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"The Transformation of Biblical Proper Names", Jože Krašovec, New York-London 2010 : [recenzja]

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The study of biblical proper names undertaken by Krašovec (henceforth K.) stems from his work on the new Slovenian translation of the Bible published in 1996. His philological work does not stop with the Slovenian language though, but is extended to cover the treatment of the proper names by all major European translations of the Bible from ancient times to the present. K. undertakes this ambitious task in order show the degree of innovation and dependence of translations on earlier key translations. The study of the proper names, however, is a preliminary introduction to a more ambitious project of the author, which is the compilation of a historical dictionary of the forms of biblical names based on the European Bible translations. K.'s work is mainly focused on the treatment of proper names by the Septuagint, Vulgate, targums, Samaritan Bible and other ancient and later translations.

K. starts his investigation with an analysis of the etymological explanation of proper names in the Hebrew Bible (ch. 1). The etymological explanation of the Hebrew names consists of the author of the text interpreting their meaning in light of the Hebrew language or of some narrated events. Such an aetiological interpretation serves as a personal testimony by the biblical author which he adds to his received tradition that he interprets. The etymological interpretation usually calls for the translation of its Hebrew interpretation into the target language, which was usually practiced in the earlier biblical translations. More recent translations, however, often transliterate the folk etymology of the proper name presented by the Hebrew text. K. analyses the most prominent examples, such as two namings of Eve, Babel, Attah El-roi, Beer-lahai-roi, Moab, Ben-ammi, and several others. The literary phenomenon of the word play in the original text constituted a great challenge for the translators who tried to render the original Hebrew or Greek into non-Semitic languages. The problem was often solved by a translation

of the proper name followed by the etymological explanation of the given name into the target language.

In the second chapter of his monograph K. concentrates on the rendering of proper names in ancient and modern translations. He chooses some of the more prominent cases, such as the Tetragrammaton, the designations of the netherworld, Abaddon and Sheol, the giants Nephilim, Behemoth and Leviathan, the symbolic names of Hosea's children, the name of Isaiah's second son Maher-shalal-hash-baz, and several others. There has not been any consistency in the transliterated names, which usually mirrors the personal preferences of the translator in his rendering of proper names, or his reliance on preceding versions. Translators working in the East mostly relied on the Septuagint, while in the West the Vulgate became the main point of reference. The Septuagint is rich in transliterated or translated proper names and in their various, no-standardized, forms. This fact is probably due to the many translators who partook in the undertaking, but the same phenomenon of the variegated rendering of proper names is also attested by the Vulgate. The latter case is all the more puzzling because the Latin text was prepared by one man only. The conclusion must be that ancient translators were not very well prepared for dealing with the challenges of biblical names.

The last chapter of this short monograph concentrates on the Greek and Latin rendering of Semitic proper names in the Bible. Unlike the Septuagint, the Masoretic Text contains very few variant readings of the forms of biblical proper names. One therefore has to assume that the Hebrew and Aramaic forms of these names must have already been standardized in the early Hellenistic period. Non-Masoretic evidence of pronunciation is often divergent from the Hebrew *Textus Receptus*, and the analysis of the differences leads to the conviction that there existed two or more independent dialects or patterns of pronunciation. K. outlines the basic grammatical principles that govern the transliteration of biblical names into Greek and Latin. He arrives at the conclusion that the basic phonetic relationship between Semitic and non-Semitic languages, such as Greek and Latin, is so complex that it was hardly possible to establish a unified tradition in writing the forms of biblical proper names. Finally, K. presents the outline of a comparative dictionary of the forms of biblical proper names for all the Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin forms found in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Vulgate. He describes the different parts of each entry, and stresses the exhaustiveness of the alphabetical list of the proper names on the one hand, and the presentation of the etymological meanings of the names, on the other. The entries will be organized according to the spelling of the NRSV, and K. presents some examples of the entries arranged in alphabetical order. It is the reviewer's

conviction that the exhaustive character of the project and the sheer size of the material it would contain will produce a final work that will be of great use for both exegetes and students of the history of biblical text transmission.