treated as holy texts, and are memorized, chanted, and studied as such.

This role for translated texts is based on statements in the Bahá'í writings themselves, such as the aforementioned affirmation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The belief in the ability of the Holy Spirit to bring enlightenment through translations into "every tongue" is not unlike the concept of "heart language" embraced by some Protestant Christian groups, whose attempts to translate the Bible into all languages are motivated by their belief in the special effect that hearing the Word of God in one's own language has on people's "centers of emotion" ("What Do You Mean" n.p.).

In addition to the spiritual uplift-ment of individuals and communities provided by the translated writings, the tradition of striving to have the translations replicate the high literary standards of the original writings means that they can act as tools for the general education of the community. Both Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice have said that translations are meant to elevate the believers' general educational level, enabling them to follow the Bahá'í principle of independent investigation of truth and avoid being oppressed or misled by others (Volker, "Translating" 71).[4]

For these reasons, Bahá'í texts are translated into the languages of societies with very different linguistic ecologies. In many countries, such as Japan, translations of the sacred writings of older religions have existed for centuries, so there are established literary standards for scripture which Bahá'í translators need to follow. In others, such as Luxembourg, there is an established written literature in the national language, Letzeburgesch, but the Bahá'í writings are the first scriptures of any religion to be translated into that language. In yet other cases, such as the Nalik language of Papua New Guinea, the Bahá'í writings were the first written literature of any sort in a previously unwritten language, so an orthography—a way of representing sounds in a standard written form—had to be established and taught to the community before translations could begin to be used (Volker, *Nalik Language* 15). Each of these different scenarios presents different challenges and requirements of which translators must be aware before beginning their translation.

In the case of languages such as Japanese, with established translations of scripture from older religions,

4 See, for example, Shoghi Effendi's letter of 14 December 1938 (qtd. in Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, a Memorandum dated 18 September 1988) and the letter dated 20 September 1973 from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Papua New Guinea.

in order for the new translations of Bahá'í writings to be accepted, established wordings and terminology should probably be retained unless there is a good reason for not using them. Very often an early translation of sacred scripture has become the basis for elevated styles in the language, as was the case for the King James Bible and its impact on English. These elevated styles should be examined and used wherever possible, since, as the Universal House of Justice pointed out in a letter in 1985 (qtd. in Research Department, Memorandum dated 18 September 1988), a colloquial translation of the highly literary styles of the Persian and Arabic Bahá'í writings would be unfaithful to the original. Some issues related to this in connection to translations into Japanese are discussed later.

In a society with established literacy in a second (often colonial) language, but not its first language, the translation of the Bahá'í writings into the society's first language will need to draw on established norms in the second language and any related or neighboring languages. This is the case for Luxembourg, where education has traditionally been conducted in French and German, and a written literature in the first language of most people, Letzeburgesch, has only been widely used in formal education in recent decades. In this case, the absence of both an established corpus of written literature and a translation of the Bible means that the translation of the Bahá'í writings will be a contribution to the establishment of an elevated written style for the language.

For languages that do not have an official orthography or written literature, such as the majority of the indigenous and creole languages of the global South, translations of the Bahá'í writings can be an important step towards establishing a written form of the language and thus foster pride in the language and culture the translation represents. In such cases, translators should identify characteristics of elevated oral styles, such as ritual oratory, and adapt them and the vocabulary they use for the writings. In some cases, as with the Nalik language, the orthography that is adopted for Bahá'í translations will become the recognized norm for writing in the language. Care must be taken in creating such an orthography so that it is phonemically accurate and conforms to speakers' preferences.

No matter what the developmental status of the language is, there are certain standards of faithfulness that translators should try to uphold when translating the Bahá'í writings into it. Foremost among these is accurately conveying the writings' content. Shoghi Effendi has written that "literary considerations are, no doubt, important, but are quite secondary when compared to the ideas and thoughts constituting the Message itself" (14 Oct. 1936).

Bahá'í translator Jeffrey Gruber points out that one facet of accuracy is to avoid diluting the strength of the original writings (2). He discusses Bahá'í translations into many African

languages—in which the strong, focused, and direct speech of the original as accessed through Shoghi Effendi's English translations is often rendered into more general and less figurative language—by using the example of Bahá'u'lláh's prayer "God grant that the light of unity may envelop the whole earth" being translated as the equivalent of "may God make the opinion of the people of the world one."

Faithfulness in translation also requires that the translator try to reflect the stylistic beauty of the original. 'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses the need for both accuracy and beauty in translations: they should be made "conformably to the originals, and with power and grace of style" (*Selections* 66). Between these two ideals of beauty and conformity there would seem to be a dynamic tension; this will be a recurring topic in the following discussions of translations into Japanese and Tok Pisin and in the use of back translation as a tool for examining issues related to faithfulness.

Related to this is the above-mentioned role played by Bahá'í translations as tools for literary as well as religious education. Noting that "[b]ooks of Scripture themselves mould the language in which they are written" (3 Feb. 1988), the Universal House of Justice has echoed the desire expressed by Shoghi Effendi that his Bahá'í translations should help English-speaking children and youth to "use the English language effectively for thought and for expression" (14 Dec. 1938). Presumably the same should be the case for translations of the writings into other languages.

It should be noted that while accuracy and faithfulness mean accuracy in conveying, and faithfulness to, the original content, they do not necessarily mean that the translation must evoke the same response as the original did, which might require significant departures from the original text. For example, the approach favored by Eugene Nida and many other modern translators of the Bible such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics / Wycliffe Bible Translators prioritizes fitting the translation into the semantics and worldview of the audience; these translators will therefore sometimes use the names of local deities for Satan or translate cultural concepts from the Middle East into the culture of the target community. An example of this approach is the Bible Society translation of Psalms 149:3 ("let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and the harp") into Tok Pisin with a phrase describing people making musical praises beating a Melanesian slit gong (*garamut*) and a New Guinea handheld drum (*kundu*). There is nothing to suggest that this is an appropriate general approach for the translation of the Bahá'í writings.

Nevertheless, there are instances where such cultural adaptation is unavoidable. For example, the English translation of the end of verse no. 61 of Bahá'u'lláh's Arabic Hidden Words reads, "and from the chalice of imperishable glory quaff the peerless wine." Several problems arose when this verse was being translated into

the Nalik language of Papua New Guinea. The first issue was with the word "chalice." The closest equivalent to a European or Asian "chalice" in that society is a *winwaam*, which is a shell traditionally used as a cup for ceremonial purposes. Moreover, in the Nalik translations of the Bahá'í writings, "glory" has generally been translated as *malagaan*, the word used to refer to the end of the Nalik memorial ceremonies for the dead, when the spirit of a deceased person's soul reaches its most glorious apex in this world and begins to ascend to paradise. This, too, is a cultural adaptation. Finally, although wine has now been introduced to Papua New Guinea, given its absence in traditional culture and its modern connections to Christian communion, it was decided to translate "peerless wine" with the equivalent of "pure medicine" (*makara tuning*), given that the meaning of the word for medicine (*makara*) includes herbal medicines to ensure both physical and spiritual health. Thus, the resulting translation, "*ma pan a winwaam doxo na malagaan a zitung, gu na imin a makara tuning*" (literally, "with the beautiful shell cup of everlasting glory, drink the pure medicine") contained several cultural adaptations.

Thus, while translators must strive to convey the power and beauty of the original writings as faithfully as they can, they are in some ways doomed to failure. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that "[a] translation is like unto a husk, whereas the original is even as a pith, for the [divine] phrases are of the utmost eloquence and clarity, and it is not possible to render them [perfectly]" (*Yádnámiy-i-Miṣbáḥ-i-Munír* 390).

Nonetheless, translators of the Bahá'í writings are asked to recreate the sacred scriptures of their religion in the target language to the best of their ability with "power, clarity, and grace," their success being measured against the extent to which "the splendours of their inner meanings" are expressed and "the eyes of all mankind" are "illuminated" (*Selections* 66). To do this, they need to both convey the content and figurative strength of the original texts and use an acceptably high standard of the language, while remaining heedful of the sociolinguistic environments of both the language in which the writings were originally composed and the language into which they are translating. In doing so, they should keep in mind that the translated texts will both be used in spiritual practices and contribute to developing an appreciation of a written literary style in the emerging Bahá'í communities which they serve.

General Translation Issues

There are certain issues that face translators of the Bahá'í writings into all languages. These include the concept of a "perfect translation," the lack of suitable reference and resource material, decisions related to orthography and transliteration, the translation of set phrases, the use (or non-use) of explanations or footnotes, and problems related to English, rather than Arabic

or Persian, phrasing. The first of these issues will be considered in this section, while the others will be addressed in our analysis of the translations of the short selection from Bahá'u'lláh's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* and the subsequent summary of issues discovered in previous literature.

Given that the Word of God is, by definition, perfect, there is a tendency to try to find the one perfect translation of that Word. Perhaps as a result of that search, there is also a tendency to view the evaluation of a translation as a binary choice, saying that it is either "perfect and correct" or "imperfect and incorrect," rather than recognizing that translations need to be placed on a continuum, from "poor" to "excellent," and that different translations are needed for different purposes. It is possible for a translation made for one purpose to be excellent for that purpose, but inadequate for another.

Most translations of the Bahá'í writings today are made for private or public devotional or deepening purposes. In such translations, endless footnotes and comments about alternative wording would interrupt the flow of the meditative state that these passages are meant to instill. Where explanations are needed for a particular target audience, these are best incorporated into the text itself. In this type of translation, the use of a high literary standard without unnecessary and unnatural stylistic influence from the Arabic or Persian original is also important.

In contrast, scholarly translations are often meant to act as exegesis with a focus on the content of the original and the context in which it was written. In such works, analyses of the original vocabulary, together with footnotes to give historical, cultural, or linguistic background, are important tools to help the reader, and literary concerns will be secondary to these. Neither approach is better or worse or more or less faithful to the original. Each has its place.

It is natural for Bahá'í translators of the writings to look to the approach taken in the English translations of Shoghi Effendi. These have a special status in the Bahá'í Faith since, in his role as Guardian, Shoghi Effendi was the authorized interpreter of the writings. This has led many Bahá'ís to regard his translations as "perfect." It should be pointed out that this is not a claim that the Guardian himself ever seems to have made. On the contrary, while he asserted that his comments on the writings and explanations of their content were authoritative, he referred to his translation into English of a work by Bahá'u'lláh as "one more attempt" (qtd. in Bahá'u'lláh, Kitáb-i-Íqán foreword). Through a letter from his secretary dated 14 August 1930 (qtd. in Research Department, Memorandum 1988), he stated categorically that "[t]he translations will continue to vary as more and better translations are made. Shoghi Effendi does not consider even his own translations as final."

As Armin Eschraghi ("Schwierigsten Künste" 98) points out, the Guardian's English translations "did not come to him in some kind of divine revelation so that all he would need to do was

write them down. To insist on the latter explanation would denigrate the great sacrifice of time and the tireless dedication that Shoghi Effendi gave to translating the Holy Writings."[5] He consulted with others and used their suggestions and corrections to improve his translations, acknowledging their assistance. An example of this was his acceptance of George Townshend's observation on the nuances of the different possessive forms in English, so that he changed his original wording of the English translation of a commonly used healing prayer from "Thy remembrance" and "Thy love" to "remembrance of Thee" and "[n]earness to Thee" (Eschraghi "Schwierigsten Künste" 100).[6]

In this regard it is also important to point out that occasionally Shoghi Effendi left out a word that was present in the original. Eschraghi has even pointed out a few rare instances where either a mistranslation was made or where a quote by an Iranian poet was mistakenly attributed to Bahá'u'lláh (Eschraghi, "Schwierigsten Künste" 96–97). When such details were drawn to Shoghi Effendi's attention, he corrected them in subsequent editions. Examples of this are the three revisions he made to his English rendition of The Hidden Words after his initial translation in 1923 (100).

Shoghi Effendi's translations of the writings were primarily designed for devotional use and were therefore made with careful attention to the style of language and largely without footnotes. This was understandable, as the young community in the West at that time had very few translations of the sacred texts to use in private or communal devotions. Shoghi Effendi left the less urgent work of scholarly translations to others. He explained this himself in his forward to his 1925 English translation of The Hidden Words: "The present edition of *Hidden Words* is a somewhat free translation primarily intended for devotional purposes. For a more literal translation, with notes explanatory of Oriental mystical terms and references, readers are referred to the edition published in Cairo under the direction of Mrs. Stannard in 1921" (i). With these words, Shoghi Effendi left the door open for other translations filling different needs, even of works that he himself had translated (Eschraghi "Schwierigsten Künste" 95).

Nonetheless, the Guardian's English translations have come to be accepted as the basis for translations into other languages and today, it is the policy of the Universal House of Justice, based on guidance from the Guardian, that translations into languages other than English should be based on English translations. However, the policy leaves translators free to consult the originals, and even encourages them to do so (16 Sep. 1992).

This policy allows translators today to take advantage of both the original language texts (for those translators able to read them), and the insights to

5 Translation from the German by Volker.

6 See Hofman, *George Townsend* 55f, 58.

be gleaned from Shoghi Effendi's translations and from other official translations into English made following the standard he set. This was, of course, not always possible. During ʿAbdu'l-Bahá's time, when nothing comparable to the Guardian's English translations existed, He directed Bahá'ís to translate the writings directly from the original languages: "Wise souls who have mastered and studied perfectly the Persian, Arabic, and other foreign languages, or know one of the foreign languages, must commence translating Tablets and books containing the proofs of this Revelation" (*Tablets* 54).

However, after Shoghi Effendi began releasing English translations, a practice developed of basing translations into other languages on his English translations, without reference to the original writings. This was initially done because of a lack of believers outside the Middle East with a suitable command of Arabic and Persian. However, both of the authors have noticed that in their communities, a feeling has developed among many Bahá'ís that the translations by Shoghi Effendi are somehow clearer than the original writings and that it would therefore be a mistake to translate directly from the original texts. This is an argument that Shoghi Effendi himself does not seem to have ever made.

In fact, ʿAbdu'l-Bahá suggested that ideally, translation of the writings into English be done by a committee of two bilingual and educated Persians and two bilingual and educated Americans. Writing through his secretary to Adalbert Mühlschlegel in 1932, Shoghi Effendi repeated 'Abdu'l-Bahá's view that it would be ideal to translate from the original languages:

> He is surely very sorry that not knowing Persian you cannot go to the very original. He sincerely hopes that before long we will have some of the younger members of the German Bahá'ís who would make translation their life-work, and with that object in mind make a thorough study of Persian and Arabic. They would surely be rendering a wonderful service to their nation as well as to the Faith as a whole. (*Light of Divine Guidance* 40)

While such scholars are now at work in German-speaking Europe, they are still not available in many other countries, which must continue to depend on translations from English, often by translators who have little or no knowledge of the original languages. This is certainly the case in Japan and Papua New Guinea, the two communities being examined in this paper. Moreover, the lack of the kind of extensive exegesis available to translators and scholars of the Bible and the Qur'án means that translators of the Bahá'í writings in these countries often work in a vacuum, without reference to the original texts to clarify the semantics of certain words and phrases, and often without a clear understanding of the cultural and religious environment in which Bahá'u'lláh and ʿAbdu'l-Bahá were living.

Under such conditions, translators may feel a need to produce translations that are literally true to the English translations of Shoghi Effendi, to the extent that in Japanese, for example, attempts have been made to make Shoghi Effendi's use of capital letters in English somehow evident in the Japanese translation, even though capitalization is a characteristic only of languages with European alphabets and does not exist in Arabic, Persian, or Japanese. In other languages, translations have been criticized for not adhering strictly to the punctuation of Shoghi Effendi's English, or (in the case of European languages) for not capitalizing pronouns referring to God, which is a particularity of traditional English orthography and not common in most other European languages.

Translators of the writings into languages other than English therefore have a number of issues to keep in mind. First, they need to be aware of the purpose of their translation. As mentioned above, different translations are needed for different purposes, and while a translation made for one purpose may be excellent for that purpose, it may be inadequate for another. When making translations for devotional purposes, which is the most common case, translators will have to identify stylistic norms in the target language that are appropriate to the elevated language used in Arabic and Persian by the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and ʿAbdu'l-Bahá. As discussed later, this includes identifying standard Biblical and Quranic translations to use in quotations. It may also include following Shoghi Effendi's lead and adopting a slightly archaic form of the target language, which can be seen as somewhat equivalent to the form of the original languages used in the writings.[7] In addition, those making translations for devotional purposes should eschew footnotes, comments on possible alternate wording and long explanations of background information that would be unfamiliar to the target audience.

Secondly, they must ascertain whether they will be able to translate directly from Arabic or Persian (with reference to any translation into English by Shoghi Effendi) or whether, as is more often the case, they will translate from an authorized translation, preferably one by Shoghi Effendi. If using an English translation to make a tertiary translation, they will need to ascertain to what extent there are human, online, or other

7 For example, a letter dated 2 December 1988 from the Universal House of Justice to Maison d'Editions Bahá'íes states: "With regard to your question about the style of English used in the translation of Bahá'í prayers, we are asked to point out that finding an adequate style in English for expressing beautifully the poetic, metaphorical and allusive style of many of the Bahá'í Scriptures is not easy. The Persian and Arabic of the Bahá'í Writings are themselves considerably different from the current styles and usages in those languages" (qtd. in Research Department, *Translations and Provisional Translations*).

resources available to help them make reference to the Arabic and Persian originals to resolve ambiguities or questions arising from the nineteenth century Middle Eastern cultural context in which the Bahá'í writings appeared. Translators should refer to academic analyses of the writings, with attention to specific words and how they have been translated into English, especially by Shoghi Effendi, when such resources exist. It is hoped that in the future, more such reference works will be written and made available for translators to refer to.

Thirdly, translators should strive to follow the recommendations that the Guardian made for "every believer who wishes to adequately understand, and intelligently read, the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh," to gain "a sound knowledge of the history and tenets of Islam—the source and background of their Faith—and approach reverently and with a mind purged from preconceived ideas the study of the Qur'án" (Shoghi Effendi, *Advent* 49). Because the Bahá'í Faith originated in an Islamic cultural milieu, and because Bahá'ís consider the Qur'án the only absolutely authenticated revealed scripture prior to the Bábí and Bahá'í revelations, in numerous places Shoghi Effendi stressed the importance of studying the Qur'án and the history and tenets of Islam, so that, as the Universal House of Justice states in a letter to all the National Spiritual Assemblies of Europe, "the friends would have a background against which to study the Bahá'í Writings" (qtd. in Hornby no. 1892).[8] While these comments were directed to Bahá'ís living in the West, they are perhaps even more pertinent to believers in countries such as Japan and Papua New Guinea that are even further removed from historical and cultural contact with Islamic societies. Of course, if the Guardian emphasized the importance of an understanding of the Qur'án and Islam for ordinary believers, such understanding is arguably even more important for translators who have taken up the challenge of presenting the writings to those who do not have access either to the original Persian and Arabic writings or to English translations. In both Japan and Papua New Guinea there are relatively few opportunities to obtain such training and these topics are rarely covered in depth in Bahá'í meetings or study material.

While translators of Bahá'í writings may be relieved to know that even the Guardian did not consider his translations perfect, they should nonetheless aim to produce the best translations possible in terms of both accuracy and beauty. One problem they face is a lack of research on translation techniques

8 Other places where the importance of the study of Islam and the Qur'án are stressed include the letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to individual believers on 23 November 1934 and on 2 December, 1935 (qtd. in "Deepening"), and the Universal House of Justice letter dated 26 September 1969 to all National Spiritual Assemblies of Europe (qtd. in Hornby no. 1892).

related to specific issues of concern in dealing with Bahá'í texts as well as analyses of existing translations in terms of how issues have been dealt with. Moreover, when new translations of the writings are published in English or other languages, explanatory information on the techniques or issues involved is usually not provided. (The discussion later in this article is a modest example of what this might look like.) Therefore, unless translators can consult with those who made the existing translations, they are generally left on their own.

One possible resource for translators in this situation is translations of the Bible or Qur'án into the target language, where they exist. These can be examined to determine how various terms have been translated; following these conventions may make the Bahá'í works seem familiar to those of different religious backgrounds. For example, the word "Say," which appears in many Bahá'í prayers and writings (e.g., "Say: Praised be God!" The Báb, *Selections* 217) and implies that God has instructed the Manifestation to convey specific information or a commandment, is used in a similar context in the Qur'án. A translator could therefore rely on the wording used in Quranic translations in the target language to represent the same word in the Bahá'í writings. In doing so, however, care must be taken to ensure that the contexts and usage are indeed the same, and also to avoid conflating concepts that may differ between religious traditions. In addition, translators need to be aware of the practice of some Bible translators of converting Middle Eastern cultural concepts such as measurements, food, and currency into terms that are used in the society of the target language and will therefore be more familiar to readers (see the earlier example of Psalms 149:3). Bahá'í translators must ask themselves to what extent, if any, it is appropriate to remove the Central Figures of their faith from their cultural environment in this way and reinterpret not only their words, but the metaphors and images that they used.

An example of this dilemma triggered a long debate when The Hidden Words was translated into the Nalik language. The translators, Michael Homerang and Craig Volker, spent considerable time considering how to translate verses 55 and 56 from the Arabic Hidden Words, which both discuss gold ("for with fire We test the gold" and "Thou dost wish for gold"). There are deposits of gold in New Ireland Province, but before they were discovered by Australian colonizers in the twentieth century, the metal was not valued by indigenous people and there was not even a word in Nalik for gold. The translators therefore needed to decide whether to use the English word "gold," to culturally translate the image using the indigenous word for shell money (which even today is a sign of wealth used for bride price,[9] funeral, and land transaction payments), or to

9 A payment made by the husband's family or clan to the bride's family or clan.

weaken the image by using a Nalik expression equivalent to "wealth" or "material goods." The translators ended up using the English word "gold" because, as Homerang stated at the time, Nalik people today are familiar with Western and Asian uses of gold as a sign of wealth and some even work in local gold mines. Moreover, Homerang noted that Bahá'u'lláh would never have handled shell money, and he wanted to be faithful to the cultural practices with which Bahá'u'lláh would have been familiar and to recognize Him in the translation as a real person who came from a real place with its own cultural practices and references.

The above issues are mainly the concern of individuals who translate Bahá'í writings, but it should be noted that translators normally work under the National Spiritual Assembly or another administrative body of the country they reside in, with individuals and institutions playing complementary roles in the translation process. This process will be outlined in the next section, but a few general issues that institutions in charge of translations should be aware of are presented below.

First, when administrative bodies appoint translators, they should try to appoint a team that will use the consultative method suggested by ʻAbdu'l-Bahá (see above) wherever possible. They should also avoid micromanaging the translations produced by a qualified team that they have chosen, following the advice of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany in a letter written in 1982 (qtd. in Eschraghi "Schwierigsten Künste" 9)

> It is not possible for a National Spiritual Assembly to undertake the work of translation itself. It must, therefore, choose a group of translators in whom it has confidence, and leave them free to work in the way they best can. Translation is a very difficult art—an art in which absolute perfection is unattainable. However good a translation, there will always be those who would have preferred it otherwise, for taste, which is undefinable, plays such a large part in such judgments. Having given the task to its translation committee, a National Assembly must, therefore, resist temptation to interfere in its work.

While this does not mean that a National Spiritual Assembly should neglect its role of deciding whether to approve a translation based on the criteria of faithfulness to the content of the original and the use of an appropriate style, it does mean that its decisions should not be based simply on an assessment of the translators' literary taste. Any reviewing process must take into consideration the fact that there is no perfect translation and that any translation, even one by Shoghi Effendi, might be improved upon or changed depending on the use to which it will be put.

Having described a number of general issues translators and institutions

face, we will now move on to give a brief description of how the Bahá'í writings are translated into languages other than English, using as examples the two languages under discussion in this paper and describing both the history of translation into these languages and the systems currently in place in Japan and Papua New Guinea.

The Process and History of Developing Translations of the Writings

Japanese

Japanese is one of the world's most used languages, being ranked number thirteen by both *Ethnologue* and *Berlitz* in terms of the number of people who speak it. The first Japanese people who accepted the Bahá'í Faith were immigrants to Hawaii and the U.S. mainland in the early 1900s, while Bahá'u'lláh's teachings were introduced to Japan itself by travel teachers in 1909 and by American pioneers, including Hand of the Cause Agnes Alexander, in 1914 (Alexander). Although the teaching work in Japan was originally conducted in Esperanto and English, by 1915, a local magazine contained an article about the Faith that included a translation of the Faith's twelve principles[10] into Japanese. In her history of the early years of the Faith in Japan, Ms. Alexander notes that by the spring of 1919, five short publications had been translated into Japanese by different groups and individuals and made available in print (27).

That same year, two young Bahá'ís started the first Japanese Bahá'í magazine, *The Star of the East* (東の星 *[Higashi no Hoshi]*), which featured a Japanese (and Esperanto) translation of Bahá'u'lláh's words "Ye are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch" on the cover, as well as a Japanese translation of one of the Persian Hidden Words on the first page (Alexander 38–39). The first complete translation of The Hidden Words into Japanese was made by one of these young Bahá'ís, Yuri Mochizuki, who apparently worked from a translation into French. It was published in 1937 (108).

Since then, many of the major works of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have been translated into Japanese by a variety of believers or, in some cases, by non-Bahá'í professional translators on commission, and they are now available in print and online. For many years, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Japan has been responsible for reviewing translations, which have been made almost exclusively from English translations of the works, without reference to the original Persian or Arabic texts. The quality and style of these translations varies considerably.

10 In His talks in Europe and North America, 'Abdu'l-Bahá often explained a number of Bahá'u'lláh's main teachings in terms of eleven or twelve principles. These were compiled into a list of twelve principles and translated into Japanese. They are still widely used in pamphlets and other materials in Japan today.

Tok Pisin

Tok Pisin, an English-based pidgin-creole language, is the most widely spoken lingua franca for the eight to ten million overwhelmingly indigenous people who live in Papua New Guinea, a South Pacific Melanesian country with more than 830 distinct languages—more than any other country in the world (Eberhard et al.). Together with English and Hiri Motu (another pidgin language based on the language traditionally spoken near the national capital, Port Moresby), it is one of the three *de facto* national languages of Papua New Guinea, and is the main language used for inter-ethnic communication in most parts of the country. Tok Pisin is increasingly used as a home language, especially in families with parents of different ethnic backgrounds, and the number of children who acquire it as either one of their native languages or even their only native language is increasing rapidly.

Tok Pisin developed in the nineteenth century on ships and plantations in which Melanesians speaking many mutually unintelligible languages were suddenly brought together as crews and laborers. Because of this, the grammar of Tok Pisin is based on commonalities among the Austronesian languages spoken in the Melanesian islands of the southwest Pacific, where its first speakers came from. Although most of the vocabulary is derived from English, the pronunciation and semantic range of words reflect Melanesian rather than English usage. The word *gras*, for example, comes from English "grass," but can mean "hair" and "fur" as well as "grass," and is used in a number of compound expressions that are calques from indigenous languages, such as *as gras* ("grass skirt," literally "arse grass"), *gras nating* ("weeds," literally "grass nothing"), and *mausgras* ("beard," literally "mouth grass"). In addition to words derived from English, Tok Pisin also contains a number of words that came from indigenous languages as well as from Malay and German, reflecting influences during the pre-First World War German colonial era in the northern part of today's Papua New Guinea.

Although Tok Pisin was used for some religious purposes in the early twentieth century, especially by Catholic missionaries, and by both Allied and Japanese forces for propaganda purposes during World War II, the development of Tok Pisin as a literary language did not become widespread until after the Second World War. In colonial Papua New Guinea, education tended to be mainly administered by Christian missionaries, and after World War II the main churches met to decide on a common orthography. Under Australian colonial control this was then adopted as the standard orthography by the Australian colonial Department of Education in the mid-1950s. This decision about the standardization of Tok Pisin orthography has not been changed since Papua New Guinea gained independence from Australia in 1975.

However, the adoption of an

English-only public education system in the 1950s meant that few people have learned this orthography in formal classroom settings, with only a few mainly rural and officially unrecognized schools run by the Lutheran church giving formal lessons in this Tok Pisin orthography. As the formal school system still uses only English and does not officially use or teach written Tok Pisin, there is great variation in the way that people spell the language. Nonetheless, the standard orthography is used by the weekly *Wantok* newspaper and has become familiar to people around the country through translations of the New Testament (and later of the complete Bible), although it is not necessarily used by them in everyday writing.

The Bahá'í Faith was introduced to Papua New Guinea in 1957, and the first Bahá'í publications in Tok Pisin were newsletters and prayers published in the 1960s. The first Tok Pisin prayer book was published in 1960 and a translation of *The New Garden* (published as *Nupela Laif*) was published and distributed soon after. The quality of these early translations varied greatly. All were made by Bahá'ís from other countries who were living in Papua New Guinea and tended to be heavily influenced by English usage. Many were more at the level of paraphrases than actual translations.

All translations of the writings into Tok Pisin are made from English without direct reference to the Arabic and Persian original texts, as no translators of the writings into Tok Pisin have had more than a superficial knowledge of Persian or Arabic. Although a number of Iranian Bahá'ís, some with a good command of Tok Pisin and some with a knowledge of Arabic as well as Persian, have lived in Papua New Guinea over the years, at the time of writing there are none living in the country to whom translators can turn for assistance. Translators needing clarification based on the original Persian or Arabic texts must rely on the assistance of persons whom they know outside the country or on the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre.

During the 1980s translators began compiling a list of standardized Tok Pisin equivalents for words and expressions that appear often in the English translations of the Bahá'í writings but were not found in the limited bilingual dictionaries available at the time. Many of the expressions on the list were taken or adapted from the Tok Pisin Bible. In the absence of a copy of the working dictionary that the Bible translators had developed for their internal use, Bahá'í translators chose expressions by finding needed words in English versions of the Bible and then seeing how the Bible translators had translated the words into Tok Pisin. The result was that the style of written Tok Pisin used in the Bahá'í writings from this period onward has been closely linked to the style used in the Tok Pisin Bible.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a number of translation workshops were held in which teams of Tok Pisin-speaking foreign Bahá'í residents and English-speaking indigenous Bahá'ís worked

together to produce translations of the writings. Some of these foreign residents had a knowledge of European or Asian languages, so they were familiar with the translations of the Bahá'í writings into these languages and were aware of issues related to translations from English into these languages. At the same time, the Papua New Guinean participants were of the first generation of indigenous Melanesians with university education, so their English was quite fluent and they could see the shortcomings of earlier translations. The result was a considerable improvement in the level of Tok Pisin translations.

Today, a sizable collection of Bahá'í sacred writings is available in Tok Pisin, including The Hidden Words, chapters from *Some Answered Questions*, collections of prayers, a number of compilations on various subjects, and a translation of the complete Kitáb-i-Aqdas that became available in 2022. As of 2024, only approximately sixty of the more than 830 separate indigenous languages of Papua New Guinea have translations of even the short obligatory prayer, so local believers depend on translations of the writings into English and Tok Pisin to have access to the words of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and ʻAbdu'l-Bahá.

Current Systems of Translating the Writings in Japan and Papua New Guinea

Although the past saw a variety of approaches to translating the Bahá'í writings around the world, today, authorized English translations are prepared at the Bahá'í World Centre though a system created by the Universal House of Justice and coordinated by its Research Department. Draft translations are prepared by teams of translators, reviewed by groups of individuals with the requisite knowledge of the languages, and revised as needed. Any unresolved questions are referred to the Universal House of Justice. The translations are then formally authorized by the House of Justice when it is satisfied with the final result of the process. After this, the translations are published at the World Centre or through one of the Bahá'í Publishing Trusts in an English-speaking country such as the United States.

Conversely, translations into other languages that are spoken in only one country, such as Japanese and Tok Pisin, are normally handled within the country where the language is spoken and require the approval of the National Spiritual Assembly of that country before publication. The copyright is then held by that National Spiritual Assembly.

In Japan, there are currently two approaches taken to the translation process: in some cases, individual translators or teams select a work that they wish to translate and submit their completed translation to the National Spiritual Assembly for review. Often, they consult the Assembly when they begin the project in order to make sure that there is no overlap in the work. At present, the National Spiritual

Assembly of Japan does not have a standing review committee; instead, teams are appointed ad hoc to review translations.

The second approach involves individuals or teams being appointed to translate specific works by an institution, usually the National Spiritual Assembly, the Publishing Trust, or the Institute Board. For example, the National Spiritual Assembly asks individuals to translate Messages from the Universal House of Justice, or, for longer messages or time-sensitive ones such as the annual Riḍván Message, different individuals are asked to translate specific sections of the Message and then other individuals are assigned the task of reviewing the combined translations. This approach was also taken when the Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Japan undertook the revision of a provisional translation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas in 2017. The Trust asked an individual with a great deal of experience in polishing translations to handle the revision process; the resulting manuscript was then reviewed by a team appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly before the official version was published. Currently, translation of Ruhi books and other Institute materials is handled by the Institute Board, with the proviso that quotations from previously published works such as *Gleanings* not be changed unless they contain mistakes. The Institute Board also conducts the review process and finalizes the translation of these works.

In both approaches, the work is entrusted to a relatively small number of bilingual individuals; some are Iranians and Americans who have lived in Japan for many years or their children, who were often born and raised in Japan, while others are Japanese who have lived abroad for extensive periods of time or have acquired high levels of English proficiency in other ways. In 2022, the National Spiritual Assembly organized its first online training session for translators. While this seminar raised awareness around various issues involved in the translation and review process, it did not result in an immediate increase in the number of translators the institutions can rely on. It is hoped, however, that such training sessions will eventually increase the human resources needed to carry out this important work.

In Papua New Guinea, decisions about which specific texts to translate are sometimes part of the Bahá'í community's development plans (Five Year Plan, Nine Year Plan, etc.) drawn up by the National Spiritual Assembly in consultation with Counsellors and the World Centre. This is usually limited to translations into the national languages of Hiri Motu and Tok Pisin. Sometimes the translation goals of these development plans include goals to translate prayers or a selection of prayers into either a certain number of indigenous languages or specific languages. In these cases, the specific prayers themselves are not usually specified, although in most cases the noonday short obligatory prayer is among the

first prayers to be translated.

Occasionally the National Spiritual Assembly or a Counsellor will request that a specific work be translated into a specific language, usually Tok Pisin. When this is done, specific persons are usually invited to do the translation. At present, there is no translation committee or translation office.

Most translations of Bahá'í writings are, however, private initiatives. The choice of a text to be translated is ideally made in advance through consultation with the National Spiritual Assembly, but often the text is simply one that an individual believer starts to translate and then submits to the Assembly for approval and publication. The approval process is fairly informal. For its translations of the writings, the National Spiritual Assembly relies heavily on a small number of translators whom it trusts to produce translations of a reliably high standard. For translations into local languages, it relies on Local Spiritual Assemblies and Auxiliary Board Members from the relevant communities to check the accuracy of the translations.

At present the only institutions in Papua New Guinea offering training in translation into Tok Pisin and other languages of the country are operated by evangelical church groups, so the training of young Papua New Guinean Bahá'ís in translation techniques is difficult. For this reason, most translations of the writings into Tok Pisin are still made by foreign Bahá'í residents who have studied overseas and learned Tok Pisin.

Translation Challenges Revealed through the Research Project

In this section, we will first discuss the challenges we encountered in translating the selected passage from the *Epistle*, and then summarize the general problems covered in previous literature and our own experience outside of this particular project.

In the discussion of the translation project, reference will be made to the paragraph numbers in Appendix A. These paragraph numbers are provided for the purpose of reference for this article and are not part of either the original text or of Shoghi Effendi's translation.

Historical Background of the Selected Passage

In translating any piece of writing, it is important to understand the context in which it was written. The *Epistle* is an admonishment to, and analysis of erroneous argumentation by, the son of an infamous opponent of the Faith, known as "the Wolf." While there are numerous studies of the *Epistle* that discuss the general background of the work, few of these guides include detailed notes regarding specific points in this book. An exception is the annotated German translation by Armin Eschraghi, to which we made extensive reference in preparation for our translations.

From Eschraghi's notes we learned that paragraph 2 of the passage we

selected is a reference to the ongoing power struggles between the Sháh's government and the Islamic clergy at the time the *Epistle* was written. We also learned that many Bahá'ís have believed that the reference in paragraph 4 to "a new language and a new script" was to Esperanto, but this is unclear. Eschraghi points out that unfortunately, no one thought to ask Bahá'u'lláh further about it, and even Shoghi Effendi said he had no information about what language Bahá'u'lláh was referring to here.

It is important to remember that Bahá'u'lláh lived and wrote within a Middle Eastern Muslim environment. This is relevant in understanding paragraph 6, in which Bahá'u'lláh talks about "the Crimson Ark." Eschraghi has pointed out that elsewhere in the *Epistle* Bahá'u'lláh mentions "the Ark of Bathá (Mecca)," a reference to a ḥadíth in which Muḥammad said that "the secret of His house" is like the safety of Noah's ark in an ocean in which everything is drowning. This image of the ocean is continued in paragraph 6 with the words "enter the ocean of the unity of God," possibly in reference to a Shiite prayer in which the happy believer is compared to someone who enters a deep sea.

The same paragraph contains the Arabic phrase "*inní as'aluka min bahá'ika bi-ab-bahá, wa-kulla bahá'ika bahíyun*"[11] in which Bahá'u'lláh plays with different forms and meanings of the word *bahá* (as indicated by the repetition of the word "glorious" by Shoghi Effendi), using words from a morning prayer composed by the fifth Imam of Twelver Shiite Islam. That prayer in turn calls on a number of the names of God that the Báb used for the names of the months in His calendar.

While it was not possible to recreate or even hint at all these references in the translations, it was important to keep them in mind when choosing wording in the Japanese and Tok Pisin translations.

Methodology: Using Back Translation to Check Translations

As mentioned earlier, 'Abdu'l-Bahá recommended that translations of the writings from Persian into English be undertaken by a committee of translators "composed of several Persians and several Americans, all of whom must have the utmost proficiency in both the Persian and English languages"; He stressed that "one person is not sufficient" (*Tablets* 466–68). However, at present, sufficient human resources do not exist to enable such a committee to be formed for Japanese and Tok Pisin translations, or for many other languages into which the Bahá'í writings are translated.

In the absence of such bilingual associates with whom to collaborate, the authors used back translation to check their initial drafts. Back translation, also known as reverse translation,

11 Translated by Shoghi Effendi as "I beseech Thee by Thy most glorious light, and all Thy lights are verily glorious" (Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle* 140)

involves taking a translated work, translating it back into the original language, and then giving it to another speaker of the source language, who need not speak the target language. This person compares the resulting translation with the original to identify errors that may have arisen in the original translation process. While the person doing the checking may not be able to comment on the stylistic quality of the translation, s/he is asked to compare the content of the back translation with the original to identify mistakes that may have arisen in the original translation process, including omissions and misinterpretations. A simple diagram of this process is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Back Translation Process

Start	**Step 1**	**Step 2**	**Step 3**	**Step 4**
Original Writing →	Draft Translation →	Translation of Draft into Original Language →	Meaning Check →	Revise Translation
Languages:				
Original (English)	Target Language	Original Language (English)	Discussion (English)	Target Language

This process can be enhanced if the person translating the passage back into the original language in Step 2 is not the same as the person who originally translated it, and if the person checking the back translation in Step 3 is also a different person.

However, in this research project, the person doing the original translation and the back translation were the same, while the second author checked the back translation. Both the authors are native speakers of English with almost no knowledge of Arabic or Persian. Both are fluent in the respective second language into which they translate and have considerable experience translating both into and from those languages and English on a wide variety of topics, including the Bahá'í writings. While Mary Noguchi, the translator of Japanese who checked the back translation from Tok Pisin, does not speak that language, she found that since it is a pidgin that evolved from English, she could understand parts of the Tok Pisin translations, so they were not totally unfamiliar. Craig Volker, the translator of Tok Pisin who checked the back translation from Japanese, lived in Japan for a number of years, so he has a moderate understanding of Japanese and some awareness of where potential translation issues might arise.

The authors began by making draft translations of the passage into the second language in which they are fluent. Over the course of a number of working sessions in which they met in person or online, they went through the passage paragraph by paragraph, with each translator orally making a back translation while the other, looking at

the original English, checked the back translation for accuracy. This allowed them to discover missing words or phrases and other errors in the translations as well as—and perhaps more enlightening—differences in the way words and phrases were interpreted.

They could also consult on questions they faced in the translation process. For example, they discussed how to deal with the vagueness of the referent for the word "it" in the first paragraph ("it shall only increase their loss"). They also considered possible approaches to various challenges they faced, including the handling of culture-specific terms such as Shakyh, Páshá, and Kaaba. Overall, both authors found this exercise a helpful way to get outside input on their translations in the absence of Arabic and Persian speakers who are fluent in Japanese and Tok Pisin.

After this process was finished, Mary Noguchi asked a Japanese Bahá'í friend to check her translation and, based on her feedback, made a number of revisions to make the translation sound more natural in Japanese.

The next sections will present some of the many challenges the authors encountered in carrying out this project.

Terminology

As mentioned earlier, these translations of the Bahá'í writings were made for devotional rather than academic purposes, so in general, they needed to eschew footnotes, comments on possible alternate wording and long explanations of background information that would be unfamiliar to the target audience. The authors decided, however, that unlike prayers, a translation of a text like the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* might benefit from brief labels and explanations within the text itself as long as they did not interrupt the flow of the translated text. Specifically, we considered this option in translating titles for religious and government leaders, Bahá'í-specific terms, words and phrases that are often used in the Bible or the Qur'án or in Islamic works, and terms and phrases whose meaning was unclear in English.

A number of religious and government titles appear in this passage. For example, "Shaykh," which is a variant spelling of "sheikh," a title for an Arab leader or a leader in a Muslim community or organization (*Oxford Dictionary*), would not mean much to the average Japanese or Papua New Guinean reader. One possibility would have been to use a familiar term used to address clergymen—in Japanese, 和尚さん (*oshousan*) for a Buddhist priest, 神父さん (*shimpusan*) for a Catholic priest, or in Tok Pisin, *pater*, *pasto*, or *talatala* for a Catholic, Lutheran, or Methodist clergyman, respectively. It was decided, however, that since there are no equivalent religious positions in Islam, using such a title in the Japanese or Tok Pisin translation would not be appropriate. Instead, the Japanese suffix 閣下 (*kakka*) was attached to the nipponized spelling of "Shaykh," since it was formerly used as a polite way of addressing feudal lords and other

people of high rank. Another suffix, 卿 (*kyou*, meaning "Lord"), was used with the title "Páshá" to indicate Kamál Páshá's noble status.

A similar approach was taken in the Tok Pisin translation, as it was important to keep in mind that Bahá'u'lláh referred to Kamál Páshá and the Shaykh in polite terms. In Tok Pisin it is important to publicly recognize a leader or elder; therefore, as in Japanese, an honorific title, in this case *bikman* "leader," was added to "Páshá" and "Shaykh," with the latter, like "Sháh," being used unchanged as proper names, rather than titles. For "Sháh" in paragraph 5, the title *King* was added, so that "the Sháh" became "*King Sháh*." Papua New Guinea is a Commonwealth nation, and during the reign of Queen Elizabeth II there was a convention of using "*Misis Kwin*" as the equivalent of "Her Majesty." With her passing, a male version equivalent to "His Majesty" has not yet been developed, so this English honorific was left out.

The reference to "divines" in paragraph 2 was translated as イスラムの学識者 (*isuramu no gakushikisha* [scholars of Islam]) in Japanese, and "*bikman bilong lotu*" (leaders of religion) in Tok Pisin. The former is perhaps weaker than the English term, as it does not have the clerical connotation, while the Tok Pisin term emphasizes the political power they have more than their education. Thus, although these seemed to be reasonable compromises, neither translation fully encapsulates the nuances of "divines."

A slightly longer interpolation was added in Japanese when translating "[t]his people" in the second paragraph of the selected passage. Given that Bahá'u'lláh states that they "are assiduously occupied in enlightening the souls of men and in rehabilitating their condition" and in other portions of the *Epistle* He asks the addressee to protect them, it is clear that He is referring to the believers. The Japanese translation therefore incorporated the words バハイの信者たち (*bahai no shinjatachi* [believers of Bahá'í]) in a footnote to explain who "this people" refers to. In Tok Pisin, "this people" was translated as "*ol dispela lain*" (this group or community of people). Thus, in both cases the translations are more specific than the English.

Another point that seemed to warrant explanation was the reference to the Qayyúm-i-Asmá in the sixth paragraph. There, Bahá'u'lláh mentions that the Crimson Ark has been ordained by God for the people of Bahá "in the Qayyúm-i-Asmá." Since most of the Writings of the Báb have not been translated into Japanese or Tok Pisin yet, it might have been advisable to integrate an appositive indicating that the Qayyúm-i-Asmá was the first work written by the Báb. A scholarly text might have even noted an explanation of this reference given by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Epistle* itself:

> We have admonished Our loved ones to fear God, a fear which is the fountainhead of all goodly deeds and virtues. It is the

> commander of the hosts of justice in the city of Bahá. Happy the man that hath entered the shadow of its luminous standard, and laid fast hold thereon. He, verily, is of the Companions of the Crimson Ark, which hath been mentioned in the Qayyúm-i-Asmá. (135)

However, to prevent such expository information from impeding the flow of the passage, in the Japanese translation it was decided to simply provide a Japanese transliteration of the name of the work and add the character for "book" (書 [*sho*]) to give readers a clue as to what it was. The same approach was adopted in Tok Pisin, with the word *Buk* (Book) added to the name "Qayyúm-i-Asmá." In addition, the subtitle of the book was given in the Tok Pisin translation: "*o Buk bilong Stori bilong Josep*" (or the Book of the Story of Joseph).

Another area that concerned the authors was the treatment of terms and set phrases that appear often in Bahá'í works as well as phraseology that is often used in Biblical or Quranic writing. One such term was the phrase in paragraph 1 that Bahá'u'lláh often used for Himself, "This Wronged One." In Japanese there is a set term that has been used in many previous translations: この虐げられし者 (*kono shiitagerareshi mono*), so it was used here as well. The original phrase is an example of the Persian use of a third-person reference to oneself, which is also appropriate in Japanese; however, in English or Tok Pisin, a first-person pronoun would normally be used to refer to oneself. Bahá'u'lláh's wording was therefore made clear in Tok Pisin by the addition "*Mi*" (I) to produce the phrase "*Mi, dispela Man, ol lain i wokim rong long Em*" (I, this Man to whom people do wrong things), followed by the repetition of the first-person pronoun in the next clause ("*Mi singautim*" [I call upon]).

To avoid confusion and link the translations to previously translated works, reference was made to published translations of prayers and other writings to determine already established terms for words such as "Pen" in paragraph 2 (in Japanese the loan word ペン [*pen*], not 筆 [*fude*], a Japanese style brush, and in Tok Pisin the somewhat outdated Biblical term "*Ingpen*" [ink pen]) and use them in our translations. Similarly, previously established terms for "Most Great Ocean" were incorporated in paragraph 6 (最大なる大海原 [*saidainaru oounabara*] in Japanese and *Biksolwara* [large ocean] in Tok Pisin), and for "Crimson Ark" in paragraph 6 (深紅の方舟 [*shinku no hakobune*] and "*Retpela Sip i gat rup long en*" [literally "red ship with a roof on it"] in Tok Pisin).

The word "crimson" brought up some questions, as the English word and the Arabic original both describe a color and give a connotation of "blood." In both Japanese and Tok Pisin it is necessary to decide between a word describing a dark red color and a word meaning "like blood." In both languages, words for a color, 深紅 (*shinku* [dark red]) and *retpela* (red),

have been used in Bahá'í translations, as they were already used in Bible translations, so, as indicated above, the authors decided to use these terms in their translations of this passage.

Another word that had previously been translated into both languages is "ark." In the Japanese translation, 方舟 (*hakobune*) was used for "ark," since it is used in the Bible in reference to Noah's ark. Similarly, in Tok Pisin the description "*Sip i gat rup long en*" (ship with a roof on it) was used, as this is the term used in the Bible to refer to Noah's ark.

This approach did not work in Japanese for the term "wayward," as it has been translated in Japanese Bahá'í prayers and writings as both 強情な (*goujouna*, implying willfully or obstinately wayward) and 迷走する (*meisou suru*, suggesting people who have strayed or gone off course). Initially 迷走する (*meisou suru*) was chosen because of the nuance of going off the straight path—off "the way"—but 強情な (*goujouna*) was left in parentheses as a possible option. The Japanese collaborator who checked the translation suggested that 強情な (*goujouna*) sounded more natural in Japanese, so in the end, that word was used.

In Tok Pisin "the wayward" was translated using the idiomatic phrase "*ol lain i brukim bus,*" which has the literal meaning "the group of people who tear down the jungle," but also refers to those who thoughtlessly break rules without regard to others, so it encapsulates the meanings of both of the Japanese alternatives.

There were also cases where adding any explanatory wording at all was felt to be too much of an interpretation on the part of the translator. For instance, an adjective such as "helpful" or "useful" could have been added to modify the word "things" in the phrase "How often have things been simple and easy of accomplishment" in the second paragraph to imply that these things would have been beneficial and not a waste of time. This would have made it clearer that Bahá'u'lláh was pointing out that policies on language should be adopted, as it was possible to do so easily. However, it was felt that this would have been too much of an interpretation and the idea was therefore abandoned.

The limited lexicon of a pidgin-creole language such as Tok Pisin presents particular problems in choosing the terminology used in translations. An example of this was encountered in translating "Sublime Horizon" in paragraph 1. "Sublime" was translated as "*Gutpela"* (good) here, but as "*Naispela"* (nice or beautiful) in paragraph 3, as there is no one word that has both the connotations of "good" and "subtly beautiful" that "sublime" has in English. Moreover, as there is no single word with the meaning "horizon" in Tok Pisin, this needed to be translated using the descriptive phrase "*ples we heven i bungim graun"* (literally, "place where heaven meets earth"). A similar problem was encountered in paragraph 1 with the translation of "vacillation, repudiation or denial." Since Tok Pisin does not have a distinction between "repudiation" and

"denial," this phrase with three components in English was reduced to two in Tok Pisin: "*tubel o tanim baksait*" (doubt or turn aside).

Some of the archaic English terms used in Shoghi Effendi's translation also presented challenges. One example is the phrase "We fain would hope" at the beginning of paragraph 4. The *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary defines "fain," when used with "would" in a sentence as "1) with pleasure, gladly; 2) by preference; and 3) by desire." It is not natural to combine such adverbs with a Japanese verb meaning "hope," so these connotations were left out and a Japanese expression meaning "I ardently hope" (切に望みます [*setsuni nozomimasu*]) was used. In Tok Pisin the opposite approach was taken by using the phrase "*Mipela bai amamas*" (We will be happy), with happiness being emphasized and "hope" remaining unexpressed.

As mentioned in the earlier section, the use of "Say" in paragraph 5 follows Quranic usage and was therefore difficult to translate into both Japanese and Tok Pisin, as it is a wording that is unusual in both languages. However, it has already been translated in a number of Japanese Bahá'í prayers using the phrase 言挙げよ (*kotoage yo*), which has connotations of a ritual that uses words to clarify a Shinto principle. Thus, even though it is not necessarily understandable to the average Japanese reader, Noguchi decided to use this wording here as well. In Tok Pisin the phrase "*tok se*" was used to translate "Say." This wording is used in the Tok Pisin Bible to indicate direct quotations, but in most dialects of Tok Pisin it is an unusual wording. On the other hand, it might be noted that this wording is also unusual in English and that English-speaking Bahá'ís may need to consult others as to its meaning or gradually come to understand it on their own. It was therefore thought that the same process could take place for people who speak Japanese and Tok Pisin.

There were other references to Islam that can be opaque to most Japanese readers and even more so to Papua New Guineans. An example of the challenges this can present to translators can be seen with the translation of "the Kaaba of God" in paragraph 6. Shoghi Effendi may have judged that the Kaaba was sufficiently familiar to English speakers so that no explanation was required, but the authors felt that this would not be true in Japan or Papua New Guinea. Therefore, in the Japanese translation, the Arabic term was not transliterated and instead the phrase 聖なる神殿 (*seinaru shinden* [sacred shrine]) was used. In Tok Pisin, the transliterated Arabic expression was retained, but an explanatory phrase was added: "*Kaaba o Ples Tambu bilong God*" (Kaaba or God's Holy Place).

Echoes of biblical wording can be seen at the end of paragraph 5, where Bahá'u'lláh says, "Happy are they who act; happy are they who understand; happy the man that hath clung unto the truth. . . ." This grammatical structure is similar to that used in the Beatitudes contained in Matthew 5 in the New

Testament (e.g., "blessed are the poor in spirit"). The authors decided to reflect this by using phrasing taken from Japanese and Tok Pisin translations of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–10).

In addition to the above issues involving culture-specific terms in this short passage, there were also a number of places where the exact meaning of the English wording was unclear. Without access to the original texts through either exegesis material or collaboration with Arabic and Persian-speaking colleagues, it was not possible to ascertain whether the ambiguity in English was a reflection of a similar ambiguity in the original text or the result of the English wording chosen by Shoghi Effendi.

For example, in paragraph 6, Bahá'u'lláh tells the Shaykh to "enter, then, the Crimson Ark which God hath ordained in the Qayyúm-i-Asmá for the people of Bahá." "Enter" could mean "get on the ship," which is how this was translated into Japanese, or "go into the ship," which is how this was translated into Tok Pisin. In translating "ordained," the translators were unclear whether this meant that God had ordained the creation of the ship or that He had set it aside for the people of Bahá. In both the Japanese and the Tok Pisin translations, the second meaning was chosen. The Shaykh is then told what will happen if he should "enter therein and attain unto it." Assuming that "it" refers to the Crimson Ark that has just been discussed, the question arises as to how one can "attain" a ship. The word "attain" suggests that the Crimson Ark is a station to be reached, rather than a physical ship. With this in mind, the Japanese translation used an equivalent of "attain to this station" (この地位に達せられる [*kono chii ni tasserareru*]), while the Tok Pisin translation retained some of the ambiguity of the English with "*kamap long en*" (arrive[d] at it).

In at least one case, Japanese semantics forced the translator to make a distinction that was not present in English. This involved the choice of a word to translate the relative pronoun "what" in the phrase "through which hath appeared what was concealed and preserved." Japanese has three words that could be used for "what": *koto* (事), which is used to refer to actions, events or abstract things, plus two words, both pronounced *mono*, one written with the character 者, indicating that it refers to a person or persons, and another written with the character 物, which is used for an object or objects. Working on the assumption that reference here is being made to the Divine Word or Teachings, it was decided to use 事 [*koto*]. This issue did not arise in Tok Pisin, in which no relative pronoun is required in this kind of construction.

Pragmatic Considerations—Politeness and Register

One factor that made this passage especially difficult to translate into Japanese concerns the pragmatics of politeness, as in Arabic, Persian, and Japanese, speakers are much more sensitive to honorifics and levels of politeness than

speakers of English generally are.

For example, at the First Bahá'í World Congress held at London's Royal Albert Hall in May 1963, Hand of the Cause Mr. Taráẓu'lláh Samandarí gave a talk on his "Recollections of Bahá'u'lláh." Throughout the talk, he prefaced every mention of Bahá'u'lláh with various titles, such as "the Blessed Beauty," "the Blessed Perfection," the "Supreme Manifestation" and so on. At one point, he follows his use of Bahá'u'lláh's title "*Jamál-i-ghedam*" (the Ancient Beauty) with the invocation, "*Jalla Dhikrihu'l 'aẓam*" ("Exalted be He Who is the most great Remembrance of God"). His interpreter, Marzieh Gail, an Iranian-American Bahá'í who was widely regarded as one of the most capable translators from Persian into English at the time, repeatedly omitted these modifiers, simply saying "Bahá'u'lláh said" or "Bahá'u'lláh did" (Samandarí). Her translation highlights an important difference between Persian and English in terms of their pragmatics and conventions of politeness, and specifically, their use of honorifics. This difference becomes problematic when using translations into English as the basis for translations into a language such as Japanese in which sensitivity to honorifics and polite wording is critical.

Kádár and Bargiela-Chiappini stress that politeness is a "culture-specific phenomenon". They note that Lakoff discusses politeness "as a phenomenon by means of which cultures can be categorized." In Lakoff's view, there are three basic rules for conflict avoidance: distance, deference, and camaraderie. Cultures can be categorized according to which of these rules are emphasized more. For example, distance is more prominent in British culture, deference more prominent in Japanese culture, and camaraderie more prominent in Australian culture (2).

While Kádár and Bargiela-Chiappini point out that research conducted after 2000 tends to downplay the normative role of culture in analyzing politeness, instead treating it as one of many factors—albeit an important one—that affect the language used in interactions, Wierzbicka stresses the salience of cultural differences in language use and argues that the extent of these differences tends to be underestimated in research into pragmatics and politeness (67). She argues that linguistic interactions are best analyzed using the predominant values of the respective cultures—for example, self-assertion in English as opposed to 遠慮 ([*enryo*] holding back out of consideration for others in order not to cause 迷惑 [*meiwaku*, trouble] to them) in Japanese culture. For instance, an assertion of a need that might be considered polite or at least non-offensive in English may come across as rude if directly translated into Japanese because it would not show the culturally appropriate amount of "*enryo*."

In addition to this emphasis on deference, Japanese culture also stresses the relationship between speaker and listener or writer and reader in the phrasing used in oral communication and letters. For

example, in both spoken and written Japanese, the wording of the invitation "Could you come to dinner?" would be different depending upon whether one was a professor inviting a student, a student inviting a professor, or a friend inviting a friend. The word for "dinner" would change (Nisbett 53–54), and different verbs would be used as well. A student inviting a professor might say, "もしよろしかったら、お食事にでもいらっしゃいませんか" (*Moshi yoroshikattara, oshokuji ni demo irrashaimasen ka* [If it is all right (with you), wouldn't (you) (honorably) go to (honorable) dinner ?]). On the other hand, to a good friend, a young Japanese male might say "飯食いに行かない" (*Meshi kui ni ikanai?* [Won't (you) go (with me) to down some grub?]). In fact, Suzuki argues that you cannot really utter a sentence in Japanese without knowing who the listener will be, because everything about the sentence changes according to the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. This issue of highly specific levels of politeness and the convention of tailoring one's language to indicate an awareness of interpersonal relationships and show social deference through the use of honorifics and humble language is not limited to Japanese: other Asian languages such as Korean and Indonesian also have comparable systems of polite language.

Of particular concern in this research project were the differences between the Persian and English concepts of politeness, since many of the original Bahá'í writings were in Persian but, as pointed out above, it is generally their English translations that are used as the basis from which translations into other languages are made.

According to Izadi, Persian is "an honorific-rich language" (83). Sharifian contrasts Persian and English, noting that the concepts of deference and respect in western English-speaking cultures reflect egalitarianism, while the Persian concept of *ehterám* (deference, respect) reflects hierarchy. Similarly, a study by Kamehkosh and Larina found that British definitions of politeness were consistent with such cultural values as "equality" and "independence" and often focused on respect for equal rights. In contrast, the Iranian participants in their study tended to define politeness in terms of respecting their elders, including parents and grandparents, and honoring those of higher status such as teachers and seniors (606–607).

According to Izadi, the use of honorifics in Persian indicates the speaker's awareness of their own and the hearer's social standing, among other attributes. He also notes that it is linked to the Persian cultural concept of *tárof*, or Persian ritual politeness, which includes compliments, flattery and formality, as well as the concepts of good manners and respect. Hodge (1957) categorized Persian speech into four politeness levels: familiar, polite, deferential and royal in terms of difference in address terms (cited in Yousofi et al. 70). Izadi summarized the use of honorifics in Persian as follows:

> Grammatical honorifics in Persian include the use of plural pronoun [*sic*] (plural form of T/V) to address a singular addressee and a referent, plural form of the verb to implicate a singular person to agree with plural (respected) subject, and switching the second person to the third person pronoun to refer to the addressee. These grammatical honorifics are often combined with a rich constellation of lexical honorifics that involve using the deferential alternative of neutral verbs and nouns, to convey the deferential form of the language, which is used to lower the "self" and elevate the "other" (Beeman, 1976, 2001; Sharifian, 2008) in the form of an extremely hierarchical conversation between a servant and a lord. (83)

Beeman found similarities between Persian and Japanese in terms of the two languages' use of honorifics, although he noted that the grammatical forms of Persian are simpler than Japanese while its morphological system is more complex (31–57). Saberi lists a number of social-cultural values prevalent in Iranian society. Several of these are similar to Japanese values, including "its group-oriented nature," "sensitivity to giving trouble to others," "the importance of seniority in terms of age and social status," and "differentiation between members of the 'inner circle' and the 'outer circle.'"

Given this analysis, the question that faces translators of the Bahá'í writings into Japanese and other languages that have highly complex systems of politeness is whether or not to go beyond the English translation's rather flattened or egalitarian modes of expressions in order to reflect the register of the Persian original. That is, should the translator into Japanese try to find ways to capture the level of politeness that the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, or 'Abdu'l-Bahá used in the original passage and express that in Japanese by adjusting forms of address and self-reference as well as verb forms in spite of the fact that not all of the original politeness strategies are reflected in the English translation?[12]

Many of the translations of Bahá'í sacred texts into Japanese to date have employed a register used by those in authority, such as kings or teachers, to speak to their subjects or students. They also in general have used the plain form of Japanese verbs, which

12 It would be incorrect to say that Shoghi Effendi's English translations reflect none of the original language text's politeness strategies. For example, his translation of phrases such as "magnified be His name," "exalted be His glory," etc., which break up the flow of the English text, do signal to the English reader that there is a level of politeness, and often reverence for God and His Manifestations in the text that goes beyond what is typically seen in English. On the other hand, these English translations do not give much of an indication of how verb forms and other wording are adjusted to reflect the respective social positions and social distance between the writer (Bahá'u'lláh) and addressees such as the Shakyh—adjustments that are required in languages such as Japanese.

is the style preferred in scholarly writing. This may be quite appropriate for a work such as The Hidden Words, in which Bahá'u'lláh is addressing humanity in God's voice. But what about the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, which is a letter written to the son of a powerful Muslim cleric, a man who—like his father—persecuted Bahá'u'lláh's followers? Did Bahá'u'lláh use the language of a superior talking to a subordinate, or did He choose a more "polite" or humble tone? The English translation offers only slight hints as to the answer to this question.

Japanese translators are therefore left with a dilemma when translating Tablets and other writings addressed to specific people. Should they adhere to the flatter English style of wording and create a translation that does not follow Japanese pragmatic conventions, try to guess the level of politeness or humility Bahá'u'lláh might have chosen to use in addressing the recipient of the Tablet or Epistle, or seek out experts who can help them make more informed language choices? It would be helpful to have annotated versions of works such as the *Epistle* with explanations of the tone and types of language (honorific or humble, etc.) used in each portion so that translators into languages with complex systems of polite language such as Japanese could reflect them in their translations.

In translating the passages in Appendix A from the *Epistle*, the authors were fortunate to be able to call upon the assistance of an able Iranian friend who is fluent in Persian and Arabic and has extensive experience in dealing with the Bahá'í writings. In an email, he writes that the *Epistle* contains both Persian and Arabic passages, including some paragraphs that mix the two languages, and comments:

> Generally speaking the tone of the Epistle varies from one subject to another. The Blessed Beauty in some passages uses condemnatory and strong statements, and in other passages He takes up a loving exhortation tone and still in some other passages He employs a humble posture of writing. Referring to the specific paragraphs you have mentioned, Bahá'u'lláh employs a polite yet humble style of writing and the tone is that of loving exhortation. He refers to Kamál Páshá in polite terms. He has used a humble polite loving exhortation tone, like a kind loving teacher guiding his students.[13]

Noguchi drew on these insights in her choice of Japanese wording. For the overall register of the passage, the です/ます (*desu*/*masu*) verb forms that indicate politeness or distance in Japanese were selected. As explained above, in translating "O Shaykh" in paragraphs 2 and 6, the address form 閣下 (*kakka*) was added to the Japanese transliteration of "Shaykh," since "*kakka*" was formerly used when addressing people

13 Email message from Jiyan Ghadimi to Mary Noguchi, 3 November, 2021.

of high rank. Because it is generally not considered polite to use any of the second-person pronouns in Japanese, パシャ閣下 (*Pasha Kakka*), パシャ卿 (*Pasha kyou*) and 閣下 (*kakka*), similar in meaning to "Your lordship," were used in place of "you" in translating Bahá'u'lláh's words to Kamál Páshá, while 陛下 (*Heika* [Your Majesty]) was used when He addressed the Sháh.

In translating Bahá'u'lláh's account of His interactions with Kamál Páshá in paragraph 3, the honorific verb おっしゃる (*ossharu*) and the polite verb ending ます (*masu*) were used for "said." Honorific verbs such as なさいました (*nasaimashita* [did]) and お望みになったら (*onozomi ni nattara* [If thou desirest]) were selected to translate the verbs Bahá'u'lláh used when referring to the Páshá, while humble verb forms such as お伝えします (*otsutae shimasu* [will communicate them to thee]) were chosen to translate the words Bahá'u'lláh used to refer to His own actions.

Similarly, in paragraph 5 honorific verbs were chosen for the words Bahá'u'lláh used when referring to the Sháh (for instance, 努力なさってくださいませ [*doryoku nasatte kudasaimase*] for "exert thyself"), while humble terms such as 向いておりません (*muiteorimasen* [are turned towards naught]) were used to translate the verbs Bahá'u'lláh used when referring to His own actions. At first, Noguchi translated "We" and "Us" as 我 (*ware*), an old-fashioned first-person pronoun which has been used in such works as The Hidden Words to translate "I" and "Me." However, since this usage has the nuance of someone in a higher position talking down to a subordinate, she reconsidered this choice and decided to use 小生 (*shousei* [literally, "little life"]), a first-person pronoun often used by males in letter writing, since it conveys a sense of polite humility.

These considerations of the pragmatics of politeness were less important in the translation into Tok Pisin, as Tok Pisin is a primarily oral language in which politeness and respect are expressed more in body language than in the choice of words. Moreover, as a pidgin-creole contact language, it is even more "flat" than English in expressing deference or social differentiation.

Nevertheless, some adaptations were needed to ensure that Bahá'u'lláh's Tok Pisin voice was polite but firm. One such adaptation was the addition of the word "*nogat*" in paragraphs 1 and 5. This word acts as an intensifier to negative sentences, a kind of oral exclamation point, and is an oratory technique often used in certain areas of Papua New Guinea. By using it here, in addition to emphasizing the particular points being made, it marks Bahá'u'lláh as a skilled orator. It should be noted, however, that it is not a direct translation of any specific part of the English text.

The above list is not exhaustive, but represents examples of the many challenges the authors faced in translating a fairly short passage from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Further Challenges of Translating the Bahá'í Writings into Japanese

In addition to the challenges of finding appropriate wording in cases where culture-specific terminology was used or when the meaning of the English wording needed to be clarified, as well as the pragmatic concerns outlined in the previous section, the translation of English texts into Japanese involves a number of other challenges.

One is related to the tendency of the Japanese language to rely on context much more than English does, particularly in terms of the use of subjects and objects. Edward Hall explained that in general, communication in English tends to adopt a "low-context" style in which things are explicitly stated so that they can be understood by anyone without reference to background information. In contrast, communication in Japanese, like that in a number of other non-Western cultures, tends to rely heavily on the participants' understanding of who is conversing, where they are, and what they are talking about. Subjects of sentences are generally omitted if they can be understood from context. In many cases, in addition to the context, the form of the verb (e.g., honorific, polite, or humble) also indicates the subject, which therefore is left unmentioned. In fact, Martin estimates that subjects are omitted in approximately three quarters of all sentences in oral Japanese. Hall calls this "high-context" communication. Thus, one choice that a translator from English into Japanese has to make is which subjects to include and which to elide, since a "faithful" rendering of all of the sentence subjects in the source text would result in extremely unnatural sounding Japanese.

In this research project, Noguchi strove to develop a more natural-sounding Japanese translation by omitting many of the subjects of the sentences and implying them by the use of honorific or humble verbs and other wording. For example, in paragraph 4, Bahá'u'lláh writes, "If thou desirest, We will communicate them to thee." Noguchi translated this sentence as もし、お望みなら、それらについて情報をお伝えします。(*Moshi, onozomi nara, sorera ni tsuite jouhou wo otsutaeshimasu* [*if / honorably wish /(conditional)/, them / about / information / (object case particle) / will humbly give*]), omitting "thou," "We" and "thee" but implying them in a natural Japanese manner, by using honorific verbs for those referring to the Shaykh, and humble verbs for those pertaining to Bahá'u'lláh Himself.

Pronouns are another source of difficulty. Takao Suzuki explains that instead of using Western-style first- and second-person pronouns in a conversation, Japanese follows a pattern of choosing terms of self-reference and address based on rules used in family dialogue, where individuals of higher age or status are referred to by their relationship to the youngest person in the family, and those of lower age or status are called by their name. This pattern of self-reference and address is carried

over into conversations outside of the family as well. Therefore, even though Japanese has several words that could be translated as "you" (e.g., 貴方 [*anata*], 君 [*kimi*], and お前 [*omae*]), it is more common for a speaker or writer to refer to the other person by their relationship ("Father") or their title (e.g., "Professor" or "Department Head"), unless the other person is younger and/or of lower status. In fact, there is no personal pronoun that is conventionally used today to refer to someone of higher status in Japanese conversation or writing.

This makes it difficult to translate words like "Thee" and "Thou" in prayers. Japanese translators have generally chosen to use 神 [*kami*] ("God") or 主 [*shu*] ("Lord"), or one of the second-person pronouns usually reserved for use in an intimate relationship (貴方 [*anata*] or 君 [*kimi*], for "Thee", "Thou," and "Thine"). For "you" in passages written in the voice of God or the Manifestation, as in The Hidden Words, 汝 [*nanji*], an old-fashioned second-person pronoun, is used. Similarly, while Japanese has several words that can mean "I" (私 [*watakushi*] or [*watashi*], 僕 [*boku*], and 俺 [*ore*]), they tend to be dropped in conversation and writing whenever the context or verb ending makes such wording unnecessary. Thus, translators of the writings have to choose between "faithful" renderings of all pronouns and dropping the subjects "I" and "you" to make the translation sound more natural.

As illustrated above, Noguchi omitted many of the subjects and objects in sentences in her translation of the selected passage from the *Epistle*, but clarified the content through use of honorifics and humble language. However, she used the title 閣下 (*kakka* [your lordship]) instead of あなた (*anata* [you]) or another second-person pronoun to translate the "You" in the third paragraph ("You have wasted your life."). Also, as explained above, 小生 (*shousei*) was used to translate "We" and "Us" when Bahá'u'lláh was referring to Himself in the above passage and a pronoun was needed to clarify the meaning.

Another difference between English and Japanese that poses particular problems when translating the Bahá'í writings is the lack of capital letters in Japanese. As was pointed out above, Persian does not have capital letters either, but the English translations of the writings clearly distinguish between "He," a reference to God or the Manifestation, and "he," an ordinary human male. In other terms such as "Dayspring" and "Sun," capitalization indicates that the term refers to something divine. Japanese translators have devised several approaches to try to add this nuance. They have enclosed the word in Japanese quotation marks (e.g., 「彼」), printed it in bold or added a dot above or below the characters to signify "He" with a capital letter. Unfortunately, such approaches make the resulting text look messy and do not necessarily convey the intended meaning, so they have been dropped in recent years. Instead, explanatory

wording is occasionally added when translating "He" (e.g., 神におわす御方 [*kami ni owasu onkata*: the honorable One who is God]).

Although there were many capital letters in the selected passage from the *Epistle*, there were not any cases in which the meaning would become unclear if they were not indicated in some manner, so this did not pose a problem in this particular translation.

A third issue are the differences between the Bahá'í way of referring to Middle Eastern place names and the names in use today: for example, Persia instead of Iran, Constantinople instead of Istanbul, and Adrianople instead of Edirne. Japanese translators of the writings have tended to reflect the terms used in the English translations, while adding the current name in parentheses immediately after it (e.g., アドリアノープル (現在のエディルネ): "Adrianople [present-day Edirne]") if it is thought to be important to the understanding of the text. Although "Constantinople" appeared in this passage, Noguchi did not add any explanation because it was simply used by Bahá'u'lláh to refer to the name of the city at that time, and she thought that when the entire *Epistle* is translated, geographical and biographical notes would most likely be included in an index, making explanations in the body of the text unnecessary.

A fourth issue in translating the writings is the difference between English and Japanese grammatical structures. While in an English sentence the order in which words occur clarifies which nouns are subjects and which are objects, Japanese indicates subject and object through the use of particles, so the word order can vary freely. Moreover, as in Persian, Japanese verbs and negations come at the end of a sentence instead of in the middle, as they do in English, so it is not clear until the end of the sentence whether the statement is positive or negative. Finally, the placement of phrasal modifiers differs: complements follow the head in English (e.g., "the language in which all the peoples of the world would converse", paragraph 3, lines 7–8) while they precede the head in Japanese (e.g., 世界のすべての人々が使って談話する言葉 [*sekai no subete no hitobito ga tsukatte danwa suru kotoba:* world / 's / all /people / use to / converse / language]). These major differences in sentence structure can make it difficult to translate complex sentences, especially those written by the Guardian or the Universal House of Justice. In many cases, a long English sentence has to be broken down into smaller segments in order to effectively convey all of the content in Japanese. In translating the selected passage from the *Epistle*, the differences in sentence structure were of course reflected, but the sentences were not so complex as to require breaking them up to facilitate comprehension.

One further issue in the translation of the writings into Japanese is that to date there has been no coordination with academics or other religious groups to help establish consistency in the wording of common religious

terms, so Japanese translations of the Bahá'í writings can seem extremely foreign to the average reader, even if they are active members of another religion. Moreover, the many quotations from the Qur'án in the Bahá'í writings have been independently translated into Japanese rather than copying the wording from one of the existing Japanese translations of this holy book. Quotations from the Bible also tend to be newly translated, although occasionally Japanese translations of the Bible are referred to. Again, this robs Japanese readers of resonance with other spiritual traditions and is a practice that we feel should be reconsidered from now on.

Further Challenges of Translating the Bahá'í Writings into Tok Pisin

Orthography is a major issue that arises in translating the writings into Tok Pisin. Since the 1980s, translations into Tok Pisin have for the most part employed the same standard orthography as that used in the Tok Pisin Bible and the Oxford University Press *Papua New Guinea Tok Pisin English Dictionary* (Volker). However, the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre urges Bahá'í translators and writers in languages using the Latin alphabet to strictly follow the transliteration practices used by Shoghi Effendi, thereby standardizing the spelling of Bahá'í names and terms in all Latin-based orthographies (letter dated 11 September 1991). In Tok Pisin, this means breaking the orthographic rules of the language or using letters that do not exist in the official orthography (i.e., the letters *c*, *q*, *x*, and *z*, double consonants, and letters with diacritics and accents), so that the names of prominent early believers are written in Tok Pisin as "Quddús" and "'Alí" instead of "Kudus" and "Ali." In contrast, Bible translations adjust Greek and Hebrew names to fit Tok Pisin orthographic norms. For example, because Tok Pisin does not allow final voiced consonants,[14] the Tok Pisin Bible uses "*Jekop*" for Greek "*Ἰακώβ*" [*Iakṓb*: Jacob], and "*Devit*" for Hebrew "דָּוִד" [*dāwīḏ*: David]. Translations of the Bahá'í writings are thus set somewhat apart from the national norm, and it can be difficult for people without education in English to pronounce names such as Chihríq, Qayyúm-i-Asmá, and Quddús which, in Standard Tok Pisin orthography would have been, respectively, "Sirik," "Kayum i Asma," and "Kudus."

Other problems encountered in translating the writings into Tok Pisin relate to its being a relatively young pidgin-creole language with a restricted vocabulary. Translators must often coin new expressions to fill gaps in the language, or use semi-synonyms. For the verb "manifest," for example, translators have used expressions that literally mean "show" (*soimaut*) or "show in an open

14 The voiced consonants b, d, g, and z cannot occur at the end of a word, except in the word *God*.

place" (*soimaut long ples klia*), but the noun "Manifestation*"* ends up being expressed with etymologically unrelated words that literally mean "intermediary" (*Namelman*) or "representative" (*Mausman*); thus, a linguistic connection between the act of God manifesting Himself and the Manifestations themselves is lost. As mentioned above, no translation is perfect, and this loss of an etymological connection between the Manifestation and His being manifest is probably the least imperfect way to express these thoughts within the structures of the Tok Pisin lexicon.

Because formal education in Papua New Guinea is conducted in English, academic discourse among educated people tends to be in that language, not Tok Pisin, in the same way that earlier intellectual discourse in Europe was once carried out in Latin and not the national languages people spoke in their daily lives. Even when they are speaking Tok Pisin, educated people tend to use a lot of the English terminology that they have learned at school, even where more transparent Tok Pisin words or expressions exist. With this tendency to use transliterated English words in written Tok Pisin, passages and concepts are often not immediately comprehensible to people who do not know English. Even if people do know the English word, they may not have a grasp of all of the semantic range of the word in English. Many people, for example, might understand the word "*jastes*," a transliteration of English "justice," but only in the sense of the Department of Justice and its court system, and not with the abstract ethical connotations of English "justice," which can be translated as the more easily understood expressions *stretpela pasin* or *stretpasin* (literally "correct behaviour"). While these are more transparent to most ordinary Tok Pisin speakers, they also do not encapsulate the wide range of both ethical and legal connotations that the English term "justice" does. Luckily, tautology is regarded as a characteristic of good style in Tok Pisin, so that combining these two phrases ("*jastes o stretpasin*") solves this issue to some extent, at least for those with some knowledge of English.

We have seen above that Japanese translators must take into account the differences between the English and Japanese pronominal systems. This is also the case with Tok Pisin. One problem relates to the English word "we." Tok Pisin differentiates between an inclusive "we" (*yumi*) that includes the speaker(s), the person(s) being addressed, and possibly other people, and an exclusive "we" (*mipela*) that includes the speaker(s) and at least one third person, but excludes the person(s) being addressed. The language also does not have the "royal we" used in both English and Arabic by the sovereign speaking about him or herself and in the English translations of the Bahá'í writings in some contexts to differentiate between Bahá'u'lláh speaking as a Manifestation of the Divine and His speaking of Himself as an individual man. In the latter case,

Bahá'u'lláh often spoke of Himself in the third person, using phrases such as "this Wronged One."

Using the first-person pronoun *Mi* (I) for both the "royal we" and the third-person references conflates these two usages in an ambiguity that is not present in the English translation and, presumably, in the original. Using the Tok Pisin first-person plural exclusive pronoun *Mipela* (We, but not you) for the English "royal we," on the other hand, invites the Tok Pisin reader to ask who besides God is doing these things. Translators need to choose between these two options in any particular passage, making a decision based on stylistic preferences and on what kind of ambiguity will be less confusing in that passage.

Another issue that arises is related to third-person pronouns. Unthinkingly following English usage in third-person pronouns can sometimes hide distinctions and lead to confusion that can be avoided by the use of nouns instead of pronouns. In the third-person singular, Tok Pisin uses only one pronoun and, for sentence subjects and objects, does not differentiate between male and female or animate and inanimate like English does with "he," "she," and "it." But after prepositions, the standard dialect used in Bible (*Buk Baibel*) translations employs third-person singular pronouns that differentiate between human (*em*) and nonhuman (*en*) referents. Bahá'í translations have followed this pattern. In translating from English translations of the Bahá'í writings, this means needing to know whether prepositional phrases such as "of Him," "with Him" or "to Him" refer to Bahá'u'lláh, a human (*Em*), or God, a nonhuman (*En*). This is often not clear from the context alone. Reference here to the original text, to a written exegesis, or to a scholar conversant with the original text would be ideal ways to solve this ambiguity. Unfortunately, at present, translators are left to their intuition.

The different time-modal-aspect marking requirements of English and Tok Pisin can also lead to problems when translating. Unlike English, the overt marking of verb tense is optional in Tok Pisin, but the marking of aspect (distinguishing between a single non-repeated action and habitual or extended action as well as between completed or not completed action) is obligatory. Often a translator must make an arbitrary decision about whether an action happened a single short time, over an extended period of time, or was repeated habitually over a longer period of time. It is also necessary to specifically mark any action that has been completed. For example, when faced with the statement by Bahá'u'lláh that "the believers suffered," the translator must decide whether to express this as "the believers suffer(ed) one time," "the believers suffer(ed) over a long period of time," or "the believers suffer(ed) repeatedly." Similarly, the translator must decide whether this suffering had ended or

if it was continuing at the time when Bahá'u'lláh was writing. Finally, the translator must decide if it is absolutely necessary to mark grammatically that this suffering happened in the past or if this information can be omitted for stylistic reasons. The absence of detailed exegesis aids can make these decisions quite difficult. Again, consultation with a scholar of the original text or reference to a detailed written exegesis could help translators solve these problems.

As with the translation of the writings into any language outside the Middle East, expressions related to the social environment of nineteenth century Middle Eastern societies can cause difficulty. Unlike European languages, which have been in contact with Arabic-speaking societies for centuries and have developed vocabulary to describe institutions and concepts in the Muslim world, the only Middle Eastern societies that Papua New Guinea has had exposure to are those described in the Bible, with few written references to societies in the Middle East after the time of the New Testament. Similarly, since Islam arrived in Papua New Guinea even later than the Bahá'í Faith, Tok Pisin has no established vocabulary for Islamic concepts, and Papua New Guineans are even less aware of Muslim beliefs or Quranic and ḥadíth stories or wording than Europeans, in whose languages there are set phrases for concepts such as obligatory prayers, the Qiblih, ḥadíth, and mosques.

Challenges Facing All Translators of the Writings into Languages Other than English

Having laid out issues that the authors faced in their research project involving translating a short passage of the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* into Japanese and Tok Pisin, as well as general concerns faced by translators of the Bahá'í writings into these two languages, the authors would like to outline two broader concerns facing translators of the writings into languages other than English. We hope, by this means, to encourage other translators to share the challenges they have encountered as well as approaches they have taken to deal with them.

Issues with Transliteration and Proper Nouns

The original Bahá'í writings were written in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish, which share a script that is more or less the same. Today most languages in the world (including modern Turkish) use orthographies that are based on the Latin alphabet. Numerous systems of transliterating Arabic and Persian words using the Latin alphabet have been developed. Bahá'í communities have tended to adopt certain choices, so that we can speak of a rather idiosyncratic Bahá'í style of transliteration that sets it apart from norms used in academic or in journalistic writing.

The main reason for this is the continuing adherence of Bahá'ís to the decision made by Shoghi Effendi in

the 1920s to follow the transliteration system adopted "at a recent congress of Orientalists" (*Light of Divine Guidance* 49). That system is no longer in common use today by academics, who normally use macrons instead of accent marks (for example, Bahā'u'llāh rather than Bahá'u'lláh) and avoid underlining consonant digraphs (such as gh or sh). Further confusing the issue is the tendency of journalists and other mainstream writers to avoid the use of idiosyncratic accents and diacritic marks altogether and as a rule to write the names of people and places according to the spelling conventions of the individual languages of their readers. For these reasons, Middle Eastern proper nouns are often spelled differently in different languages using the Latin alphabet.

As noted above, the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center urges Bahá'í translators and writers in languages using the Latin alphabet to strictly follow the transliteration practices used by Shoghi Effendi.[15] This should be done even when it breaks the orthographic rules of the language or uses letters that do not exist in the orthography of the target language, as is the case for Tok Pisin. One reason for this policy is to facilitate the recognition of names and Arabic and Persian words in all languages using the Latin alphabet. Additional reasons given are to avoid problems with certain words that are written the same in Arabic and Persian, but pronounced differently (for example with *Riḍván*, as discussed later) and to retain phonemic distinctions that are important in Arabic, such as between *Váḥid* (meaning "unity" and often used as a reference to the number nineteen) and *Vaḥíd* (the title given to a prominent early Bábí martyr).

The following explanation of the difference between transcription and transliteration, and the reason for adhering to the rules of transliteration for the original language, are provided on the Bahá'í Reference Library website:

> Unlike transcription, transliteration is not intended as a guide to the pronunciation of the words of one language in the phonetic system of a different language, but rather to provide a key to the spelling of the words in the original language. The symbols used in transliteration thus serve only as an approximate indication of pronunciation. As the symbols are a key to the spelling in the original language, their pronunciation is determined by the context: Arabic pronunciation in an Arabic context, and Persian in a Persian context, while Arabic terms embedded in a Persian text are subject to the rules of Persian. (*Transliteration System*)

In its letter of 11 September 1991, the Research Department does suggest that the conventional spelling of

15 For example, in a letter to Volker dated 11 September 1991. This system is explained in depth in *Transliteration System*, a document available on the Bahá'í Reference Library.

city and regional names can be used for well-known localities, so that in English "Mecca" can be used instead of "Makkah." Changes in the ethnic composition or political status of cities can lead to problems, however, and a choice must sometimes be made between using a well-known historical name or a contemporary name, or between names favored by one or another ethnic group. For example, many Turkish cities in which Bahá'u'lláh lived previously had a Greek name that was often better known in the West than the Turkish name that is in common international use today. Yet Bahá'ís tend to use the Greek name that today is no longer in general use. This means that in translations of the Bahá'í writings, the Turkish city in Europe where Bahá'u'lláh lived for many years is usually called by its Greek name, "Adrianople," rather than by its Turkish name, "Edirne." Similarly, localities in Israel tend to be referred to using their Arabic rather than Hebrew or European names (for instance, Arabic "'Akká" rather than Hebrew "Akko" or French and English "Acre"). However, for localities that are important in the Bible, Bahá'í publications tend to use the name and spelling that is common in the target language (such as, "Mt. Carmel" and "Jerusalem" in English).

Another source of difficulty is the fact that some of the people referred to in both the Bible and the Qur'án have different names in these two holy books. When the names are similar, such as "David" and "Aaron" in the Bible and "Dáwúd" and "Hárún" in the Qur'án, the tendency in English translations of Bahá'í writings is for them to be referred to by the name that is commonly used in the translation of the Bible in the target language, but where the names are different or where the correspondence is contested, the Quranic Arabic name is used, with a complete transliteration, including diacritical marks. This is the case with "Húd" in the Kitáb-i-Íqán (9), who many, but not all, scholars identify with the biblical "Eber."

A further problem with names is that personal titles in the Bahá'í writings are often transliterated strictly from Arabic when equivalent English loan words from Arabic already exist. The use of such transliterations can obscure the actual meaning of the title. An example of this is the aforementioned title "Sheikh," which is usually transliterated in Bahá'í texts as "Shaykh," causing confusion for some English readers, who do not understand that the terms are identical.

The result of all of these transliteration conventions has been the development of a particular register used in translations of the Bahá'í writings in many languages. This register is not limited to the printed page. Because of the influence of Persian speakers, it also affects the way that Arabic words related to the Bahá'í Faith are pronounced by many people outside the Middle East. Persian has many loan words from Arabic, especially words related to religion and theology. While these loan words are written

in the same way in both languages, because Persian does not make many of the phonemic distinctions between consonants that Arabic does, the pronunciation of a number of letters that have different pronunciations in Arabic is collapsed or changed to fit Persian phonology.

Because the overwhelming majority of early Bahá'ís were Persian, and not Arabic, speakers, and it was these believers who first brought the Bahá'í Faith to the West, Persian pronunciations of Arabic words were introduced into many languages. The result is that while words may be transliterated in writing according to a strict system from Arabic, as mentioned in the above quotation, they tend to be pronounced according to the way they would be pronounced in Persian in Bahá'í settings. An example of this phenomenon is "Riḍván," which is written according to its transliteration from classical Arabic, but is given a more Persian pronunciation, *Rizwán*,[16] by almost all non-Arab Bahá'ís.

The peculiarities of transliteration into the Latin alphabet and the use of Persian pronunciations are often carried into languages with other writing systems, as many of the early Bahá'ís taking the Faith to new countries were Westerners who usually had no experience with Arabic or Persian. Often, distinctions not made in these western languages were not made in the target languages of further translations either. An example of this is the transliteration of vowels in Japanese translations of Arabic and Persian names. As in Arabic, vowel length is important in Japanese, with short and long vowel length being phonemically significant. But many of the early Bahá'ís who brought the Bahá'í Faith to Japan were native speakers of English, a language where vowel length is not phonemically important. As a result, an early standardized list of names and terminology still in use in Japan fails to make vowel length distinctions in its transliteration of Arabic terms (National Translation Committee). "Jalál" ("Glory," the title of the second month of the Badí Calendar), for example, is transliterated with two short vowels (ジャラル [*jararu*]) rather than with a second long vowel as in Arabic (ジャラール [*jaraaru*]).[17] This, combined with the use of Persian pronunciations in transliteration, results in transliterations of names or concepts that do not reflect written Arabic and sometimes differ from those used by Japanese media or academics, or by Arabic speakers in

16 This is actually a hybrid pronunciation that mixes elements of Arabic and Persian, as an accurate Persian transliteration would be *Rezván.* The latter has apparently influenced the transliteration into Japanese, レズワン [*rezuwan*].

17 This list was made by two Japanese believers. It is highly unlikely that they had any knowledge of Arabic or Persian and therefore probably made the list based on their knowledge of English and the rules for transliterating English words in the Japanese katakana syllabary. Since vowel length is not important in English, their transliteration did not make vowel length distinctions.

Japan. For example, Naw-Rúz is translated as ノー・ルーズ (*Noo Ruuz*) by Japanese Bahá'ís but as ノウルーズ (*Nouruuz*) by Japanese academics and others referring to the Persian New Year. A similar phenomenon occurs in English, where this holiday is referred to in a variety of ways, including Naw-Rúz, Nowruz, Norooz, and Navruz. Again, this can have the effect of making Bahá'í translations seem somewhat peculiar to academics or others who deal with the Middle East, although they do allow a standardization of pronunciation across the Bahá'í world. The goal of achieving standardization is, in fact, a strong reason for translators to study the Bahá'í transliteration system as a guide to the original Arabic and Persian pronunciations.

Problems Arising from English

While the insights that Shoghi Effendi's translations give us are undeniably valuable in facilitating understanding of the content of the writings[18] it is possible to follow the linguistic aspects of the Guardian's writing too literally.

In fact, the Universal House of Justice, in a letter to an individual believer, writes:

> [T]he Beloved Guardian was not only a translator but the inspired Interpreter of the Holy Writings; thus, where a passage in Persian or Arabic could give rise to two different expressions in English he would know which one to convey. Similarly he would be much better equipped than an average translator to know which metaphor to employ in English to express a Persian metaphor which might be meaningless in literal translation.
>
> Thus, in general, speakers of other European tongues will obtain a more accurate translation by following the Guardian's English translation than by attempting at this stage in Bahá'í history to translate directly from the original.
>
> This does not mean, however, that the translators should not also check their translations with the original texts if they are familiar with Persian or Arabic. There may be many instances where the exact meaning of the English text is unclear to them and this can be made evident by comparison with the original. (Letter dated 8 December 1964)

Keeping this in mind, it must also be remembered that there may be certain phrases in the source text that are ambiguous or that have a meaning that cannot be succinctly expressed when translated into the target language. When the English translation is used as a source text, there is already the possibility that this English source does not completely reflect the original. To compound this, when using the English

18 To borrow the words of the Universal House of Justice in a letter dated 23 July 2006 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, they are "an authoritative interpretation of the Writings" (qtd. in Eschraghi, "Schwierigsten Künste" 96).

translations as if they were original texts, certain aspects of English semantics can introduce further ambiguities or even misunderstandings into the translation into a third language. Without reference to the original text or at least to academic analyses of the English translation and its relationship to the original text, these ambiguities or misunderstandings can create translations that are less than faithful to the original texts.

An example of semantic interference caused by English wording is a passage in the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* where Bahá'u'lláh uses the phrase *'árif bi lláh* to describe a particularly pious martyr. As Eschraghi has explained, this literally means "one who knows God" (*Brief* 171), but presumably because this phrase is used in the same context where one would say "a godly person" in English, Shoghi Effendi translated the phrase as "that godly man." The *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary defines "godly" as "pious, devout". In Tok Pisin, this phrase can be translated as *dispela man i gat save long God* (literally "that man having knowledge of God."), a phrase that is closer to the original meaning than wording such as *man bilong lotu* (literally "a man of religion"), which is a more literal rendering of Shoghi Effendi's English translation.

One situation where reference to the original Arabic or Persian may be particularly useful is in translating phrases to which Shoghi Effendi added words in his English translation. These additions resulted in a much more elevated and natural English style than if he had adhered too closely to the original style. However, the rules of good grammar and style in other languages may make these additions inappropriate. In a conversation about translation that took place in the 1990s with one of the authors, the German translator Udo Schaefer pointed out that Shoghi Effendi often used a tautology in English phrases, giving the example of the addition of "but Thee" to produce the English phrase "there is no other God but Thee." He pointed out that in German this tautology is stylistically poor and that using a phrase in German meaning literally "there is no other God" (*es gibt keinen anderern Gott*) and omitting "but Thee" (*außer Dir*) is both stylistically preferable in German and closer to the original texts.

Armin Eschraghi ("Schwierigsten Künste") has pointed out a notable example where Shoghi Effendi added a number of words to a popular children's prayer. In the translation of this prayer below, all the words in parentheses have been added for grammatical and stylistic reasons: "O God, guide (me), protect (me), make (of me a) shining lamp and (a) brilliant star. Thou art (the) Mighty and (the) Powerful" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, qtd. in *Bahá'í Prayers*).

Knowledge of these additions could help a translator of this prayer into a language such as Japanese, in which there are no articles and in which the specification of an understood object (in this case, "me") is optional. The result would be a translation without the

articles and direct object that is stylistically preferable in the target language and closer to the style and rhythm of the original than a cumbersome and wordy version based on the exact wording of the English translation. In fact, the current Japanese version of this prayer omits the second "me" and does not have any articles in it.[19]

It should be noted that Shoghi Effendi did not only add words in his translations; he sometimes deleted words or references. This was the case in his avoidance of references that would have been easily understood to an educated person in the nineteenth century Middle East, but which would be obscure to a twentieth century Westerner. In the *Epistle*, for example, Bahá'u'lláh used a nickname for Bagdad (Zaurá, meaning "curve") because Baghdad was built on a spot where the Euphrates River bends in a curve. Shoghi Effendi simply translated this as "Baghdád," as the curve in the river was not relevant to the point Bahá'u'lláh was making in that passage (49). Nevertheless, in a language such as Tok Pisin, where nicknames and euphemisms are prized, a translator might do well to combine the original reference with Shoghi Effendi's explanation and say something like "*long Zaurá, hap we Wara i Tan o Biktaun Bagdad*" (literally "Zaurá, where the River bends, or Baghdad City").

One final problem with following the English translations unthinkingly is that language changes over the years. A good example of this is the use of "man" to refer to the entire *Homo sapiens* species, both men and women. During Shoghi Effendi's lifetime, it was customary in English to use "man" as a synonym for "human being," so Shoghi Effendi used "man" in many contexts to refer to both human beings in general and, in different contexts, to male human beings in particular. This usage is quickly being lost, and a number of style guides in English today specifically advise against it.[20] Many other languages such as German, have always had different words for "human" (German *Mensch*) and "male" (*Mann*). When translating into languages with this distinction, it is necessary to refer to the original text to ascertain whether the word Shoghi Effendi translated as

19 神さま、わたしをお導きください。お守りください。私の心の灯を明るくして、わたしを輝く星となしたまえ。あなたは偉大なる御方におわし、力に満ちたまう御方にまします。(*Kami sama, watashi wo omichibiki kudasai. Omamori kudasai. Watashi no kokoro no hi wo akaruku shite, watashi wo kagayaku hoshi to nashi tamae. Anata wa idainaru onkata ni owashi, chikara ni michitamou onkata ni mashimasu.*)[God / honorific / me / object particle / please (honorific) guide / please (honorific) protect / my / heart / object particle / make bright / me / object particle / shining / star / make / (honorific) / you / subject particle / great / honorable being / are / power / be filled with / (honorific) / honorable being / honorably are] (*Children's Prayers*)

20 For more details, please see American Psychological Association, *Publication Manual*; Miller and Swift, *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*.

"man" or "men" should be translated in German as "human being(s)" (singular *Mensch* or plural *Menschen*) or "male human(s)" (singular *Mann* or plural *Männer*). Similarly, Japanese does not use the word for "man" to represent all humanity, so in Japanese one needs to distinguish between human being(s) (人間 [*ningen*]) and male(s) (男［達］[*otoko(tachi)*]) when translating this English word.

These issues show problems that can arise for translators working solely from the English translations, without reference to the original texts or to reliable reference notes. Unfortunately, there are very few detailed guides for translators such as exists in German for the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* with the annotated academic translation by Eschraghi (*Brief an den Sohn des Wolfes*). There is also no established mechanism through which Bahá'í translators can refer questions to specialists in nineteenth century Persian and Arabic usage who understand the specific linguistic and cultural contexts of the Bahá'í writings. Translators are left to find their own resources from among the people they know. This means that sometimes Iranians who may not be well versed in the written styles of the nineteenth century or non-Bahá'í academics who are unaware of Bahá'í history or sacred literature are asked to unravel quite difficult Arabic and Persian passages. When questions are asked of the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre, they are answered to the best ability of the Research Department staff, but unfortunately, there is no publicly available collection of their previous answers to such queries to which translators can refer in advance, so a not inconsiderable amount of the Research Department staff's time is taken by looking up how similar questions and their responses have been handled in the past.

To support translations based on authorized English translations, it would be helpful for both individual translators and institutions to have more academic analyses of the Bahá'í writings, with attention to specific words and how they have been translated into English, especially by Shoghi Effendi. Complete translations with academic annotations would be particularly useful. To start with, a database of questions and answers related to translation in general and to specific passages in particular that have already been dealt with by the Research Department at the World Centre could help to answer some of the problems most commonly faced by translators. This would help to make translations into third languages reflect the original texts more closely, even if those translations have been made from the English translations and without reference to the actual original texts themselves. Creating such a database is probably beyond the capacity of individual translators. It could be compiled by the World Centre's Research Department, of course, but it might also be a project that could be undertaken by a special interest group within the Association of Bahá'í Studies or other interested parties.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined some of the many challenges encountered in translating the Bahá'í writings into as many languages as possible, focusing in particular on problems encountered in translating a short passage from the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* into two very different languages, Japanese and Tok Pisin, which are both Asia-Pacific languages from cultures that have not traditionally had a great deal of contact with the Middle East.

In cataloging specific challenges we encountered in translating the selected passage into these two languages, we found some problems that are common to both languages, including difficulties in dealing with certain terminology and cultural concepts specific to Persian and Arabic cultures, as well as some ambiguities in the English wording. Other challenges, particularly differences in the grammatical features of the source and target language and methods of reflecting the pragmatics of the original, arose with only one of the languages. Specifically, the need to express aspect in Tok Pisin verbs in a manner not required in English or the original Persian or Arabic was mentioned. In addition, it was noted that translating passages in which a range of honorifics and humble language is used in the original but not clearly reflected in the English translation poses special challenges when the target language is one that relies heavily on pragmatic wording to indicate the respective positions of the author and addressee, as is the case of Japanese and many other Asian languages.

We also presented a review of the literature outlining some general issues encountered in translating the writings, including issues of orthography and transliteration, as well as problems that can arise when translators rely solely on an English translation of the work without being able to refer to the original Persian or Arabic text.

In addition, we introduced a method of checking each other's draft translations by using back translations into English. We found this technique to be helpful in improving the accuracy of our translations and clarifying areas where ambiguity exists in the English version of the text. We personally found that this method offered many advantages over working alone and therefore present it as a technique that may be useful for those who are working on translating the writings on their own. As with many other Bahá'í activities, accompaniment allows partners to learn from and encourage each other.

Our translation efforts were made more difficult by the lack of human and written resources to which we could turn when it seemed there were ambiguities in the English text from which we were translating or when the semantic, stylistic, or grammatical requirements of our respective target languages forced us to make choices that did not necessarily reflect the English texts. The development of more scholarly works explaining the translations of Shoghi Effendi and sharing insights into the pragmatics of the

original Bahá'í writings would help future translators to make more informed decisions in their choice of wording. We have appreciated the translation-related advice we have received over the years from the Research Department of the Bahá'í World Centre and feel that the development of a central database of advice regarding translation, either in general or of individual works or even of specific words and phrases, possibly provided by this Department or developed by, say, a special interest group within the Association of Bahá'í Studies, would be a useful tool for translators in all countries.

There are 7,164 languages currently spoken on our planet (*Ethnologue*). Portions of the sacred Bahá'í writings have been translated into less than 1,000 of these living languages. As the Bahá'í writings become more widely known, the need for accurate translations into more languages will only become greater. For the foreseeable future, the vast majority of these will be made from existing English translations, often by translators working in isolation. We hope that our discussion will spur further conversations on issues confronting these translators and will encourage greater consultation and collaboration across languages.

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Appendix A: Shoghi Effendi's English Translation

1 This Wronged One hath, at all times, summoned the peoples of the world unto that which will exalt them, and draw them nigh unto God. From the Most Sublime Horizon there hath shone forth that which leaveth no room unto any one for vacillation, repudiation or denial. The wayward, however, have failed to profit therefrom; nay, it shall only increase their loss.

2 O Shaykh! It is incumbent upon the divines to unite with His Majesty, the Sháh—may God assist him—and to cleave day and night unto that which will exalt the station of both the government and the nation. This people are assiduously occupied in enlightening the souls of men and in rehabilitating their condition. Unto this testifieth that which hath been sent down by the Most Sublime Pen in this lucid Tablet. How often have things been simple and easy of accomplishment, and yet most men have been heedless, and busied themselves with that which wasteth their time!

3 One day, while in Constantinople, Kamál Páshá visited this Wronged One. Our conversation turned upon topics profitable unto man. He said that he had learned several languages. In reply We observed: "You have wasted your life. It beseemeth you and the other officials of the Government to convene a gathering and choose one of the divers languages, and likewise one of the existing scripts, or else to create a new language and a new script to be taught children in schools throughout the world. They would, in this way, be acquiring only two languages, one their own native tongue, the other the language in which all the peoples of the world would converse. Were men to take fast hold on that which hath been mentioned, the whole earth would come to be regarded as one country, and the people would be relieved and freed from the necessity of acquiring and teaching different languages." When in Our presence, he acquiesced, and even evinced great joy and complete satisfaction. We then told him to lay this matter before the officials and ministers of the Government, in order that it might be put into effect throughout the different countries. However, although he often returned to see Us after this, he never again referred to this subject, although that which had been suggested is conducive to the concord and the unity of the peoples of the world.

4 We fain would hope that the Persian Government will adopt it and carry it out. At present, a new language and a new script have been devised. If thou desirest, We will communicate them to thee. Our purpose is that all men may cleave unto that which will reduce unnecessary labor and exertion, so that their days may be befittingly spent and ended. God, verily, is the Helper, the Knower, the Ordainer, the Omniscient.

5 God willing, Persia may be adorned with, and attain unto, that whereof she hath thus far been deprived. Say: "O Sháh! Exert thyself so that all the peoples of the world may be illumined with the effulgent splendors of the sun of thy justice. The eyes of this Wronged One are turned towards naught save trustworthiness, truthfulness, purity, and all that profiteth men." Regard Him not as a traitor. Glorified art Thou, O my God, and my Master, and my Mainstay! Aid Thou His Majesty the Sháh to execute Thy laws and Thy commandments, and show forth Thy justice among Thy servants. Thou art, verily, the All-Bounteous, the Lord of grace abounding, the Almighty, the All-Powerful. The Cause of God hath come as a token of His grace. Happy are they who act; happy are they who understand; happy the man that hath clung unto the truth, detached from all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth.

6 O Shaykh! Seek thou the shore of the Most Great Ocean, and enter, then, the Crimson Ark which God hath ordained in the Qayyúm-i-Asmá for the people of Bahá. Verily, it passeth over land and sea. He that entereth therein is saved, and he that turneth aside perisheth. Shouldst thou enter therein and attain unto it, set thy face towards the

Kaaba of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting, and say: "O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy most glorious light, and all Thy lights are verily glorious." Thereupon, will the doors of the Kingdom be flung wide before thy face, and thou wilt behold what eyes have never beheld, and hear what ears have never heard. This Wronged One exhorteth thee as He hath exhorted thee before, and hath never had any wish for thee save that thou shouldst enter the ocean of the unity of God, the Lord of the worlds. This is the day whereon all created things cry out, and announce unto men this Revelation, through which hath appeared what was concealed and preserved in the knowledge of God, the Mighty, the All-Praised. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 137–140)

Appendix B
Translation into Japanese

1　この虐げられし者は、常に、世界の人々を、自分たちの心を高揚させ、神のおそば近くに引き付けるものへと召喚しました。最も崇高な地平線から、誰にとっても、ためらい、拒絶、または否認の余地を残さないものが輝き出ました。しかし、強情な人々は、その利益を受け損いました。それどころか、彼らの損失をさらに増大させるだけでしょう。**2**　おお、シェーク閣下！イスラムの学識者にとって、シャー陛下　（神の援助が彼にあらんことを。）と手を携え、政府と国家両方の状況を向上させるものを昼も夜もしっかりと守っていくことが義務なのです。この民*は、人々の精神を啓発し、彼らの状態を回復させるために根気強く献身的に従事しています。このことは、この明快な書簡において、もっとも崇高なペンによって下された言葉が証言しています。簡単で達成が容易なことがあるのに、ほとんどの人々はそれに気づかず、時間を無駄にする事柄で忙しくしたことが何度あったことでしょうか。**3**　コンスタンティノープル市に滞在していた間に、カマル・パシャ卿がこの虐げられし者を訪問してくださいました。我々の会話は人類にとって有益になる話題へと展開しました。パシャ卿はいくつかの言語を学んだとおっしゃいました。それに対して、小生は次のように述べました。「閣下は人生を無駄になさいましたね。閣下も政府の他の高官と集まりを招集し、さまざまな言語の中から一つを、また既存の文字体系から一つを選び、あるいは新しい言語と文字体系を創り、それを世界中の子どもたちに学校で教えられるようになさるのが良いでしょう。こうすることで、子どもたちは二つの言語のみ習得することになります。つまり、自分の母語と、世界のすべての人々が使って談話する言葉を習得するようになります。ここに言及した発想をしっかりと実行すれば、世界全体は一つの国のようになり、人々は異なった言語を習得したり勉強したりする必要性から解放され、楽になるでしょう。」小生に面会しておられた間、パシャ卿はこの

主張を素直に受け入れられただけでなく、大変な喜びと完全な満足さえ示されました。そして、小生は、さまざまな国で実行できるように、これを政府の官僚や大臣たちに提案して下さるようにと申し上げました。この提案は世界の人々の調和と和合一致に貢献すると思われました。しかし、パシャ卿はその後度々小生に会いに来られたにも関わらず、二度とこの話題には言及されませんでした。

4 ペルシャの政府がこの提案を導入し、実行することを小生は切に望みます。現在、すでに新しい言語と新しい文字体系が作り上げられています。もし、お望みなら、それらについて情報をお伝えします。小生の目的は、すべての人々が無駄な労力と尽力の削減を確実に実行することであり、そうなれば彼らは生涯を最後まで相応しく送ることができるでしょう。神こそは、援助者、知り給う御方、命令者、知らぬことなき御方におわします。

5 願わくば、ペルシャは今まで恵まれなかったことを得られ、それを飾りとするでしょう。言挙げよ。「おおペルシャの王よ！陛下の正義という太陽の光輝により、世界のすべての人々が啓蒙されるように努力なさってください。この虐げられし者の目は、信頼性、誠実性、純粋さと、人間の利益となるあらゆるもの以外には向けられておりません。」小生を反逆者と見なさないでください。おお、わが神、わが主君、わが大黒柱であるあなたに栄光あれ!国王陛下があなたの法と掟を執行でき、あなたの僕らの間に正義を現せるように助け給え。あなたは誠に、すべてを与え給い、豊なる御恵みの主、全能の御方、力に満ち給う御方におわします。神の大業は神の恩恵の象徴として与えられています。行動する者は幸いなり。理解する者は幸いなり。真理にすがり、天と地にあるすべてのものから離脱する者は幸いなり。

6 おおシェーク閣下！最大なる大海原の岸を求め、そして、神様がガエムール・アスマ書でバハの人々のために定め給うた箱舟にお乗りください。誠に、それは陸も海も通ります。それに乗る者は救われ、背ける者は滅びるでしょう。もし、閣下がそれにお乗りになり、その地位に達せられたら、危難の中の御救いにおわし、ご自力にて存在し給う御方におわす神の最も聖なる神殿にお顔をお向けになり、次のようにお述べ下さい：「おお、わが神よ！あなたの最も栄光ある光により嘆願いたします。誠にあなたの光はすべて栄光に満ちています。」そのようにされると、神の王国の扉は、閣下のお顔の前にさっと開け放たれます。そして、閣下はかつて目が見たことのないことをご覧になり、耳が聞いたことのないことをお聞きになるでしょう。この虐げられし者は、以前に閣下を忠告したと同じように忠告をいたします。なお、閣下が諸々の世の主である神の一体性の海に入ること以外に閣下に対して望みを抱いておりません。この日こそ、すべての創造物は声たからかに、人間にこの啓示を宣言し

ます。この啓示を通して、力強き、すべてに賞賛される御方である神の知識の中に隠され、保護されたことが現されました。

＊（バハイの信者たち）

Appendix C
Translation into Tok Pisin

1 Long olgeta taim Mi, dispela Man, ol lain i wokim rong long Em, Mi singautim ol lain manmeri bilong olgeta hap graun long ol kain pasin i bai litimapim nem bilong ol na pulim ol i kam kamap klostu long God. Long Gutpela Ples we heven i bungim graun i gat kain draipela lait we man i no nap long tubel o tanim baksait. Nogat. Ol lain i brukim bus tasol, ol i no win long en. Nogat. Ol i bai lus moa moa yet tasol.

2 O bikman Shaykh! Ol bikman bilong lotu i mas bung wantaim King Shah, inap God i halivim em. Na olgeta de na olgeta nait, ol i mas holimpas long ol wanem kain samting i bai mekim mobeta sindaun bilong gavman na kantri. Ol dispela lain i save wok olgeta taim long givim lait long ol tewel bilong ol man na long stretim sindaun bilong na pasin bilong ol. Ol tok Ingpen i Naispela Tumas i raitim long dispela Pas i klia tumas i tokaut olsem, ol tok skul Mi autim hia, em ol trupela tok. Planti taim samting i isi na i no hatwok long winim, tasol planti ol man ol i no harim tok na ol i bisi wantaim ol samting nating.

3 Wanpela de taim Mi stap long biktaun Konstantinopel, bikman bilong gavman Kamál Páshá i bin kam stori wantaim Mi, dispela Man ol i wokim rong long Em. Mitupela wok long stori long ol kain samting i save mekim mobeta sindaun bilong man. Em i tok olsem, em i lainim pinis sampela kainkain tok ples. Mi bekim em se, "Yu westim taim long laip bilong yu. Mobeta yu wantaim ol arapela wokman bilong Gavman i mas singautim wanpela bikpela bung na makim wanpela long ol planti tok ples na wankain wanpela bilong ol kain pasin bilong raitim ol tok ples. O yupela mas wokim wanpela nupela tok ples olgeta na nupela stail leta bilong ritrait, bai olgeta pikinini bilong ol skul long olgeta kantri i mas lainim. Long dispela rot ol i mas lainim tupela tok ples tasol— narapela em tok ples bilong ol yet na narapela em nameltok bilong olgeta lain manmeri bilong ol kainkain ples. Sapos ol lain i holimpas long ol dispela tok, bai olgeta hap graun i kamap wankain olsem wanpela kantri, na ol manmeri i no hatwok moa long ol i mas skul na lainim ol kainkain tok ples." Taim em i stap wantaim Mipela, em i wanbel long dispela tingting na i amamas na i kirap nogut tru long tingim. Orait, bihain Mipela tokim em long givim dispela tingting long ol wokman na ol minista bilong Gavman, bai em i kamap long ol kainkain kantri. Tasol maski em i save kambek planti taim long painim Mipela, em i no tok gen long dispela samting. Maski dispela tingting Mipela autim i bai strongim pasin belisi na pasin bilong ol lain manner bilong graun i bung wantaim, em i no tok gen long en.

4 Mipela bai amamas, bai Gavman

bilong Persia i tok orait long dispela tingting na bai wokim. Long dispela taim nau, i gat wanpela man i kamapim nupela tok ples na nupela leta bilong ritrait. Sapos yu laik, bai Mipela skulim yu long ol. As bilong tok bilong Mipela em long olgeta man bai holimpas long ol samting i daunim bikpela hatwok bilong ol na i westim taim bilong ol. Olsem na bai long olgeta de bilong ol, ol i save stap gut na laip bilong ol bai gat gutpela pinis. Tru tumas, God i gat save, i save helpim, i save makim, i gat save long olgeta samting.

5 Inap God i laik, bai kantri Persia i bilas wantaim ol samting inap long nau ol i no inap long kisim tasol bai inap long kisim nau. Tok se: "O King Sháh! Wok hat inap bai ol strongpela lait bilong san bilong stretpela pasin bilong yu i givim lait long olgeta manmeri long dispela graun. Tupela ai bilong Mi, dispela Man ol i wokim rong long Em i tan i go long tok i tru, long samting i klin olgeta na i tru olgeta, na long olgeta samting i save halivim sindaun bilong ol manmeri tasol." No ken tingim Mi wanpela Man i tanim baksait long lain bilong Em na i birua. Nogat. Litimapim nem bilong Yu, O God bilong mi, na Papa bilong mi, na sapot bilong mi! Halivim King Sháh long karimautim ol lo na ol oda bilong Yu na long soimautim stretpasin bilong Yu namel long ol wokmanmeri bilong Yu. Tru tumas, Yu save givim olgeta presen. Yu Papa bilong marimari tumas. Yu strong olgeta. Yu gat olgeta pawa. Bikpela Wok bilong God i kamap olsem mak bilong marimari bilong God. Husat ol i wokim ol samting, ol i ken amamas. Husat ol i harim tok, ol i ken amamas. Husat man i bin holimpas long trupela tok, em i ken amamas na i bruklus long olgeta samting i stap long heven na olgeta samting i stap long graun.

6 O bikman Shaykh! Painim nambis bilong Biksolwara, na go insait long en na bihain go insait long Retpela Sip i gat rup long en. Long Buk Qayyúm-i-Asmá o Buk bilong Stori bilong Josep, God i bin makim dispela Sip long ol lain Bahá. Tru tumas, Sip ya i save go antap long graun na solwara. Husat i go insait long en bai gat laip, na husat i tanim baksait long en bai dai pinis. Sapos yu go insait long en na kamap long en, orait, tanim pes bilong yu i go long Kaaba o Ples Tambu bilong God, God bilong halivim long taim bilong trabel, God i save inapim Em yet, na tok se: "O God bilong mi! Mi singautim Yu wantaim ol lait bilong Yu i gat olgeta glori. Na tru tumas, olgeta lait bilong Yu i gat olgeta glori." Olsem na bai ol dua bilong Kingdom i op i stap long ai bilong yu. Na bai yu lukim ol samting, ai bilong ol manmeri i no lukim bipo. Na bai yu harim ol samting, yau bilong ol manmeri i no harim bipo. Mi dispela Man, ol i wokim rong long Em, Mi singautim yu strong we Mi no singautim yu wankain olsem bipo. Na Mi no gat narapela laik long yu, wanpela laik tasol, bai yu kalap i godaun long biksolwara bilong pasin bilong bung wantaim God, Em Papa bilong olgeta hap graun. Dispela em i de we olgeta samting, God i mekim kamapim ol, ol i singaut na i toksave long ol pipel long dispela Tok bilong

God. Wantaim dispela Tok ol samting i stap hait long save bilong God i Strongpela i kamap ples klia. Yumi olgeta litimapim nem bilong En.

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